

FEBRUARY, 1934
The Work of the Spirit

In our last article we dwelt upon some of the general and inferior operations which the Holy Spirit performs upon the non-elect, who are never brought unto a saving knowledge of the truth. On this occasion we shall consider His special and saving work in the people of God, dwelling mainly upon the absolute necessity for the same. It should make it easier for the Christian reader to perceive the absoluteness of this necessity when we say that the whole work of the Spirit within the elect is to plant in the heart a hatred for and loathing of *sin* as sin, and a love for and longing after *holiness* as holiness. This is something which no human power can bring about. It is something which the most faithful preaching as such cannot produce. It is something which the mere circulating and reading of the Scripture does not impart. It is a miracle of grace, a Divine wonder, which none but God can or does perform.

Of course if men are only partly depraved (which is *really* the belief today of the vast majority of preachers and their hearers, never having been experimentally taught by God *their own* depravity), if deep down in their hearts all men really loved God, if they are so good-natured as to be easily persuaded to become Christians, then there is no need for the Holy Spirit to put forth His Almighty power and do for them what they are altogether incapable of doing for themselves. And again: if “being saved” consists merely in believing I am a lost sinner and on my way to Hell, and by simply believing that God loves me, that Christ died for me, and that He will save me now on the one condition that I “accept Him as my personal Saviour” and “rest upon His finished work,” then no supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit are required to induce and enable me to fulfill *that* condition—self-interest moves me to, and a decision of my will is all that is required.

But if, on the other hand, all men *hate* God, (John 15:23, 25), and have minds which are “enmity against Him” (Rom. 8:7), so that “there is *none* that seeketh after God” (Rom. 3:11), preferring and determining to follow their own inclinations and pleasures; if instead of being disposed unto that which is good, “the heart of the sons of men is *fully* set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11); and if when the overtures of God’s mercy are made known to them and they are freely invited to avail themselves of the same, they “*all* with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:18);—then it is very evident that the invincible power and transforming operations of the Spirit are indispensably required if the heart of a sinner is thoroughly changed, so that rebellion gives place to submission and hatred to love. This is why Christ said, “No man can come to Me, *except* the Father (by the Spirit) which hath sent Me *draw* him” (John 6:44).

Again; if the Lord Jesus Christ came here to uphold and enforce the high claims of God, rather than to lower or set them aside; if He declared that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:14), rather than pointing to a smooth and broad road which any one would find it easy to tread; if the salvation which He has provided is a deliverance from sin and self-pleasing, from worldliness and indulging the lusts of the flesh, and the bestowing of a nature which desires and determines to live for *God’s* glory and please Him in *all* the details of our present lives;—then it is clear beyond dispute that none but the Spirit of God can impart a *genuine* desire for *such* a salvation. And if instead of “accepting Christ” and “resting upon His finished work” be the sole conditions of salvation, He demands that the sinner throw down the weapons of his defiance, abandon every idol, unreservedly surrender himself

and his life, and receive Him as his only Lord and Master, then naught but a miracle of grace can enable any captive of Satan's to meet *such* requirements.

Against what has been said above it may be objected that no such hatred of God as we have affirmed exists in the hearts of the great majority of our fellow creatures: that while there may be a few degenerates who have sold themselves to the Devil and are thoroughly hardened in sin, yet the remainder of mankind *are* friendly disposed to God, as is evident by the countless millions who have some form or other of religion. To such an objector we reply, The fact is, dear friend, that those to whom you refer are almost entirely ignorant of *the God of Scripture*: they have heard that He loves everybody, is benevolently inclined toward all His creatures, and is so easy-going that in return for their religious performances will wink at their sins. Of course they have no hatred for such a "god" as this! But tell them something of the character of the true God: that *He hates* "all workers of iniquity" (Psa. 5:5), that He is inexorably just and ineffably holy, that He is an uncontrollable Sovereign, who "hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18), and their enmity against *Him* will soon be manifested—an enmity which none but the Holy Spirit can overcome.

It may be objected again that so far from the gloomy picture which we have sketched above being accurate, the great majority of people *do* desire to be saved, and may more or less endeavour after their salvation. This is readily granted. There is in every human heart a desire for deliverance from misery and a longing after happiness and security, and those who come under the sound of God's Word are *naturally* disposed to be delivered from the wrath to come and wish to be assured that Heaven will be their eternal dwelling-place—who *wants* to endure the everlasting burnings? But that desire and disposition is quite compatible and consistent with the greatest love to sin and most entire opposition of heart to that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). But what the objector here refers to is a vastly different thing from desiring Heaven upon *God's* terms, and being willing to tread the *only* path which leads there!

The instinct of self-preservation is sufficiently strong to move multitudes to undertake many performances and penances in the hope that thereby they shall escape Hell. The stronger men's belief of the truth of Divine revelation, the more firmly they become convinced that there is a Day of Judgment when they must appear before their Maker and render an account of all their desires, thoughts, words and deeds, the more serious and sober will be their minds. Let conscience convict them of their misspent lives, and they are ready to turn over a new leaf; let them be persuaded that Christ stands ready as a Fire-escape and is willing to rescue them, though the world still claims their *hearts*, and thousands are ready to "believe in Him." Yea, this *is* done by multitudes who still hate the true character of the Saviour, and reject with all their hearts the salvation which *He* has. Far, far different is this from an unregenerate person longing for deliverance from *self and sin*, and the impartation of that *holiness* which Christ purchased for His people.

All around us are those willing to receive Christ as their Saviour, who are altogether unwilling to surrender to Him as their Lord. They would like His peace, but they refuse His "yoke," without which *His* peace cannot be found (Matt. 11:29). They admire His promises, but have no heart for His precepts. They will rest upon His priestly work, but will not be subject to His kingly scepter. They will believe in a "Christ" who is suited to their own corrupt tastes or sentimental dreams, but they despise and reject the Christ of God. Like the multitudes of old, they want His loaves and fishes, but for His heart-

searching, flesh-withering, sin-condemning teaching, they have no appetite. They approve of Him as the Healer of their bodies, but as the Healer of their depraved souls they desire Him not. And nothing but the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit can change this bias and bent in any soul.

It is just because modern Christendom has such an inadequate estimate of the fearful and universal effects which the Fall has wrought, that the imperative need for the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit is now so little realized. It is because such false conceptions of human depravity so widely prevail that, in most places, it is supposed all which is needed to save half of the community is to hire some popular evangelist and attractive singer. And the reason why so few *are* aware of the awful depths of human depravity, the terrible enmity of the carnal mind against God and the heart's inbred and inveterate hatred of Him, is because *His* character is now so rarely declared from the pulpit. If the preachers would deliver the same type of messages as did Jeremiah in his degenerate age, or even as John the Baptist did, they would soon discover how their hearers were *really* affected toward God; and then they would perceive that unless the power of the Spirit attended their preaching they might as well be silent.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

74. *The Faith of Moses*: 11:28.

More is said about Moses than of any other individual in this 11th chapter of Hebrews. No less than five definite actings of his faith are there recorded. The reason for this is not far to seek. He was the law-giver, and the boast of the Jews of Christ's day was, "We are Moses' disciples" (John 9:28). They were seeking acceptance with God on the ground of their own doings. They supposed that their outward conformity to the ordinances of Moses would secure the approbation of Heaven, and therefore, "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). It was under this influence that these converted Hebrews had been brought up, and therefore did the Holy Spirit press upon them the fact that it was *by faith*, and not by a legal spirit, their renowned ancestor had lived and acted. The particular acting of Moses' faith which we are now to consider was one which would be singularly pertinent to the Spirit's design here: it manifested his trust in the Lamb and testified to the value which Moses placed upon the sprinkled blood. Instituting and observing the feast of the Passover, the leader of the Israelites set an example that could not be ignored without fatal consequences. It completely repudiated the awful error of thinking to escape from the wrath of God in consequence of any performances on the part of the creature. It effectively shuts up the sinner to Christ as his *only* hope. Let it be duly considered that the "Passover" was the *first* ordinance given to Israel.

How striking it is to see the law-giver himself preaching by those actings of his recorded in our text, "*By grace* are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). How great is the ignorance, then, which supposes that salvation by grace is peculiar to this Christian dispensation—as though God has had several ways of redeeming sinners. No, my reader, from the beginning to the end of human history every fallen descendant of Adam which enters Heaven will owe it to sovereign grace flowing to him through the appointed channel of faith, entirely irrespective of all his works, religious or irreligious, before he first trusts in Christ. Abel was saved thus: Hebrews 11:4. Noah "found grace in the eyes of the LORD": Genesis 6:8. Abraham "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness": Romans 4:3. And the children of Israel were delivered from the Angel of Death because they sheltered beneath the blood of the lamb.

That which is now before our consideration formed an appropriate and blessed climax to the actings of Moses' faith recorded here in Hebrews 11: all the others led up to this one. His *refusing* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, his *choosing* rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, his *esteeming* the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, and his *forsaking* of Egypt would all have been in vain spiritually, that is, so far as his salvation was concerned, unless those had been followed by *faith in the lamb* and the efficacy of *its blood*. Turning away from the world is not sufficient: there must also be a turning unto God. The forsaking of sin is not enough: there must also be the laying hold of Christ. *This* is what is typically in view in our present text.

It is highly important that the closest attention be paid to *the order of truth* set forth in Hebrews 11:24-28. If this be done, the defectiveness of much modern "evangelism" will at once be apparent. The keeping of the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood *is not*

the first thing recorded of Moses! No man can rightly value the blood of Christ while his heart is still wrapped up in the world, and to invite and exhort him to put his trust in the same, is being guilty of casting pearls before swine. No man can savingly believe in Christ while he is determined to “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” *Repentance precedes faith* (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21): and repentance is a sorrowing over sin, a hatred of sin, and a turning from sin; and where there is no genuine repentance, there can be no “remission of sins”: Mark 1:4. Let every preacher who reads this article carefully weigh *all* that is here recorded of Moses, and faithfully instruct his congregation that the different exercises of heart recorded in Hebrews 11:24-27 *must* precede that which is denoted in verse 28.

It is really deplorable that such elementary aspects of Truth as we have just pointed out above need to be stressed at this late date. Yet such is the tragic case. Laodicean Christendom is boasting of its riches, and knows not that it is poor and wretched and naked. Part of those “riches” which she boasts so loudly of today is the “great increase of light” which it is supposed that the study of “prophetic” and “dispensational” truth has brought to us. Yet not only is that a subtle device of Satan’s coming as “an angel of *light*” (2 Cor. 11:14), to *darken* men’s understandings, and make them believe that his lies are “wonderful discoveries” and openings up of the Scriptures, but the present generation *has far less* real Light than Christendom enjoyed a century ago. By which we mean, there is far less faithful and fearless preaching of those things which make for practical godliness and holy living. But that is not the worst: Scriptural evangelism has well-nigh disappeared from the earth.

The “Gospel” which is being preached today is only calculated to deceive souls and bolster them up in a false hope. To make men believe that God loves them, while they are under His wrath (see John 3:36), is worse than a physician telling a diabetic subject that he may safely eat all he wishes. To withhold the preaching of *the Law*—its Divine authority, its inexorable demands, its spirituality (in requiring *inward* conformity to it: Matthew 5:22, 28), its awful curse—is to omit that which alone conveys a true knowledge of sin: see Romans 3:20, 7:7. To cry “Believe, believe,” and say nothing about *repentance*, is to falsify the terms of salvation: Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30. To invite sinners to receive Christ as their “Saviour” *before* they surrender to Him as their Lord, is to present a *false* “way of salvation.” To bid the lost “come to Christ” without telling them they must first “forsake the world,” is to fill the “churches” with unconverted souls. To tell sinners they may find rest unto their souls *without* taking Christ’s YOKE upon them, is to give the lie unto the Master’s own teaching: Matthew 11:29.

We offer no apology for this seeming digression from our present subject. Once again we would point out that it is our earnest desire in this series of articles to write something more than a “commentary” on Hebrews, or give a bare “exposition” of its text: rather do we seek (as the Holy Spirit is pleased to enable) to address ourselves directly to the hearts of our readers, and press upon them *the personal and present* application of each verse to their own souls. In all probability a large proportion of the readers of this magazine are *deceived* souls, and we do not want to have to answer for their blood in the Day to come. Many of them have been lulled to sleep by the chloroforming “evangelism” of the day. Therefore we earnestly beg each one who scans these paragraphs to seriously and solemnly ask, Is there anything in my own heart’s history which answers to that which is said of Moses in Hebrews 11: 24-27? If there is not, if you are not “*crucified to*

the world” (Gal. 6:14), then Satan is fatally deluding you if you imagine that you are under the blood of Christ.

Suffer us then, dear reader, to continue addressing you directly, for a moment longer. We do not ask, first, Are you “resting on the finished work of Christ?” There are thousands who imagine they are so doing, who have never been converted. No, rather would we inquire, *Have you made your peace with God?* We are well aware *that* expression is ridiculed and denounced by a certain class who pose as being ultra-spiritual and exceptionally well-taught in the Scriptures, but they only betray their ignorance of the Word: see Isaiah 27:5, Luke 14:32. By asking whether you have “made your peace with God,” we mean, *Have you ceased fighting against Him, and have you yielded to His demands? Have you thrown down the weapons of your rebellion, and expressed an honest desire and determination to be in subjection to Him? Have you realized that living to please yourself and have your own way is a species of defiance, and have you truly surrendered yourself unto His claims?*

“Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (Heb. 11:28). Let it be pointed out again that *this* was the point unto which all the previous actings of Moses’ faith led. While it is true that no sinner can “keep the Passover” or find protection under “the sprinkling of blood,” while his heart still loves the world, and is filled with its idols, nevertheless, his separation from and relinquishing of all which is opposed to God obtains not salvation for him. The blotting out of sins does not become ours until the atonement of Christ is received into our hearts by faith. Thus, by taking Hebrews 11:24-28 *as a whole*, we see how both the righteousness and the grace of God were honoured and magnified.

Our present verse (28) looks back to and gives an abridgment of that which is recorded in Exodus 12. It tells us of a further fruit of a supernatural faith. At first sight it may appear unto many that *this* particular work of faith is far less remarkable than some of those which have engaged our attention in previous articles. Yet when it be duly considered, when all the attendant circumstances are properly weighed, it will be seen that the conduct of Moses on this occasion was as much opposed to human reason and carnal wisdom, and issued from a Divine work of grace in his heart, as did Abraham’s leaving of Chaldea for an unknown country, his offering up of Isaac, or Joseph’s “making mention of the departing of the children of Israel.” We quote now from another who has brought out this point most forcibly and helpfully.

“The institution of the Passover was an act of faith, similar to that of Noah’s preparation of the ark (Heb. 11:7). To realize what this faith must have been, we have to go back to ‘that night,’ and note the special circumstances, which can alone explain the meaning of the words ‘by faith.’ God’s judgments had been poured out on Egypt and its king, and its people. A crisis had arrived, for, after nine plagues had been sent, Pharaoh and the Egyptians still remained obdurate. Indeed, Moses had been threatened with death if he ever came into Pharaoh’s presence again (Exo. 10:28, 29). On the other hand, the Hebrews were in more evil case than ever; and Moses, who was to have delivered them, had not made good his promises.

“It was at such a moment that Moses *heard* from God what he was to do. To sight and to sense it must have seemed most inadequate, and quite unlikely to accomplish the desired result. Why should this last plague be expected to accomplish what the nine had failed to do, with all their cumulative terrors? Why should the mere sprinkling of the

blood have such a remarkable effect? And if they were indeed to leave Egypt, ‘that same night’ why should the people be burdened with all those minute ceremonial observances at the very moment when they ought to be making preparation for their departure!?

“Nothing but *faith* could be of any avail here. Everything was opposed to human understanding and human reasoning. With all the consciousness of ill-success upon him, nothing but unfeigned faith in the living God, and what he had heard from Him, could have enabled Moses to go to the people and rehearse all the intricacies of the Paschal observances, and tell them to exercise the greatest care in the selection of a lamb on the tenth day of the month, to be slain on the fourteenth day, and eaten with (to them) an unmeaning ceremonial.

“It called for no ordinary confidence in what Moses had *heard* from God to enable him to go to his brethren who, in their deep distress, must have been ill-disposed to listen; for, hitherto, his efforts had only increased the hatred of their oppressors and their own miseries as bondmen. It would, to human sight, be a difficult if not impossible task to persuade the people, and convince them of the absolute necessity of complying with all the minute details of the observance of the Paschal ordinance. But this is just where *faith* came in. This was just the field on which it could obtain its greatest victory. Hence we read that ‘by faith’ every difficulty was overcome; the Feast was observed, and the Exodus accomplished. ‘All was based on the hearing of faith.’ The words of Jehovah produced the faith, and were at once the cause and effect of all the blessings” (E.W.B.).

It should be evident, then, from what has been pointed out above that the actions of Moses recorded in Exodus 11 and 12 proceeded from no mere natural faith, but were the supernatural fruit issuing from a supernatural root. His conduct must have exposed him unto the ridicule of the Egyptians, but with implicit confidence in the wisdom, distinguishing mercy, and faithfulness of Jehovah, he acted. See here, again, how inseparable are faith and obedience: the very “faith” of Moses which is mentioned in our present text, *consisted in* an implicit compliance with all the regulations specified by the Lord. He observed the Passover in his own person, and he ordered the people to do likewise, though it involved their procuring many thousands of lambs. He observed the Passover in fullest assurance that thereby all the firstborn of the Hebrews would be delivered. Though all Israel kept the Passover, it was by Moses that God delivered the institution of it.

The Passover was one of the most solemn institutions of the Old Testament, and one of the most eminent types of Christ. “1. It was a lamb that was the matter of this ordinance (Exo. 12:3). And in allusion hereunto, as also to other sacrifices that were instituted afterwards, Christ is called ‘The Lamb of God’ (John 1:29). 2. This lamb was to be taken out from the flock of the sheep (Exo. 12:5). So was the Lord Christ to be taken out of the flock of the church of mankind, in His participation of our nature, that He might be a meet sacrifice for us (Heb. 2:14-17). 3. This lamb being taken from the flock was to be shut up separate from it (Exo. 12:6). So although the Lord Christ was taken from amongst men, yet He was separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26), that is, absolutely free from all that contagion of sin which others are infected withal. 4. This lamb was to be without blemish (Exo. 12:5), which is applied unto the Lord Christ: ‘a Lamb without blemish and without spot’ (1 Peter 1:19). 5. This lamb was to be slain, and was slain accordingly (Exo. 12:6). So was Christ slain for us; a Lamb, in the efficacy of His death, slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). 6. This lamb was so slain, as that it was a sacrifice (Exo. 12:27); it was the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover. And Christ our Passover was sacri-

ficed for us (1 Cor. 5:7). 7. The lamb being slain, was to be roasted (Exo. 12:8-9), which signified the fiery wrath that Christ was to undergo for our deliverance. 8. That ‘neither shall ye break a bone thereof’ (v.46), was expressly to declare the manner of the death of Christ (John 19:33-36). 9. The eating of him, which was also enjoined, and that wholly and entirely (Exo. 12:8, 9), was to instruct the church in the spiritual food of the flesh and blood of Christ, in the communication of the fruits of His mediation unto us by faith” (John Owen).

“Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (Heb. 11:28). Two things are here noted separately, the lamb and its blood. In type they spoke, distinctively, of the person and work of Christ, for it was *the person* of Christ which gave value to His work—His Divine person being the “altar” which “sanctified” the offering of His humanity (Matt. 23:19). This is ever the *order* of Scripture: “Behold (1) the Lamb of God, which (2) taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29); “I determined not to know any thing among you, save (1) Jesus Christ, and (2) Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2); “in the midst of the elders, stood (1) a Lamb (2) as it had been slain” (Rev. 5:6). Here is the Analogy of Faith for the preacher to follow today: It is not the blood which is first to be proclaimed to the sinner, but the wondrous and glorious God-man Mediator who shed His blood for His people.

The Hebrews, equally with the Egyptians, were exposed unto the Divine vengeance, when the Angel of Death went forth on His dread work that memorable night, for “*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). And naught but their placing the substitutionary death of an innocent victim between their guilty selves and an holy God could protect from the judgment announced against them. Trusting in their descent from Abraham would avail them not. Appeal to their good works and religious performances would have sufficed not. They might have spent the entire night in fasting and prayer, in penitently confessing their sins and crying unto God for mercy, but none of those exercises would have stood them in any good stead. “When I *see the blood*, I will pass over you” (Exo. 12:13) made known the all-essential requirement. So it is now; nothing but *the blood of Christ* can cleanse from sin and deliver from the death penalty of God’s broken law.

“Through faith” or better “By faith,” for the Greek here is the same as in the previous verses. “He kept the Passover,” that is, both instituted and observed it, as the Redeemer did His own “supper.” “And the sprinkling of blood”: this emphasizes an important distinction. “Without *shedding* of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22), and without *sprinkling* of blood (cf. 1 Peter 1:2) the virtues of Christ’s atonement are not brought into the soul. The “sprinkling” of the blood has reference to *the application* to one’s own self. The shedding of Christ’s blood is the *ground* on which atonement was made for the sins of His people; the sprinkling of it is the *means* of reaping benefit thereby. The sprinkling of the blood on the door of the house in Exodus 12:13 was both a sign to the Destroyer that He should not enter, and an assurance to the household that they were safe.

It is by the spiritual “sprinkling” or applying of Christ’s blood that all the benefit thereof redounds to us. It corresponds to the laying of a plaster on a sore, to the drinking of a wholesome potion, to the eating of food, to the putting on of a garment: the *benefit* of all these ariseth from a *fit application* of them. The blood of Christ is “sprinkled” on the soul in two ways. First, by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 6:11), who inwardly persuades the soul of a *right* that *it* hath to Christ and to all that He did and suffered for our redemption.

Second, by faith (Acts 15:9), for faith is the hand of the soul which *receives* all spiritual benefits. Faith moves the regenerated soul to rest upon Christ for a personal benefit of His obedience unto death. On this ground the Apostle exhorts, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts *sprinkled from an evil (guilty) conscience*” (Heb. 10:22).

“Lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (Heb. 11:28). Primarily, the Destroyer was the Lord Himself (Exo. 12:12, 23); secondarily, and instrumentally, the reference is to an angel: compare 2 Samuel 24:16, 2 Kings 19:35. Whoever is not “sprinkled” with the blood of Christ is exposed to the anger of God. But so secure are those who are under the same, that the Destroyer shall not so much as “touch” them—He shall do them *no harm*: cf. 1 John 5:18. God proportioned His judgment upon Egypt according to their sin: Pharaoh had ordered his people to cast every son born unto the Hebrews into the river (Exo. 1:22), and now *their* firstborn were to be slain. Thus God manifested the equity of His proceedings against them. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

Our verse as a whole teaches Christians that there must be *the exercise of faith* in order to a right use of the means and institutions which God has appointed: whether in reading the Word, in prayer, in baptism, or the Lord’s supper: “*without* faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6). It also shows us that real faith will not use that for which it has no Divine warrant. An active obedience unto the authority of Christ in His commands is exactly required in all that we do in Divine worship. Well suited to the case of the Hebrews was this example of Moses: to exercise faith in the Lamb and persevere in the duties which God has appointed. No matter how unreasonable it might seem to carnal wisdom, no matter what inconvenience and persecution it might entail, trust in and obedience to the Lord was their duty and blessedness.—A.W.P.

The Life of David

26. *His Recourse in Sorrow*

In our last article we directed attention to the gracious manner in which the Lord put forth His interposing hand to deliver David from that snare of the fowler into which his unbelief and folly had brought him. Ere passing on to the immediate sequel, let us pause and admire the blessed way in which God *timed* His intervention. “To every thing there is a season . . . He hath made every thing beautiful in *His time*” (Eccl. 3:1, 11): equally so in the spiritual realm as in the natural. Probably every Christian can look back to certain experiences in life when his circumstances were suddenly and unexpectedly changed. At the time, he understood not the meaning of it, but later was able to perceive the wisdom and goodness of Him who shaped his affairs. There have been occasions when our situation was swiftly altered, by factors over which we had no control, which called for us to move on: but the sequel showed it was God opening our way to go to the help of others who sorely needed us. So it was now with David.

“My times are in Thy hand” (Psa. 31:15). Yes, my “times” of tarrying, and my “times” of journeying; my “times” of prosperity, and my “times” of adversity; my “times” of fellowship with the saints, and my “times” of isolation and loneliness; each and all are ordered by God. It is blessed to know this, and more blessed still when the heart is permitted to rest thereon. Nothing is more quietening and stabilizing to the soul than the realization that everything was ordained by Omniscience, and is now ordered by infinite love: that He who eternally decreed the hour of my birth, has fixed the day of my departure from this world; that my “times” of youth and health; and my “times” of infirmity and sickness are equally in *God’s* hands. He knows *when* it is best to bring me out of a distressing situation, and His mercy opens the way when it is His time for me to make a move.

While David and his men were in the camp of Achish, the Amalekites took advantage of their absence, fell upon the unprotected Ziklag, burned it, and carried away captive all the women and children. Their husbands and fathers knew nothing of this: no, *but God did*, and He had designs of mercy toward them. Their sad case seemed a hopeless one indeed, but appearances are deceptive. Though they were unaware of the fact, God had already set moving the means for their deliverance. Unlike us, God is never too early, and He is never too late. Had David and his men been discharged by Achish a week sooner, they had been on hand to defend Ziklag, and a needed chastisement and a great blessing from it had been missed! Had they returned home a week later, they had probably been too late to recover their loved ones. Admire, then, the *timeliness* of God’s freeing David from the yoke of the Philistines.

“So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep” (1 Sam. 30:3,4). Observe, there was no turning unto God, or seeking to cast their care upon Him! They were completely overwhelmed by shock and grief. Perhaps the reader knows something of such a state from painful experience. A heavy financial reverse which plunged the soul into dark gloom; or a sudden bereavement came, and in the bitterness of grief all seemed to be against you, and even the voice of prayer was silenced. Ah, David and his men are not the only ones who have been overwhelmed by trouble and anguish.

“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters” (v. 6). The turning against him of his faithful followers was the final ingredient in the bitter cup which David was now called on to drink. But even this was of God: if one stroke of His chastening rod avails not, it must be followed by another; and if necessary, yet others, for our holy Father will not suffer His wayward children to remain impenitent indefinitely. So it was here: the sight of Ziklag in ruins, and the loss of his family did not bring David to his knees; so yet other measures are employed. The anger of his men aroused him from his lethargy, the menacing of his own life by intimate friends was the way God took to bring him back unto Himself.

“But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (v. 6). Here is where light broke into this dark scene, yet care needs to be taken lest we make a wrong use of the same. No one sentence in God’s Word is to be interpreted as an isolated unit, but Scripture must be compared with Scripture. Much is included in the words now before us, far more than any human writer is capable of fully opening up. Attention needs to be directed unto three things: first, what is pre-supposed in David’s “encouraging himself in the LORD;” second, what is signified thereby; third, what followed the same. If we take into consideration the *real* character of David as “the man after God’s own heart,” if we bear in mind the whole context recounting his sad lapses, and, above all, if we view our present verse in the light of the Analogy of Faith, little difficulty should be experienced in “reading between the lines.”

“But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (v. 6). Ah, much is implied here. David could not *truly* “encourage himself in the LORD” until there had been *previous* exercises of heart: conviction, contrition, confession, necessarily preceded comfort and consolation. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13): that enunciates an unchanging principle in God’s governmental dealings, with unconverted and converted alike. Had there been no repentance on David’s part, no unsparing condemnation of himself, no broken-hearted acknowledgment unto God of his failures, he would have been “encouraging himself” in *sin!* and that would be “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4.) Not only has Christ died to save His people from the penalty of their sins, but He has also procured the Holy Spirit to work in them a hatred for the vileness of their sins! and as there is no forgiveness and cleansing for the saint without confession (1 John 1:9), so there is no acceptable “confession” save that which issues from a contrite heart.

There is great need today for the above principles to be explained unto and pressed upon professing Christians. Neither God’s glory will be maintained nor the good of His people promoted if we conceal and are silent about the requirements of His righteousness. God’s mercy is exercised in a way of holiness: where there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness; where there is no turning away from sin, there is no blotting out of sins. Something more is required than simply asking God to be gracious unto us for Christ’s sake. There are many who quote “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7), but there are few indeed who faithfully point out that that precious promise is specifically qualified with, “IF *we walk in the light* as He is in the light.” If we avoid the searching light of God’s holiness, if we hide, excuse, repent not of and refuse to make daily confession of our sins, then the blood of Christ certainly *does not* “cleanse” us from all sin. To insist on the contrary is grossly dishonouring to the Blood,

and is to make Christ the Condoner of evil!

Weigh well the following: “If they pray toward this place, and confess Thy name, *and turn from their sin*, when Thou afflictest them: *Then* hear Thou in Heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy servants. . . If Thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever Thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which Thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for Thy name: Then hear Thou in Heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against Thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and Thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, *and repent*, and make supplication unto Thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; And so *return* unto Thee *with all their heart*, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto Thee . . . *Then hear Thou their prayer* and their supplication in Heaven Thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, *And forgive* Thy people that have sinned against Thee” (1 Kings 8:35, 36, 44-50). And God is still the same. No change of “dispensation” effects any alteration in His character, or in anywise modifies His holy requirements: with Him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

“But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (1 Sam. 30:6). Having sought to indicate what is *pre-supposed* by these words, let us now briefly consider what is *signified* by them. The same *Holy Spirit* who convicts the backslidden saint of his sins, works in him a sincere repentance, and moves him to frankly and freely confess them to God, *also* gives him a renewed sense of the abounding mercy of God, strengthens faith in His blessed promises, and reminds him of His unchanging faithfulness (1 John 1:9): and thus the contrite heart is enabled to rest in the infinite grace of God; and being now restored to communion with Him, the soul “encourages” itself in His perfections. Thus, just as the Holy Spirit delivers the saint from heeding Satan’s counsel to hide his sins, so also does He rescue him from Satan’s attempts to sink him in despair after he is convicted of his sins.

“But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.” This means that he reviewed afresh the everlasting covenant which God had made with him in Christ, that covenant “ordered in all things and sure” (2 Sam. 23:5). It means that he recalled God’s past goodness and mercy towards him, which reassured his heart for the present and the future. It means that he contemplated the omnipotency of the Lord, and realized that nothing is too hard for Him, no situation is hopeless unto His mighty power, for *He* is able to overrule evil unto good, and bring a clean thing out of an unclean. It means that he remembered God’s promises to bring him safely to the throne, and though he knew not how his immediate trouble would disappear, without doubting, *he hoped in God*, and confidently counted upon His undertaking for him. O Christian reader, when we are at our wit’s end, we should not be at faith’s end. See to it that all is right between your soul and God, and then trust in His sufficiency.

When all things were against him, David’s faith was stirred into exercise: he turned unto the One who had never failed him, and from whom he had so sadly departed. Ah, blessed is the trial, no matter how heavy; precious is the disappointment, no matter how bitter, that issues thus. To penitently return unto God means to be back again in the place

of blessing. Better, far better, to be in the midst of the black ruins of Ziklag, surrounded by a threatening mob, than to be in the ranks of the Philistines fighting against His people. Have we, in any way, known what bitter disappointment means? and have we in the midst of it turned unto Him who has smitten us, and “encouraged” ourselves in Him? If so, then like David, we may say, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word” (Psa. 119:67).

O that it may please the Lord to bless this article unto some sorely-distressed soul, who is no longer enjoying the light of His countenance, but who is beneath His chastening frowns. You may be borne down by sorrow and despondency, but no trouble is too great for you to find relief in God: in the One who has, in righteousness, sent this sorrow upon you. Humble yourself beneath His mighty hand, acknowledge to Him your sins, count upon the multitude of His mercies, and seek grace to rest upon His comforting promises. When faith springs up amidst the ruins of blighted hopes, it is a blessed thing. What has just been before us marked a turning-point in David’s life; may it be so in yours. “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee” (Psa. 55:22).

O my reader, be you saved or unsaved, none but God can do you good, relieve your distress, remove the load from your heart, and bring blessing into your life. If you refuse to humble yourself before Him, lament the course of self-will which you followed, and turn from the same, you are your own worst enemy and are forsaking your own mercies. But if you will take your place before Him in the dust, repent of your wickedness, and seek grace to live henceforth in subjection to His will, then pardon, peace, joy, await you. No matter how sadly you have failed in the past, nor what light and favours you sinned against, if you will own it all in brokenness of heart unto the Lord, He is ready to forgive.

“And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech’s son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David inquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them?” (1 Sam. 30:7-8). Here we see the first *result* which followed David’s turning back unto God. It is blessed to observe that the Holy Spirit has thrown a veil of silence over what took place in secret between David and the Lord, as He has over Christ’s private interview with Peter (1 Cor. 15:5). But after telling us of David’s encouraging himself in the Lord, He now reveals the reformation which took place in his conduct. Nothing was said of David’s seeking counsel from God when he journeyed to Achish (1 Sam. 27:2), but now that he is restored to happy fellowship, he will not think of taking a step without asking for Divine guidance.

Very blessed indeed is what is recorded in verses 7, 8. Moses had laid it down as a law that the leader of Israel should “stand before (Eleazar) the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in” (Num. 27:21), and in compliance therewith, David turned to the priest, and bade him seek the mind of the Lord as to how he should now act in this dire emergency. Learn from this that *obedience* to the revealed will of God is the best evidence of having been restored to communion with Him. Of course it is, for it is the very nature of love to seek to *please* its object. Let us test, then, *our* practical relation to God, not by our feelings nor by our words, but by the extent to which we are in actual subjection to Him and walking in a spirit of dependency upon Him.

Notice here how indwelling grace triumphed over the promptings of the flesh. Mere nature would urge that David’s only possible course was to rush after the Amalekites and seek to rescue any of the women and children who might yet be alive. But David was

now delivered from his impetuous self-confidence; his soul was again “like a weaned child.” God was now to order all the details of his life. Alas most of us have to receive many hard knocks in the by-paths of folly before we are brought to this place. It is indeed much to be thankful for when the feverish restlessness of the flesh is subdued, and the soul truly desires God to lead *us* step by step: progress may not *seem* so swift, but it certainly will be more sure. The Lord graciously lay His quietening hand upon each of us, and cause us to look unto and rest in Himself alone.—A.W.P.

7. *The Law of God*

After what has been pointed out in the previous section of this article there is little need for us to devote much space here unto demonstrating the error of those who affirm that the moral law was given *only* to and for the nation of Israel. One plain Scripture is quite sufficient to expose such a fallacy. In Romans 3:19 we read “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” Observe, “the law *saith*,” not “said”: it is still speaking with Divine authority, commanding and threatening. It speaks to “them who are under the law,” and *who* these are is distinctly defined as “all the world.” Nothing could be simpler or more conclusive, and no arguments of ours can possibly strengthen its force; nor can any repudiation of others blunt its sharp edge.

We pass on, then, to *test by Scripture* the third great error which “dispensationalists” have made on this subject, namely, that Christians are not “under the law” in *any* sense, that it is not a Rule of Life to them for the regulating of their conduct. Concerning this particular the utmost confusion now prevails in many quarters, and as it is an important part of the work committed unto God’s servants to heed that Divine command “Take up the stumbling block *out of the way* of My people” (Isa. 57:14), we shall endeavour to deal with this point with the more care, and at some length. No doubt some of our readers will regret this, and would much prefer for us to write on other subjects. We ask all such to kindly bear in mind the needs of others who urgently require to be delivered from the baneful effects of this pernicious error.

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ . . . But now we are delivered from the law” (Rom. 7:4, 6); “For I through the law died unto the law” (Gal. 2:19 R.V.). Such verses as these are eagerly pressed into their service by those who declare that the law has no jurisdiction over the Christian, yet let it be pointed out that these very verses flatly contradict their other assertion that the law was never given to any but the nation of Israel. How could the Roman saints be “delivered from the law” *if they were never under it?* and how could the Gentile Galatians have “died unto the law” if they had never been alive unto it? Thus, the very verses which these errorists are so fond of quoting make directly against one of their own positions. Verily, “the legs of the lame are not equal” (Prov. 26:7).

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). Yet we are expressly told that “Being not without law to God, but *under the law to Christ*” (1 Cor. 9:21). Obviously these two verses need “rightly dividing,” or rather, properly interpreting, or we shall have the New Testament contradicting itself. And here we may perceive the real need for an anointed *teacher*, for surely the man who toils hard for his living through the day and spends only a few minutes in the evening or on the Sabbath, cursorily reading the Scriptures can scarcely expect to acquire the skill which is needed to see into the mysteries and solve the difficulties of the Word. No, a lifetime of prayerful, diligent, and patient study is called for, if one is to be an “able minister of the New Testament” (2 Cor. 3:6), and such study is not possible where one is in the pulpit or on the platform almost every day of the week.

To understand the above verses a four-fold distinction needs to be made in regard to the Christian’s relation to the law. First, as he was in and federally represented by Adam, when he was under the law as a covenant of works, life being promised to him if his legal head obeyed it. Second, as a fallen descendant of Adam, a personal transgressor of the

law; being in his unconverted days under its curse. Third, as he was in and federally represented by Christ, who was made under the law, fulfilled all its requirements by a perfect obedience, and suffered its penalty on the behalf of and in the stead of His people. Fourth, as converted: the Holy Spirit having united him to Christ, so that God now pronounces him free from *the condemnation of* the law and imputes to him the perfect obedience of his Surety; and, the Spirit having wrought in him a desire and determination to love and serve God, he delights in the law and takes it as his Rule of Life, or standard of conduct.

The Christian is released from the law as the procuring ground of his justification and as the ground of his condemnation before God, because Christ has rendered in his room and stead that perfect obedience which the law required, and also suffered its penalty: therefore he is freed from the law as a covenant of works, to obtain life and glory thereby, but not from that submission to God which its terms enjoin. The Christian has been delivered from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), but not from its requirements. The Christian has been delivered from the condemning power of the law, but not from its precepts—otherwise liberty would be his to live in sin, which is the only other possible alternative. The Christian has been delivered from the terror of the law, but not from obedience thereto. The Christian died to the penalty of the law when his Surety suffered in his stead, but he is under the law to Christ as a Rule of Life or director of conduct.

One thinks this issue would be settled once for all by a calm reading of Exodus 20. Is a Christian, any more than a non-Christian, permitted to have more Gods than one? May the Christian make *for himself* a graven image and fall down and worship it? Will the Lord hold *him* guiltless if he takes His name in vain? May the Christian break the Sabbath? Is *he* at liberty to dishonour his parents, kill his neighbor, commit adultery, steal, or covet something which belongs to another? Surely the very things required by the law approve themselves to every honest man's conscience. What a state of heart must they be in who *hate* the law! We earnestly beg every Christian parent who reads these pages to diligently teach the Ten Commandments to his or her children; if you do not, you are an enemy of God, an enemy to your offspring, an enemy to the State. What right have you to denounce the lawlessness which is so rife throughout the land, if you fail to enforce the law in your home?

It is contended by many that since the Law of God requires *perfect obedience* in heart and life, and since men are depraved and cannot obey it, or obtain life by it, that therefore Christ has introduced a new regime, upon *easier* terms; a regime which enjoins conditions that *are* in the power of fallen man to keep, and secure eternal life thereby. But mark well what such a theory involves. *It sets the Son against the Father*: it places Christ in opposition to the moral Governor of Heaven and earth. It represents the Redeemer as *deserting* the Father's honor and interests—the honor of His Law and government; and supposes that He shed His precious blood with the object of persuading the Ruler of this world to slacken the reins of government and grant an impious license to iniquity. To suppose *that* would make the holy Saviour a friend to sin and the enemy of God. From such horrible blasphemy may Divine grace preserve both writer and reader.

So far was Christ from setting aside the law, or even abating its high requirements, that in His first sermon (published in the New Testament) He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass

from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17, 18). In that same Sermon He *condemned* the Pharisees for their sin of abating the law. They taught that though the law did forbid certain external and gross sins, yet not so the first stirrings of corruption in the heart. They affirmed that a man must not commit murder, but that there was no harm in his being angry without a cause, in speaking reproachfully, and harbouring a secret grudge in the heart (Matt. 5:21, 22).

The Pharisees taught a man must not commit adultery, but that he should be excused for secret lascivious *thoughts* (Matt. 5:27, 29). They affirmed that a man must not be guilty of perjury, but that petty oaths in common conversation were quite permissible (vv. 33-37). They argued that a man should not hate his friends, but supposed it was quite right for him to hate an enemy (vv. 43, 44). These, and such like *allowances*, the Pharisees imagined were made by the law, and therefore that such things were not sinful. But the Lord Jesus condemned their doctrine as false and damnable, and insisted that the high and holy demands of the law were *not abated* in the slightest degree, nor ever shall be; but rather that the law required us to be “perfect” as our heavenly Father (v. 48); and declared, “I say unto you, That except your righteousness *shall exceed* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (5:20). No wonder the “dispensationalists” hate so bitterly the Sermon on the Mount!

But the carping objector will reply, Is it fair and just for God to require of His creatures *more* than they can possibly render? In answering, let it be duly considered *what it is* that God requires from us. In Matthew 22:37-40 we find the Lord Jesus declaring, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” We turn, then, to the objector and ask, Is it wrong that the Governor of Heaven and earth requires men to *love* Him with all their hearts? Is *that* too much to ask from them? Is it more than He deserves from us? Shame! shame! Is it not rather the truth that the objector *hates* God so much that he cannot find it in his heart *to* love Him, and therefore says, “He must not insist upon it; and if He does, He is unjust and very hard with us.” What is this but the objector saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14)!

Yet notwithstanding all that has been pointed out above, there are many who loudly insist that Christ’s death entirely annulled the Law of God, and that it has now wholly ceased to be a Rule of Life to the believer; whereas one great and declared design of Christ’s coming into the world was to recover His people unto obedience, to bring them back in heart and life to God: “That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, *in holiness and righteousness* before Him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74, 75). The Lord Jesus came here not to dissolve our obligations to God, but rather to promote them. Christ died to restore His people to conformity unto the law: Titus 2:11, 12. Why, to deliver any *creature* from the law would be to make it supreme, independent! How could there be a “kingdom” (Col. 1:13) without any law to regulate its subjects?

No, so far from Christ’s death having repealed God’s Law, as the Psalmist declared, “The righteousness of Thy testimonies *is everlasting* . . . Concerning Thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them *for ever* . . . Thy Word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth for ever*” (Psa. 119:144,

152, 160). And again, “The works of His hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. *They stand fast for ever and ever*” (Psa. 111:7, 8). O how men love their own corruptions and hate God and His Holy Law, though, of course, they seek to conceal the same under a religious disguise as did Cain and Judas. Nevertheless, “The LORD *sitteth King for ever*” (Psa. 29:10): yes, and He will yet *assert the rights* of His crown, maintain the honor of His majesty, glorify His great name, and vindicate His injured Law, although it be in the eternal damnation of millions of His creatures: “But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should *reign over them*, bring hither, and slay them before Me” (Luke 19:27).

From the last-quoted Scripture the real Christian may perceive what an aversion men have to right thoughts of God and Divine things, and in view of it (and John 7:47, 1 Cor. 2:14, etc.) may be convinced of the absolute necessity of a supernatural and invincible power being brought to bear upon them if their prejudices are to be removed and their hearts made to really love the Truth. A holy God does not appear infinitely glorious to an unholy heart; and the unregenerate not seeing the *grounds* of loving God with all their hearts, do not see the *reason* of the law, nor do they see how “holy, just, and good” the law is. The carnal mind being enmity *against God*, it is, at the same time, enmity against His Law, which is a transcript of the Divine nature (Rom. 8:7). Hence, sinners do not wish to believe either God or His Law to be what they really are; and their depraved inclinations make them blind to what Scripture so plainly says, and leads them to frame a *false* image of God, and entertain *wrong* notions of His Law, that they may have a God and a law to suit their own minds.

From Luke 19:27 we may also perceive what is the character of genuine regeneration and conversion: it is a marvel and miracle of Divine grace, which transforms a lawless rebel into a loving and law-abiding subject. By a “lawless rebel” we mean one who is determined to please himself, have his own way, follow out his own plans, and gratify his own desires. By a “loving and law-abiding subject” we mean one who is brought to recognize the claims of God upon him, and who yields to those claims; one who gives up himself to God, to honor, please, and serve Him: not by constraint, but gladly; not through fear of Hell, but out of gratitude and love. But such a transformation of character and conduct is only brought about by the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit. The great triumph of Divine grace is to win the heart to God, so that the favored recipient of it sincerely declares, “*I delight in the law of God after the inward man*” (Rom. 7:22).

From what has just been before us we may clearly perceive the worthlessness of the religion of our degenerate age. The poor deluded creatures in most of the “churches” and “assemblies” will dearly love those ministers who cry “Peace, peace” unto them, but bitterly hate any who expose their “refuge of lies.” The religion of vast multitudes consists in little more than a firm confidence that their sins are forgiven and that their souls are eternally secure. They consider it a serious fault to doubt their salvation, and the whole of their experience is made up of “faith” and “joy”: faith that their sins are blotted out, joy in the sure prospect of eternal bliss. *But there is no conformity to God’s Holy Law*, no mourning before Him because of self-love and self-seeking, no humility and brokenness of heart. Let one bid them “examine themselves,” test their foundations, take upon them the yoke of Christ, and they at once raise the howl of “Legalism, Dangerous teaching!” O what a rude awakening awaits all such the first five minutes after death!—A.W.P.

The Providence of God

Carson on Esther

Let us next contemplate, for a moment, the elevation of a poor fatherless Jewess to the rank of queen of the Persian empire, and admire the wonderful providence of God in her destination. Is there any man so blind as not to perceive that it was entirely providential that one of the small number of captive Jews should be found more beautiful than all the virgins of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces? Can any one question that God gave her that exquisite loveliness for the very occasion? Known unto God are all His ways from the beginning; and in the formation of Hadassah (Esther's Hebrew name) He had an eye to the plan which He intended to execute through her. Had not God provided a Jewess surpassing all the virgins of the Persian dominion the previous events would have been useless. Esther was found the most lovely of women, that through her beauty she might deliver the people of God.

In this circumstance we have a key to the Divine procedure in adjusting the various events in providence to the fulfilling of His plans and declaration with respect to the kingdom of His Son. All the persons who are called to take a part in the advancement or defense of the cause of God are gifted by Him with the necessary qualifications. Many of these qualifications are given in their birth or education, though they may not for a length of time be called to use them. Sometimes they may even for years employ them in opposition to God. Such was the case with Paul, and doubtless some points of the character of this eminent Apostle were bestowed on him in his very constitution, with a view to the service of Christ. He had many things by immediate gift; but he had some things by mental temperament and education. Any one who reads the history of the Reformation with an eye to this characteristic in Divine Providence will see it surprisingly illustrated in innumerable instances. The character and circumstances of Luther alone will afford a multitude of such providential provisions. By a single gift was Esther fitted to be the deliverer of Israel: by a multitude of talents and acquirements, in the most wonderful complexity, was Luther fitted for the work to which he was called by God. Indeed, the history of the Reformation bears a very striking resemblance to this deliverance of the Jews. Without a single miracle God wrought a deliverance as surprising as the preservation of Israel, and many of those employed to effect it were as ignorant of God as the king of Persia. He used the passions and the interests of worldly men in bringing about His purposes, as well as the love and zeal of His own people. The preservation of the cause and people of God at that period was as much the work of Divine Providence as the deliverance of the Jews from the destruction to which they were destined by the wicked Haman.

All the learning, ability, and acquirements—the riches, birth, rank, and influence, through which at any time the cause of God has been served, have been conferred by God, in His providential government, to fulfill the purposes of His grace. Not only does He gift His own people for this end, but many who belong not to any of the tribes of Israel have been made hewers of wood and drawers of water for the service of the temple. Many able defenses of the Scriptures—many satisfactory vindications of their doctrines, and illustrations of their contents have been afforded by Providence through the instrumentality of men as ignorant of the true grace of God as they who deny their authenticity. The very ravens are made to feed the people of God, rather than that they should want.

In God's conferring on Esther this exquisite beauty, that He might raise her to royal rank, and to influence over the throne itself, we may see that the very thing may, in one

point of view, *be the Divine appointment*, and in another may *be the sinful actions of men*. This is a doctrine clearly taught us in the Scriptures. It is here exemplified in the government of Providence. It is a truth, however, that the wisdom of this world cannot fathom, and therefore cannot receive. That God should in any sense *appoint*, or intend to bring about, what He has in His Word *forbidden*, is indeed one of the deep things of God. It is the abhorrence of the wise, while many even of those who have professed to have become fools that they may be wise, in effect deny it by their explanations. But this is a doctrine that the wisdom of men will never penetrate; it is a depth that human intellect will never be able to fathom! Who can by searching find out God? Can nothing be true of Him and His ways *but what is to be comprehended* by such worms as men? Is it not enough to command our belief, that *God* has said it? Is he not virtually an atheist who requires more? A Christian who rests the reception of the Divine testimony on his ability to comprehend the thing testified is more inconsistent than a deist. One who recommends any truth of Scripture on such grounds insults God. The voice of Providence combines with that of Scripture in testifying to the truth of the doctrine to which I have referred. God evidently provided the beautiful Hadassah for the bed of Ahasuerus. But does the Holy One approve of this connection? Are the seraglios of sensualists according to His Word? Does the Divine Law sanction the divorce of Vashti for such an offense? What can be more abominable in the eyes of God than *this* manner of choosing a queen? What could be more hurtful to the interests of men, or more repugnant to their feelings? How unreasonable that a brutal sensualist should possess all the beauty of his vast empire? How many of the fairest females were thus lost to society and consigned to perpetual misery in the palace of the sensual despot? Can anything be more palpably contrary to the end of marriage, not only as it is declared in the Word of God, but even as it has been understood by heathens? *Yet God performed His purpose through this great wickedness of men!* He has no share in human guilt, while the transgressors of His Law are made *to fulfill His purposes*. Such wisdom is too wonderful for us; it is high; we cannot reach it. *But it is God's wisdom*; let us receive it with submission.

We may here see also the way in which God regulates the events in His providence for fulfilling His plans by adapting them to the instruments which He intends to employ in their execution. It was beauty that He gave to Esther, because beauty only could be the means of her elevation. All other accomplishments would have utterly failed. Had God given Esther greater riches than any subject of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces, she would not have been a

single step nearer the throne. Had she been the daughter of the most powerful man in Persia, or a person of the highest birth, God, in His providence, could have made her a convert, or a friend to the religion of the Jews; but this would not have forwarded her progress to the throne. Had she possessed all the wisdom of Solomon, or all the accomplishments of her sex, with the exception of beauty, she might as well have been an idiot or a rustic. Personal beauty only could raise her, and personal beauty the God of providence gave her, that she might be raised. This affords a key to God's plan in His providence by which He governs a world that is at enmity with Him. In this way He makes them obey His will who know Him not, who hate Him, and, what is still more strange, even while *they fulfill His will*, transgress His laws. How unsearchable are the counsels of Jehovah! His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known.

The providence of God appears conspicuous even in the ignorance of Mordecai and Hadassah. A marriage with a heathen was forbidden to the Jews. Now, had Mordecai and his kinswoman known their duty, her exaltation could never have taken place. But it seems very surprising that a man like Mordecai should be ignorant of this law of God, or that he should know it, and join in the breach of it. Commentators are very willing to excuse him in this business. Mr. Scott says, "It does not seem to have been left to the choice either of Mordecai or Esther;" and Dr. Gill is willing to believe that the fair Jewess went by constraint. But, were this true, is it a justification of a breach of the Law of God? Why did Mordecai so uselessly hazard his own life and expose his whole nation to destruction by obstinately refusing to honor Haman, and yield so readily to this vile prostitution of Esther? If danger will warrant us to violate the Law of God, we will never want a pretext. But there is no evidence that there was any reluctance in this business. There is no account of a search, nor of concealment on the part of Esther. So far from hiding Hadassah when the king's commandment was heard, it appears that Mordecai was uncommonly solicitous to promote her exaltation. Mr. Scott, indeed, attempts to plead his vindication in this, by alleging, that as he could not prevent her from becoming one of the concubines of Ahasuerus, he might thus endeavor to have her made queen. But even this reasoning is not good. Had she been violated by the despot, she would not be justified in afterwards becoming his wife. Mordecai's zeal, then, to have her made queen, is, in every point of view, unjustifiable. It was contrary to the Law of God, yet it was in another point of view, God's own appointment. Instead of eagerly seeking a union with the king, Hadassah should have chosen the scaffold in preference. Her crime was much heightened by submitting to become his concubine before she became his wife. How many chances were against her that she might never have been called a second time into his presence!

Mr. Scott alleges that "in her peculiar circumstances, the *ritual law of not giving their daughters to those of another nation* might not be thought obligatory." But can any circumstances justify the violation of a law of God? Very likely, indeed, Mordecai might have some way to excuse himself. The command, as contained in the law of Moses, could not be unknown to him. But, like many good men now, he might have some way of excusing himself from obedience. But whatever this might be, he must have deceived himself. Neither times nor circumstances can relieve from the obligation of obeying God's Law. Could there be stronger circumstances to disannul the restriction as to marriage than those which existed in the return from the Babylonian captivity? Wives had been married, and therefore ruined if the marriage is broken; children are born of these marriages, and, if the marriage will not stand, they must not only be bastardized, but even deprived of a father's roof, and education by him in the knowledge of the God of Israel. Yet all this was a matter of no consideration. Both wives and children must be disowned and driven away forever. Let us read the book of Ezra and learn how sinful such marriages were accounted by all that feared God.

It is this wretched shift of times and circumstances that has subverted the whole order for Christ's house and changed every ordinance of His kingdom. The laws of the kingdom are read in the Book of God; but, by some peculiarity in their situation, good men plead their excuse from observance, or, by forced explanations, conform the canons of Scripture to their own conduct. It requires but little ingenuity to devise a plausible pretext for not doing that to which we are averse, or for doing that we like.

Mordecai and Esther, then, were guilty in this affair. But this unaccountable igno-

rance of their duty prepared them to execute the part that God had allotted them in this wonderful display of His providence. Who can read this story without being convinced that this marriage was *God's* plan for delivering the Jews from the approaching danger? Can any thing be clearer than that it was contrary to the Law of God? In some point of view, then, God *appoints* what the sin of man effects. He ordains actions which are entirely free, and in which men have all the guilt. This is as clear as the authority of Scripture can make it. Ask me to explain it, and I confess myself a child. I would as soon attempt to fathom space or calculate the moments of eternity. I believe it, I confess it before the world, I urge the reception of it on Christians, because God has testified it in His Word. Let God be true, and all men liars.

From this we see that the very ignorance of duty in the people of God may sometimes be providential, and serve His purposes. I have no doubt that there are still in Babylon many Mordecais and Esthers, whose ignorance in their unlawful situation is turned to the glory of God and the good of His people. But the good effected by them in such a situation *does not lessen their sin* in violating the Law of God. It is the hand of the Almighty that brings good out of evil, and makes the ignorance of His friends, as well as the wrath of His enemies, to praise Him. He will pardon them, but they will suffer loss, both in this world and in the next. Even in this world, the most gainful violation of God's law is a loss to a Christian, and obedience, at the cost of the most expensive sacrifices, is a gain. What says the Lord Jesus to this question? "Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:28-30). The hundredfold in this life cannot be the things of this world, for then obedience would be merely mercenary speculation. God does not bribe us to do our duty. It appears to me that it must be in the increase of light and enjoyment of God. The value of discovering God's mind in the Scriptures, and of beholding the glory of His character and ways, is incalculably great; and no one who has experienced it would exchange it for kingdoms. He is a blessed man who is the least in the kingdom of God; but that there are many Christians who would not exchange with their brethren of the lowest attainments their views of Divine things, as they have been taught by the Word and Spirit of their God, for all the glory of this world. The man who knows most of God is the first man on earth.

There is no reason, then, to envy the condition of believers, who, from ignorance, can enjoy lucrative situations, even if there were no future loss. The peace of God, *which will always be enjoyed in proportion to knowledge and obedience*, is beyond all the treasures of the world. This view of things is highly useful, for sometimes Christians may not only be tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, but even the condition of their brethren, whose ignorance allows them to possess more of the popularity, honors, and gains of the present world. Peter himself, when informed of the manner of his death, appears to have felt more from jealousy lest the beloved disciple might not be called to like suffering, than he did for the thing itself. "Lord," said he, "and what shall this man do?" It behooves us all to attend to the answer: "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? *follow thou Me*" (John 21:21, 22).

There is an obvious advantage in knowing and doing the will of God. Paul says, "If

any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:14, 15). He who got the greater number of talents, and made the best use of them, was made ruler over the greater number of cities. And what talent can be compared with the knowledge of the will of God?

Some people are willing to believe that whatever is lost by obedience to the will of God, will in some way be made up to them, even in this world, though it is their duty to obey without this consideration. But this view is false, fanatical, and hurtful. Though in every situation, we have a right to look to God, for this world as well as for the next, yet we know not to what sort of trials it may seem good to God to expose us. There is no safety in anything but in counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and to be ready for Him to suffer the loss of all things.

The Perpetuity of the Law

By C. H. Spurgeon

“Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18). It has been said that he who understands the two covenants is a theologian, and this is no doubt true. I may also say that the man who knows the relative positions of the law and of the Gospel has the keys of the situation in the matter of doctrine. The relationship of the law to myself, and how it condemns me: the relationship of the Gospel to myself and how if I be a believer it justifies me—these are two points which every Christian man should clearly understand. He should not “see men as trees walking” in this department, or else he may cause himself great sorrow and fall into errors which will be grievous to his heart and injurious to his life. To form a mangle-mangle of law and Gospel is to teach that which is neither law nor Gospel, but the opposite of both. May the Spirit of God be our Teacher, and the Word of God our lesson-book, and then we shall not err.

Very great mistakes have been made about the law. Not long ago there were those about us who affirmed that the law is utterly abrogated and abolished, and they openly taught that believers were not bound to make the moral law the rule of their lives. What would have been sin in other men they count it to be no sin in themselves. *From such Antinomianism as that may God deliver us.* We are not under the law as the method of salvation, but we delight to see the law in the hand of Christ, and desire to obey the Lord in all things. Others have been met with who have taught that Jesus mitigated and softened down the law, and they have in effect said that the perfect Law of God is too hard for imperfect beings, and therefore God has given us a milder and easier rule. Alas, we have met with authors who have gone much further than this, and have railed at the law. Oh, the hard words that I have sometimes read against the holy Law of God! How very unlike to those which the Apostle used when he said, “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good.” How different from the reverent Spirit which made him say, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” You know how David loved the Law of God, and sang its praises all through the longest of the Psalms. The heart of every real Christian is most reverent towards the Law of the Lord. It is perfect, nay, it is perfection itself. We believe that we shall never have reached perfection till we are perfectly conformed to it. A sanctification which stops short of perfect conformity to the law cannot truthfully be called perfect sanctification, for every want of exact conformity to the perfect law is sin.

I gather from our text two things upon which I shall speak at this time. The first is that *the Law of God is perpetual*: “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.” The meaning is that even in the least point it must abide till all be fulfilled. Secondly, we perceive that *the law must be fulfilled*: “One jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” He who came to bring in the Gospel dispensation here asserts that He has not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it.

I. *The Law of God must be perpetual.* There is no abrogation of it nor amendment of it. It is not to be toned down or adjusted to our fallen condition; but every one of the Lord’s righteous judgments abideth forever. I would urge three reasons which will establish this teaching.

First, *Our Lord Jesus declares that He did not come to abolish it.* His words are most express: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to

destroy, but to fulfill.” And Paul tells us with regard to the Gospel “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom. 3:31). The Gospel is the means of the firm establishment and vindication of the Law of God.

Jesus did not come to change the law, but He came *to explain it*, and that very fact *shows that it remains*, for there is no need to explain that which is abrogated. Upon one particular point in which there happened to be a little ceremonialism involved, namely, the keeping of the Sabbath, our Lord enlarged, and showed that *the Jewish idea* was not the true one. The Pharisees forbade even the doing of works of necessity and mercy, such as rubbing ears of corn to satisfy hunger, and healing the sick. Our Lord Jesus showed that it was not at all according to the mind of God to forbid these things. In straining over the letter, and carrying an outward observance to excess, they had missed the spirit of the Sabbath law, which suggested works of piety such as truly hallow the day. He showed that Sabbatic rest was not mere inaction, and He said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” He pointed to the priests who labored hard at offering sacrifices, and said of them, “The priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless.” They were doing Divine service, and were within the law. To meet the popular error He took care to do some of His grandest miracles upon the Sabbath day; and though this excited great wrath against Him, as though He were a law-breaker, yet He did it on purpose that they might see the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, and that it was meant to be a day for doing that which honors God and blesses men.

In addition to explaining the law the Master went further: He *pointed out its spiritual character*. This the Jews had not observed. They thought, for instance, that the command “thou shalt not kill,” simply forbade murder and manslaughter; but the Saviour showed that anger without cause violates the law, and that hard words and cursing, and all other displays of enmity and malice are forbidden by the commandment. They knew that they might not commit adultery, but it did not enter into their minds that a lascivious desire would be an offense against the precept, till the Saviour said, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Assuredly this was no abrogation of the law; it was a wonderful exposition of its far-reaching sovereignty and of its searching character. The Pharisees fancied that if they kept their hands, and their feet, and their tongues, all was done; but Jesus showed that thought, imagination, desire, memory, everything must be brought into subjection to the will of God, or else the law was not fulfilled.

What a searching and humbling doctrine is this! If the law of God reaches to the inward parts, who among us can by nature abide its judgment? “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.” The ten commandments are full of meaning—meaning which many seem to ignore. “Thou shalt not kill” forbids *anything which may cause injury to* our neighbor’s health, and so deprive him of life. Many a deadly manufactured article, many an ill-ventilated shop, many a business with hours of excessive length, is a standing breach of this command. So, too, in reference to another precept; some persons will repeat songs and stories which are suggestive of uncleanness. Do they not know that an unchaste word, a double meaning, a slight hint of lust, all come under the command “Thou shalt not commit adultery?”

Oh, talk not to me about our Lord’s having brought in a milder law because man could not keep the Decalogue, for He has done nothing of the kind. “Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor.” “Who may abide the day of His coming?

for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." Let us not dare to dream that God had given us a perfect law which we poor creatures could not keep, and that therefore He has corrected His legislation, and sent His Son to put us under a relaxed discipline. Oh, God, I am everywhere condemned, for everywhere Thy law reveals to me my serious deviations from the way of righteousness, and shows me how far short I come of Thy glory. Have Thou pity on Thy servant, for I fly to the Gospel which has done for me what the law could never do.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in addition to explaining the law, and pointing out its spiritual character, also *unveiled its living essence*, for when one asked Him, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:35-40). In other words, He has told us, "All the law is fulfilled in this, thou shalt love." Those two precepts comprehend the ten at their fullest extent; and cannot be regarded as the erasure of a jot or tittle of them. Whatever difficulties surround the ten commandments are equally found in the two, which are the sum and substance. If you love God with all your heart you must keep the first table; and if you love your neighbor as yourself you must keep the second table.

To show that He never meant to abrogate the law, our Lord Jesus *has embodied all its commands in His own life*. In His own person there was a nature which was perfectly conformed to the law of God; and as was His nature such was His life. He could say, "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" And again, "I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." I may not say that He was scrupulously careful to keep the law: I will not put it so, for there was no tendency in Him to do otherwise; He was so perfect and pure, so infinitely good, and so complete in His agreement and communion with the Father, that He in all things carried out the Father's will. The Father said of Him, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Point out, if you possibly can, any way in which Christ has violated the law or left it unfulfilled. There was never an unclean thought or rebellious desire in His soul; He had nothing to regret or to retract: it could not be that He should err. He was thrice tempted in the wilderness, and the enemy had the impertinence even to suggest idolatry, but He instantly overthrew the adversary. The prince of this world came to Him, but found nothing in Him.

Once more, that the Master did not come to alter the law is clear, because after having embodied it in His life He willingly gave Himself up *to bear its penalty*, though He had never broken it, bearing the penalty for us, even as it is written, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." If the law had demanded more of us than it ought to have done, would the Lord Jesus have rendered to it the penalty which resulted from its too severe demands? Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a greater vindication to the law by dying, because it had been broken than all the lost in Hell can ever give by their miseries, for their suffering is never complete, their debt is never paid; but He has borne all that was due from His people, and the law is defrauded of nothing. By His death He has vindicated the honor of God's moral government, and made it just for Him to be merciful. If therefore it is clearly proven that Jesus was obedient to the law, even to the extent of death, He certainly did not come to abolish or abrogate it; and if *He* did not remove it, who can do so? If He declared He came to establish it, who shall overthrow it?

Secondly, the Law of God must be perpetual *from its very nature*; for right must al-

ways be right, truth must always be truth, and purity must always be purity. Before the ten commandments were published at Sinai there was still that same law of right and wrong laid upon men by the necessity of being God's creatures. Right was always right before a single command had been committed to words. When Adam was in the garden it was always right that he should love his Maker, and it would have always been wrong that he should have been at cross-purposes with his God; and it does not matter what happens in this world, or what changes take place in the universe, it never can be right to lie, or to commit adultery, or murder, or steal, or to worship an idol god. It is said by some that man cannot keep a perfect law, and God does not demand that he should. Certain modern theologians have taught this, I hope by inadvertence. Has God issued an imperfect law? It is the first imperfect thing I have ever heard of His making. Does it come to this, that, after all, the Gospel is a proclamation that God is going to be satisfied with obedience to a mutilated law? God forbid. I say, better that we perish, than that His perfect Law perish. Terrible as it is, it lies at the foundation of the peace of the universe, and must be honored at all hazards. That gone, all goes. When the power of the Holy Spirit convinced me of sin I felt such a solemn awe of the Law of God that I remember well, when I lay crushed beneath it as a condemned sinner, I yet admired and glorified the law. I could not have wished that perfect law to be altered for me. Rather did I feel that, if my soul were sent to the lowest hell, yet God was to be extolled for His justice, and His Law held in honor for its perfectness. I would not have had it altered even to save my soul. Brethren, the Law of the Lord must stand, for it is perfect, and therefore has in it no element of decay or change.

I should like to say to any brother who thinks that God has put us under an altered rule: "Which particular part of the law is it that God has relaxed? Which precept do you feel free to break? Are you delivered from the command which forbids stealing? My dear sir, you may be a capital theologian, but I shall lock up my spoons when you call at my house. Is it the command about adultery which you think is removed? Then I could not recommend your being admitted into any decent society. Is the law as to killing softened down? Then I had rather have your room than your company. Which law is it that God has exempted you from? That law of worshipping Him only? Do you propose to have another God? Do you intend to make graven images?" The fact is that when we come to detail we cannot afford to lose a single link of this wonderful golden chain, which is perfect in every part as well as perfect as a whole. The law is absolutely complete, and you can neither add to it nor take from it. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou are become a transgressor of the law." If, then, no part of it can be taken down, it must stand, and stand forever.

A third reason I will give why the law must be perpetual is that *to suppose it altered is most dangerous*. To take away from the law its perpetuity is, first of all, to take away from its power to convince of sin. Is it so, that I, being an imperfect creature, am not expected to keep a perfect law? Then it follows that I do not sin when I break the law; and if all that is required of me is that I am to do according to the best of my knowledge and ability, then I have a very convenient rule indeed, and most men will take care to adjust it so as to give themselves as much latitude as possible. By removing the law you have done away with sin, for sin is the transgression of the law, and where there is no law

there is no transgression. When you have done away with sin, you may as well have done away with the Saviour and with salvation, for they are by no means needful. When you have reduced sin to a minimum, what need is there of that great and glorious salvation which Jesus Christ has come to bring onto the world?

By lowering the law you weaken its power in the hands of God as a convincer of sin. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." It is the looking-glass which shows us our spots, a most useful thing, though nothing but the Gospel can wash them away.

"My hopes of Heaven were firm and bright,
But since the precept came
With a convincing power and light,
I find how vile I am.
My guilt appeared but small before,
Till terribly I saw
How perfect, holy, just, and pure,
Was Thine eternal law.
Then felt my soul the heavy load,
My sins revived again,
I had provoked a dreadful God,
And all my hopes were slain."

It is only a pure and perfect law that the Holy Spirit can use in order to show us our depravity and sinfulness. Lower the law and you dim the light by which man perceives his guilt. This is a serious loss to the sinner rather than a gain; it lessens the likelihood of his conviction and conversion.

You have also taken away from the law its power to shut us up to the faith of Christ. What is the Law of God for? For us to keep in order for us to be saved by it? Not at all. It is sent in order to show us that we cannot be saved by works, and to shut us up to be saved by Grace; but if you make out that the law is altered so that a man can keep it, you have left him with his old legal hope, and he is sure to cling to it. You need a perfect law that shuts man right up to hopelessness apart from Jesus, puts him into an iron cage and locks him up, and offers him no escape but by faith in Jesus; then he begins to cry, "Lord, save me by Grace, for I perceive that I cannot be saved by my own works." This is how Paul describes it to the Galatians: "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." I say you have deprived the Gospel of its ablest auxiliary when you have set aside the law. You have taken away from it the schoolmaster that is to bring them to Christ. No, it must stand, and stand in all its terrors, to drive men away from self-righteousness and constrain them to cry to Christ. *They will never accept Grace till they tremble before a just and holy law*; therefore the law serves a most necessary and blessed purpose, and it must not be removed from its place.

To alter the law is to leave us without any law at all. A sliding-scale of duty is an immoral invention, fatal to the principles of law. No wonder that men talk of perfect sanctification if the law has been lowered. There is nothing at all remarkable in our getting up to the rule if it is conveniently lowered for us. I believe I shall be perfectly sanctified when I keep God's Law without omission or transgression, but not till then. If any

man says that he is perfectly sanctified because he has come up to a modified law of his own, I am glad to know what he means, for I have no longer any discussion with him: I see nothing wonderful in his attainment. Sin is any want of conformity to the Law of God, and until we are perfectly conformed to that law in all its spiritual length and breadth it is idle for us to talk about perfect sanctification; no man is perfectly clean till he accepts absolute purity as the standard by which he is to be judged. So long as there is in us any coming short of the perfect law we are not perfect. What an humbling truth this is! The law shall not pass away, but it must be fulfilled. This truth must be maintained, for if it goes, our tacklings are loosed, we cannot well strengthen the mast, the ship goes all to pieces; she becomes a total wreck. The Gospel itself would be destroyed could you destroy the law. To tamper with the law is to trifle with the Gospel. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

Self Knowledge

“Commune with your own heart upon your bed” (Psa. 4:4). This is a Divine command, but it receives very little attention today from the great majority of professing Christians, and that to their immeasurable harm for every command of God is designed for our good, and is disregarded to our loss. Were we more genuinely convinced of the importance and value of self knowledge, and governed by a due esteem of it, and did we but prosecute it rightly, we should make it our duty and business to become better acquainted with our hearts and their workings, and be delivered from many of the evil effects of self ignorance. But alas, God still has to say, as He did of old, “My people doth not *consider*” (Isa. 1:3).

Self knowledge is that acquaintance with ourselves which reveals to us what we are and do, and what we ought to be and do in order to our living usefully here and happily hereafter. The means of it is self examination in the light of Holy Scripture. The purpose of it is self government: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). It consists principally in the knowledge of our *souls*, which is attained by a particular attention to their various faculties, dispositions, and workings. A man’s soul is properly *himself*: Matthew 16:26 and compare Luke 9:25. The body is but the house, the soul is the tenant which indwells it.

Other knowledge is very apt to make a man conceited, but a growing knowledge of *himself* will keep the Christian humble. It is the lack of self knowledge which is the occasion of so much pride. “If a man (through self ignorance) think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal. 6:3). The Lord Jesus upbraided His disciples with their self ignorance when He said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of” (Luke 9:55). The more ignorant we are of ourselves, the readier we are to condemn others; but the better acquainted we are with ourselves, the slower shall we be in rashly censuring others for the same crimes of which *we* are guilty: Romans 2:1, 21, 22.

A true knowledge of ourselves cannot be acquired without diligent and frequent self examination. To this duty there exists in human nature a strong repugnance, so that by most it is greatly neglected. But when it is attempted, we are in much danger of being misled by self love and prejudice. To acquire any true knowledge of ourselves a good degree of honesty and impartiality is essentially requisite. But an honest desire to arrive at the truth is not the only prerequisite to self knowledge: the mind must be enlightened in regard to the standard of rectitude to which we ought to be conformed: the Word of God should dwell richly in us, and by its principles and precepts we must form all sentiments respecting ourselves.

Beware of the common illusion of forming your estimate of yourself from the favorable opinion of those around you. They cannot know the secret principles from which you act; and flattery may have much influence in leading them to speak in your favor. We may often learn even from our enemies and calumniators what are the weak points in our characters. They are discerning in detecting faults, and, generally, have some show of pretext for what they allege against us. We may, therefore, derive more benefit from the sarcasms of our foes than from the flattery of our friends.

We need to become acquainted with *our frailties and deficiencies*, that we may know where our weakness lies; otherwise, like Sampson, we are likely to expose ourselves to numerous temptations and troubles. Every man has his weak side, and every wise man *knows* where it is, and will be sure to keep a double guard there. Yet our limitations and

incapacities can only be discovered by a considerable degree of self-acquaintance. How often have we attempted things beyond our reach and assayed to do things out of our powers; we were blind to our deficiencies through self ignorance. It has been truly said, "A wise man as well as a fool has his foibles: but the difference between them is, that the foibles of the former are known to himself and concealed from the world, while the foibles of the other are known to the world and concealed from himself."

We need to know *our talents and capacities*, and how they may be improved to the greatest advantage. What money, time, and labor have been wasted through people trying to learn and master that for which they had no talent—music, art, languages, etc. How many have aimed to be preachers who were never qualified by God for such a calling. These are illustrations, perhaps, of more extreme cases, but the same principle is active in all of us. Just as each organ in the body has its own particular office to discharge, so each Christian has his own individual place to fill; and the sooner he discovers what his *real* place is, the better. A wise man, instead of aspiring after talents he has not, will set about cultivating those he has: "Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor. 7:7).

We need to know *our constitutional sins*. With some people this is easy, with others more self examination is required. The reason for this is that the besetting sins of some are more open and flagrant, while with others they are more secret and unsuspected. Every person has some particular turn or cast of mind which distinguishes him from others as much as the particular constitution of his body, and their individual traits naturally tend to certain kinds of sin. Some are more prone to sloth, pride, selfishness, envy, malice, self-indulgence. For one not to know his prevailing sin is great self ignorance. A man who is engaged in the study of himself must be willing to know the worst of himself.

We need to know what are *our most dangerous temptations*. He who is properly acquainted with himself has discovered in what circumstances he is in greatest danger of trespassing. This is a point which needs to be examined thoroughly. Consider in what company you are apt to lose possession and government of yourself and on what occasions you become most vain and unguarded. Flee that company and avoid those occasions if you would keep your conscience clear. It is of first importance in order to self knowledge and self government to be acquainted with all the avenues of sin and to observe how it is we are most led into it, and to set reason and conscience to guard those passes. No man can sincerely pray that God will not lead him into temptation if he takes no care himself to avoid it.

The *benefits* of self knowledge are too numerous for us to mention. We single out one: the man who knows himself best knows wherein he most needs to *deny* himself. The great duty of self-denial, which Christ so expressly requires from His followers, has been mistaken and abused, not only by the Papists with their penances and fasts, but by Protestants in instances of voluntary abstinence and unnecessary austerities. Such people are very apt to be too censorious against those who indulge themselves (temperately) in the use of things indifferent. Each believer must learn his own danger points, and guard against every thing that would assail them. Each must learn *what* it is which *he* or *she* most needs to abstain from.—A.W.P.

N. B.—For most of the above we are indebted to a little work by John Mason.

Grace Reigning in Election

“Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12). Accordingly, he finds fault with election, as a mere system of arbitrary partiality, and favouritism: and tells us that if there be such a thing as total helplessness in man, and sovereign election in God, then man is not to blame if he be lost. Man’s entire apostasy and death in sin, so that he cannot save himself, and God’s entire supremacy, so that He saves whom He will, are doctrines exceedingly distasteful to human pride. But they are scriptural.

Why was the one thief saved and the other lost? “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” God was not bound to save the one, and He had power enough to have saved the other, and neither could save himself. What made the difference? The sovereign grace of God. Why was Paul saved and Judas lost? Was it because the former deserved to be saved and the latter to be lost? No, neither deserved to be saved. Was it because the one was a fitting object for the grace of God and the other not? No, the one was no more a fitting object than the other. Was it because Paul chose Christ, and Judas rejected Him? Well, but how was it that Paul chose Christ? Was it not because Christ chose him?

Why was it that Judea was made a land of light and Egypt remained a region of darkness? Who made the difference? Man or God? Was God unjust in leaving Egypt in the shadow of death when He made light to arise on Israel? What had Israel done to deserve a privilege like this? Why is it that Britain is a land of light and Africa a land of darkness? Who made the difference? Who sent the Gospel to Britain and withheld it from Africa? Is God unjust in leaving the mighty continent in the hands of Satan, and in delivering from his yoke this small Island of the Sea?

None have deserved salvation. No man is more fit for it than another. God was not bound to save any. God might have saved all. Yet He has only saved some. Is He, then, unjust in only saving some when He could have saved all? Objectors say, Oh, those who are lost, are lost because they rejected Christ. But did not *all* equally reject Him at first? What made the unbelief of some give way? Was it because *they* willed it, or because God put forth His power in them? Surely the latter. Might He not, then, have put forth His power in all, and prevented any from rejecting the Saviour? Yet He did not. Why? Because so it seemed good in His sight. Is it unjust in God to save only a few when all are equally doomed to die? If not, is there any injustice in His determining beforehand to save these few, and leave the rest unsaved? They could not save themselves, and was it unjust in Him to *resolve*, in His infinite wisdom, to save them? Or was it unjust in Him not to resolve to save all? Had *all perished* there would have been no injustice with Him. How is it possible that there can be injustice in His resolving to *save some*?

There can be no grace where there is no sovereignty. Deny God’s right to *choose* whom He will and you deny His right to *save* whom He will. Deny His right to save whom He will, and you deny that salvation is of grace. If salvation is made to hinge upon any desert or fitness in man, seen or foreseen, *grace* is at an end.

One of the controversies of the present day is respecting the *will* of God;—as to whether His will or man’s is the regulating power in the universe, and the procuring cause of salvation to souls. The supremacy of God’s will over individual persons and events is questioned. Things are made to turn upon man’s will, not on God’s. Conversion is made to turn on man’s will, not on God’s. Man’s will, not God’s, is to decide what in-

dividuals are to enter Heaven. Man's pen, and not God's, is to write the names of the saved one's in the Lamb's Book of Life! Much zeal is shown for the freedom of man's will, little jealousy seems to be left for the freedom of God's will. Men insist that it is unjust and tyrannical in God to control *their* wills, yet see nothing unjust, nothing proud, nothing Satanic in attempting to fetter and direct the will of God. Man, it seems, cannot have his own foolish will gratified, unless the all-wise God will consent to relinquish *His!*

Such are some of the steps in the march of Atheism. Such are the preparations made in these last days by the wily usurper for dethroning the eternal Jehovah. Men may call these speculations. They may condemn them as unprofitable. To the law and to the testimony! Of such *speculations* the Bible is full. *There* man is a helpless worm, and salvation, from first to last, is of the Lord. God's will, and not man's, is the law of the universe. If we are to maintain the Gospel,—if we are to hold fast grace,—if we are to preserve Jehovah's honour,—we must grasp these truths with no feeble hand. For if there be no such a Being as a Supreme predetermining Jehovah, then the universe will soon be a chaos; and if there be no such a thing as free electing love, every minister of Christ may close his lips, and every sinner upon earth sit down in mute despair.—H. Bonar, 1844.
