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“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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

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A GOOD ENDING

In order to a good ending, it is required that we heed the injunction, "Let us not be weary in well doing" (Gal 6:9). There has ever been a pressing need for God's people to pay attention to that word, for they meet with so many discouraging setbacks in their best efforts to mortify their lusts and develop their graces, that they are very apt to become thoroughly discouraged, which produces a readiness to give ear unto that seductive whisper of Satan's "What's the use?" But there is a special timeliness in this exhortation for our degenerate generation, when the vast majority of professing Christians are walking arm-in-arm with the world, and the believer himself is tempted to follow their evil example. If he is not to share their doom, then he must not tread their path, for all who walk the broad road—no matter how orthodox their beliefs, or what their church connections—will most certainly find it terminates in destruction—eternal and unbearable. "Well-doing" consists of a sincere determination and endeavour to perform God's revealed will and an earnest effort to glorify Him. Unto those who continue so doing, the promise is given "for in due season we shall reap, *if we faint not.*"

The "if" is not to be ignored, explained away, nor glossed over, but taken just as it stands. To continue well is not only desirable, but imperative and indispensable. There are many who appear to make an excellent start in the Christian life whose efforts are not sustained, and it has to be said of them, as of the Galatians in like case, "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth...?" (Gal 3:1). And observe well that the apostle did not say, "peace," "peace," and assure them that God would certainly recover them out of the snare of the devil. Instead, he told them plainly and faithfully, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal 4:11). So far was Paul from subscribing to the dangerous delusion which now prevails so widely—that if a person has once "accepted Christ as his personal Saviour," all is well with him for ever, no matter to what extent he conforms to this world and indulges the lusts of the flesh—he declared, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1Co 9:27). Alas, that such a solemn warning should now be robbed of all points where it is not criminally disregarded.

That verse has been woefully wrested by the "Dispensationalists," who make such a pretence of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). They affirm that it merely relates to a being disqualified for and rejected from Christian "service." But the Greek word for "castaway" ("*adokimos*") is never used of anyone's being set aside from the ministry, but in every instance refers to "something" much more serious and fatal—namely to a being *abandoned by God*. It is translated "rejected" of the ground which bears "thorns and briers" (Heb 6:8), and "reprobate" in the other six passages, among which are Romans 1:28; 2 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:16! In the context of 1 Corinthians 9:27, the apostle likens the Christian life and conflict unto the running of a race and the engaging in a wrestling contest (verses 24 and 25), both of which call for strenuous effort, strict self-discipline and self-denial (verse 25). In verse 26, he changes the figure from running to boxing, and then applies the same to himself, making his body the antagonist (verse 27). By a synecdoche (in which a part is made to comprehend the whole—the "body" represents his entire sinful nature: compare the "body of sin" (Rom 6:6), "the body of this death" (Rom 7:24), "mortify therefore your *members* which are upon the earth [namely, the lusts of]; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5), where in each case the allusion is to the totality of our inward corruptions.

Even so strong a Calvinist as Charles Hodge (1797-1878), in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, said upon 9:27, "It was not merely his sensual nature that Paul endeavoured to bring into subjection, but all the propensities and passions of his heart... He made these strenuous exertions, lest, having preached the Gospel to others, he himself should become a reprobate, one rejected. What an argument and what a reproof is this! The reckless and listless Corinthians thought they could safely indulge themselves to the very verge of sin, while this devoted apostle considered himself as engaged in a lifelong *struggle for his salvation*. This same apostle, however, who evidently acted on the principle that the righteous scarcely are saved and that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, at other times breaks out in the most joyful assurance of salvation, and says that he was persuaded that nothing in heaven, earth, or hell, could ever separate him from the love of God (Rom 8:38-39). The one state of mind is the necessary condition of the other." It is only those who heed God's solemn warnings, that recognize the perils which beset their souls, that assiduously em-

ploy the means of grace which He has provided for their preservation, who are entitled to appropriate the comfort found in the divine promises concerning the eternal security of the saints.

It was *not* that Paul *expected* to become a “castaway,” but that he tells us in 1 Corinthians 9:27, what he did (and what we must do) in order to *prevent* such a catastrophe. He was not one who fondly dreamed of being “carried to heaven on flowery beds of ease,” but rather was engaged in fighting the good fight of faith, seeking to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil—knowing full well that unless he did so, he would be fatally overcome by them. But it will be asked, Is not every regenerate soul “kept by the power of God” (1Pe 1:5)? Certainly he is. But how, and where? Not by preserving him in the ways of utter worldliness, self-will, and self-pleasing, but rather by leading him into the paths of righteousness, and when he wanders, restoring him thereto; by moving him to resist temptation, avoid the perils which menace, and conduct himself sanely and circumspectly. God’s power does not keep us mechanically, without any concurrence on *our* part; but as 1 Peter 1:5 goes on to say, “through faith”: that is, through working in us a spirit of dependence upon God and obedience to Him. Believers are kept by divine power moving them to deny self, take heed to their ways, flee temptation, and by causing them to seek grace from above and to draw strength from Christ.

But does not Scripture expressly teach the final perseverance of all saints? Of *saints* yes, but not of graceless professors or white-washed worldlings. Of thousands of them it is written, “This man *began* to build, and was not able to finish” (Luk 14:30); and again, “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the *latter end* is worse with them than the beginning” (2Pe 2:20). The final perseverance of the saints taught in God’s Word is not their preservation in a course of self-gratification and sin, but a perseverance in faith, obedience, and holiness. “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Mat 10:22), and none others will be. Thus, it is imperative to heed that word, “For we are made partakers of Christ, *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb 3:14), which is very far from signifying a “presumptuous persuasion” that heaven is sure no matter what road I tread. “Our confidence,” as the context shows, is our “profession” (Heb 3:1); and to hold it “unto the end” is to continue supplying evidence of the genuineness of our profession, to “continue in the faith grounded and settled” (Col 1:23), to heed the exhortations in Hebrews 3:12 and 13, and the warnings in Hebrews 4:1, 11.

“Conversion is a turning into the right road; the next thing is to walk in it. The daily going on in the road is as essential as the first starting, if we would reach the desired end. To strike the first blow is not all the battle; to him that overcometh is the crown promised. To start in the race is nothing; many have done that who have failed; but to hold out until you reach the winning-post is the great point of the matter. Perseverance is as essential to man’s salvation as conversion”—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892). We must not only begin well but continue well, if we are to *end well*. Unless we can truly say, “*For to me to live is Christ,*” we are but deceiving ourselves if we imagine that “to die is *gain*” (Phi 1:21). Alas, if the vast majority of professing Christians were honest, they would be obliged to aver, “For to me to live is—pleasure—money-making—or social prestige”; and for *them* to die is eternal loss, for they must not only leave behind their idols, but enter a hopeless eternity. Face the issue squarely, my reader: is it “For me to live is to gratify *self*?” or “For me to live is *Christ*?”—to seek to please and honour Him? Only if the latter be the case, will you end well.



THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

62. 1 Peter 1:4-5

Certain schools of the “Dispensationalists” aver and insist that the last seven epistles of the New Testament (Hebrews—Jude) pertain not to those who are members of the mystical body of Christ, but are entirely “Jewish,” penned by the apostles to the Circumcision and meant for them only. Such a wild and wicked assertion is an arbitrary invention of their own, for there is not a word in the Scriptures which substantiates it, but on the contrary, much in those very epistles which clearly repudiates such a view. As well affirm that the epistles of Paul are “not for us” (British and American saints), because they are addressed to companies at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, etc. Whoever the persons entitled “the Hebrews,” that epistle belongs to those who are “partakers of the *heavenly* calling” (Heb 3:1)—something which in no wise pertained to the Jewish nation as such. Though the epistle of James be written to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jam 1:1), yet it was those members of them who were begotten of God (Jam 1:18). The epistles of John are manifestly the letters of the Father to His dear children (1Jo 2:12; 5:21), who had Jesus Christ for their Advocate (1Jo 2:1). Jude is also a general one, “to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called” (Jude :1).

The first epistle of Peter is addressed to “the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1Pe 1:1), or as the American R.V. more literally renders, “to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus,” etc.: that is, to Jews who are absent from Palestine, residing in Gentile lands—compare John 7:35. But care needs to be taken that the term “strangers” or “sojourners” is not limited to its literal force, but given to its figurative meaning, and spiritual application. It refers not strictly to the fleshly descendants of Abraham, but rather to his spiritual “seed,” who were partakers of the heavenly calling, and as such, away from their home. The patriarchs “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth...for they desire a better country [than the earthly Canaan], that is, an heavenly” (Heb 11:13-16). So too David, even when king in Jerusalem, acknowledged, “I am a stranger in the earth” (Psa 119:19). All Christians are “strangers” in this scene, for while they “are at home in the body,” they are “absent from the Lord” (2Co 5:6). Their citizenship is in heaven (Phi 3:20). Thus it was *spiritual* “strangers” unto whom Peter wrote, those who had been begotten unto “an inheritance” reserved for them in heaven (1Pe 1:4).

Nor were all the spiritual “strangers” from the natural stock of Abraham. There is more than one indication in this very epistle that while possibly a majority of them were Jewish believers, yet by no means all of them were so. Thus, in 1 Peter 2:10, after stating that God had called them out of darkness into His marvellous light, the apostle went on to say, “Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy,” which was the case with the *Gentiles* (compare Eph 2:12-13). Peter was there quoting from Hosea 1:9-10 (the “children of Israel” in verse 10 refers to the *spiritual* Israel), which is definitely interpreted for us in Romans 9:24-25. “Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee [Hosea], I will call them my people, which were not my people” Again, in 1 Peter 4:3, Peter reminds those to whom he was writing, “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable *idolatries*”—which could only refer to Gentiles, for the Jews, since Babylonish captivity, never fell into idolatry.

In connection with the prayer in 1 Peter 1:3-5, we shall consider seven things. First, its connection—that we may perceive who are included in the “begotten *us*” (verse 3). Second, its nature: another doxology—“Blessed be.” Third, its Object: “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Fourth, its ascription: “His abundant mercy.” Fifth, its incitement: “Hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.” Sixth, its acknowledgement: “By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Seventh, its substance: “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]” (verse 4). There is much here of interest and deep importance, and therefore, it would be wrong for us to hurriedly dismiss such a passage with a few generalizations, especially since it contains so much that has not come before us in the preceding prayers. It is not that we are seeking to unduly prolong this series—though we admit we shall be sorry when the end of it is reached—but that we desire to consider this prayer as carefully as we have each of the others. May we be duly affected by its contents and truly enter into its elevated spirit.

First, *its connection*. Those on whose behalf the apostle offered this doxology are spoken of according to their literal and figurative circumstances (1Pe 1:1), and then described by their spiritual characters: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (verse 2). That description pertains equally to *all* the regenerate in every dispensation or age. When connected with election, the "foreknowledge of God" refers not to His eternal and universal prescience, for that embraces all beings and events, past, present, and future, and therefore has for its objects the non-elect equally with the elect; consequently, there is no allusion whatever to God's preview of our believing or any other excellence in the objects of His choice. Rather has the term, "foreknowledge" respect to the spring or source of election, namely God's good will and approbation—see Psalm 1:6, Amos 3:2, and 2 Timothy 2:19 for *this* sense of the word "know"; and Romans 11:2 for "foreknow." Thus, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" signifies that, the favoured subjects thereof were fore-loved by Him, that they were the objects of His eternal favour, unalterably delighted in by Him as He foreviewed them in Christ—"accepted [or 'graced'] in the beloved" (Eph 1:4-6).

"Through sanctification of the Spirit" (1Pe 1:2). It is via and by means of the Spirit's gracious and effectual operations that our election by God the Father takes effect: see 2 Thessalonians 2:13. "Sanctification of the Spirit" has reference to His work of regeneration, whereby we are quickened, anointed, consecrated, and set apart unto God. The underlying idea of "sanctification" is almost always that of *separation*: by the new birth, we are distinguished from those dead in sin. "Unto obedience" signified *here*, unto the authoritative call of the Gospel (Rom 10:16, 1; 1Pe 1:22) and subsequently to its precepts. Election is never unto license, but to holiness and good works (Eph 1:4; 2:10); and the Spirit regenerates unto a heart-submission to Christ, and not to a life of self-pleasing. When the Spirit sanctifies a soul, it is that he may adorn the Gospel by a walk which is regulated thereby. It is by his obedience that a Christian makes evident his election by the Father, for previously, he was one of "the children of disobedience" (Eph 5:6); and by it, he furnishes proof of the Spirit's supernatural work within him. "And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:2), which must be distinguished from His blood-shedding (Heb 9:22). The "shedding" is Godward: the "sprinkling" is its application unto the believer, whereby he obtains forgiveness and peace of conscience (Heb 9:13-14; 10:22), and by which his service is rendered acceptable unto God (1Pe 2:5).

A careful reading of the whole epistle makes it evident that these saints were passing through severe trials: see 1 Peter 1:6-7; 2:19-21; 3:16-18; 4:12-15; 5:8-9. Jewish Christians have ever been sorely oppressed, persecuted not so much by the profane world, as by their own brethren according to the flesh. How bitter and fierce the hatred of such appears not only from the case of Stephen, but from what the apostle suffered at their hands (2Co 11:24-26). Writing to the Hebrews, he bade them, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions...and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods" (Heb 10:32-34). By bearing the fact in mind, a better understanding is had of many details. It then becomes more apparent why Peter has so much to say upon affliction, and why he refers so often to the sufferings of Christ. They were in need of both a stimulating cordial and that which would nerve unto heroic endurance. He therefore dwelt upon those aspects of truth best adopted to support the soul, strengthen faith, inspire hope, produce steadfastness, and good works.

Second, *its nature*: a tribute of praise. In this prayer, the apostle is not making supplication of God, but rather is offering adoration unto Him! This is as much our privilege and duty as it is to spread our needs before Him, yea, the one should ever be accompanied by the other. It is "with thanksgiving" we are bidden to "let [our] requests be made known unto God" (Phi 4:6), and that is preceded by the exhortation, "rejoice in the Lord alway" (verse 4); and that rejoicing is to find expression in gratitude and by ascribing glory unto Him. If we be suitably affected by God's bounties, we cannot but bless the Bestower of them. In verse 2, Peter had mentioned some of the most noteworthy and comprehensive of all the divine benefits, and this "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is the echo—or better, the reflex—of His amazing grace toward them. This particular doxology is also to be regarded as a devout acknowledgment of the inestimable favours which God had bestowed on His elect in verse 3. As the apostle reflected upon the glorious blessings conferred on hell-deserving sinners, his heart was drawn out in fervent worship unto the benign Author of them.

Thus it should be, thus it must be, with Christians today. God has no dumb children (Luk 18:7). Not only do they "cry day and night unto him" in their distress, but they frequently praise Him for His excellency and give thanks for His benefits. As they meditate upon His abundant mercy in having begotten them unto a living hope, as they anticipate by faith the glorious inheritance which is reserved for them in heaven,

and as they realize these flow from the sovereign favour of God to them through the death and resurrection of His dear Son, well may they exclaim, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Doxologies, then, are expressions of holy joy and adoring homage—see our September 1948 article for further remarks thereon. Concerning the particular term which is here used for "blessed," Charles John (C. J.) Ellicott (1819-1905) most helpfully remarked that, "This form of Greek word is consecrated to God alone: Mark 14:61; Romans 9:5; 2 Corinthians 11:31. It is a completely different word from the 'blessed' or 'happy' of the Beatitudes and different from the 'blessed' of our Lord's mother in Luke 1:28, 42. This form of it [in 1 Peter 1:3] implies that blessing is always *due* on account of something inherent in the person, while that only implies a blessing has been *received*." So minutely discriminating and accurate is the language of Holy Writ.

Third, *its Object*. This doxology is addressed to "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," which is explained by John Calvin (1509-1564) thus: "For as formerly, by calling Himself the God of Abraham, He designed to mark the difference between Him and all fictitious gods, so after He has manifested Himself in His Son, His will is not to be known otherwise than in Him. Hence they who form their ideas of God in His naked majesty, apart from Christ, have an idol instead of the true God, as is the case with the Jews and the Turks [i.e. the Mohammedans, to which we may add 'Unitarians']. Whoever then seeks really to know the only true God, must regard Him as the Father of Christ." More specifically: in Psalm 72:17, it was foretold of Christ that "men shall be blessed in him" and that "all nations shall call him blessed." Whereupon the sacred singer broke forth in this adoring praise: "Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things" (Psa 72:18). That was the Old Testament form of doxology (compare 1Ki 1:48; 1Ch 29:10); but the New Testament doxology (Eph 1:3; 2Co 1:3) is expressed in accordance with the revelation the Deity has made in the person of Jesus Christ: "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (Joh 5:23).

God the Father is not here viewed absolutely but relatively, that is, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Himself is contemplated in His mediatorial character, that is, as the eternal Son vested with our nature. As such, the Father appointed and sent Him forth on His redeeming mission. In that capacity and office, the Lord Jesus owned and served Him as His God and Father. From the beginning, He was engaged in His Father's business, ever doing those things which were pleasing in His sight. By God's Word, He was regulated in all things. Jehovah was His "portion" (Psa 16:5), His "God" (Psa 22:1), His "All." Christ was under Him (Joh 6:38; 14:28): "The head of Christ is God" (1Co 11:3). In a covenant way, too, He was and is the God and Father of Christ (Joh 20:17). Not only so while He was here on earth, but so now in heaven. This is clear from His promise after the ascension: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of *my God*, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of *my God*" (Rev 3:12). Yet this *official* subordination of Christ unto God the Father in no wise militates against nor modifies His *essential* equality with Him (Joh 5:23; 10:30).

It is to be carefully noted that praise is here rendered not to "the God and Father of *the* Lord Jesus Christ" but of "*our* Lord Jesus Christ": in other words, God's relation to us is determined by His relation to our Surety. He is the God and Father of sinners only in Christ. He is adored as the covenant Head of the Saviour and of His elect in Him. This is a point of first importance: the connection which the Church sustains to God is fixed by that of the Redeemer's to God, for She is Christ's and Christ is God's (1Co 3:23). The "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is the peculiar and characteristic *Christian* designation of Deity, contemplating Him as the God of *redemption*: Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 11:31; Colossians 1:3. When an Israelite called upon Him as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," he recognized and owned Him not only as the Creator and moral Governor of the world, but also as the covenant God of his nation. So when the Christian addresses Him as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," he acknowledges Him as the Author of eternal redemption through the incarnate Son, who voluntarily took the place of subserviency unto and dependence upon Him. In the highest meaning of the word, God is the "Father" of no man until he is united to the One whom He commissioned and sent to be the Saviour of sinners, the sole Mediator between God and men.

The language in which God is here worshipped *explains* how He is so kind and bounteous unto His people. All blessings come to the creature from God. He it is who gave them being and supplies their varied needs. Equally so, all spiritual blessings proceed from Him (Jam 1:17). The Highest is "kind unto the unthankful and the evil" (Luk 6:35). But spiritual blessings issue from Him not simply as God, nor from the Father absolutely, but from "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." In what follows, the apostle

makes mention of His abundant mercy, of His begetting the elect unto a living hope, and of an inheritance which infinitely transcends all earthly good. And in the bestowment of these favours, God is acknowledged in the special character in which He confers them. If it be asked, How can a holy God endow sinful men with such blessings? the answer is, as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is because God is well-pleased with the Redeemer that He is well pleased with the redeemed. The work of Christ merited such a reward, and He shares it with His own (Joh 17:22). All comes to us from the Father through the Son.

Fourth, *its ascription*: “His abundant mercy.” As God does not elect because He foresaw any would savingly repent and believe the Gospel—for these are the effects of His invincible call, which is *the consequence* and not the cause of election—but “according to his own purpose” (2Ti 1:9); neither does He regenerate because of any merits possessed by the subjects thereof, but solely of His sovereign pleasure (Jam 1:18). His abundant mercy is here set over against our abundant demerits, and in proportion as we are sensible of the latter shall we be moved to render praise for the former. Such is our woeful case through sin that naught but divine mercy can relieve it.

“No other attribute could have helped us had mercy refused. As we are by nature, justice condemns us, holiness frowns upon us, power crushes us, truth confirms the threatenings of the law, and wrath fulfils it. It is from the mercy of God that all our hopes begin. Mercy is needed for the miserable, and yet more for the sinful. Misery and sin are fully united in the human race, and mercy here performs her noblest deeds. My brethren, God has vouchsafed His mercy unto us, and we must thankfully acknowledge that in our case, His mercy has been *abundant* mercy. We were defiled with abundant sin, and only the multitude of His loving kindnesses could have put those sins away. We were infected with an abundant evil, and only overflowing mercy can ever cure us of all our natural disease, and make us meet for heaven. We have received abundant grace up till now; we have made great drafts upon the exchequer of God, and of His fullness have all we received grace for grace. Where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded. . . Everything in God is on a grand scale. Great power—He shakes the world. Great wisdom—He balances the clouds. His mercy is commensurate with His other attributes: it is Godlike mercy, infinite mercy! You must measure His Godhead before you can compute His mercy. Well may it be called ‘abundant’ if it be infinite. It will always be abundant, for all that can be drawn from it will be but as the drop of a bucket to the sea itself. The mercy which deals with us is not man’s mercy, but God’s mercy, and therefore boundless mercy”—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892).



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

42. *The Inquisition, Part 2*

Continuing the LORD's response to Joshua's prayer, subsequent to the humiliating repulse at Ai. After informing him that Israel had sinned grievously, and therefore His blessing had been withheld from their efforts, the LORD bade his servant, "Up, sanctify the people" (Jos 7:13). Before we consider the immediate and historical application of those words, let us observe how they supplied yet another line to the typical picture of the Saviour which is set forth in this book. As we have passed from chapter to chapter, the readers' attention has been directed to quite a number of things in which Joshua foreshadowed the Lord Jesus. A further detail now appears in this injunction for him to sanctify "without the gate" (Heb 13:12). And what was the moral condition of His people when He did so? Precisely the same as Israel's was here: defiled, under the curse of the Law, "fierceness of his [God's] anger" being upon them (Jos 7:26 and compare Eph 2:3). To deliver them therefrom, the antitypical Joshua suffered the full penalty of their sins, and set them apart unto God in all the acceptableness of His meritorious sacrifice. Mark also *the time* when this occurred: as it was immediately following upon Joshua's "[falling] to the earth upon his face" (Jos 7:6) that he was bidden to "sanctify the people," so it was a few hours after His prostration on the ground in Gethsemane that Christ sanctified His people at the Cross! [Please note: Originally "cross"]

Turning from the spiritual and mystical signification of the order Joshua received, to its literal and historical meaning, we understand by God's "sanctify the people" that he was to formally and reverently convene the nation in orderly array before the LORD. That injunction was probably the exact equivalent of one received by Israel's prophet at a later date. "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children" (Joe 2:15-16), for it is clear from what follows here that all Israel were required to take their place before the divine tribunal. "Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (Jos 7:13). It is striking and interesting to note how that the LORD here *repeated* what He had just said in the previous verse, both in charging them with their being an accursed thing in Israel's midst, and that because of it, they could not stand before their enemies. Such reiteration not only evinced how heinous was their crime in the eyes of the Holy One, but also gave point unto the call for the people to "sanctify yourselves"—not "for the morrow," but *against* it. They were to duly anticipate in their consciences the divine inquisition which would then be held, when the guilty would be unerringly identified and severely punished. Thus, "Sanctify yourselves" was tantamount unto "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amo 4:12).

"Sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow." The same demand had been made at Sinai, and what is recorded of it casts light upon the import of it here: they were to wash their bodies and clothes, and abstain from their wives (Exo 19:14-15). Thus, "sanctify" here has the force of *purify*: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh" (Heb 9:13 and compare 2Ti 2:21). Under the law, "sanctification" or separation and consecration to the LORD was secured by a process of cleansing. By a comparison with Joel 2:15-16, and its context (verses 12, 13, 17), it is clear that, in addition to ceremonial purification, Israel were here enjoined to cleanse themselves *morally*. "Sanctify yourselves" would therefore imply and include a solemn call to self-examination, humiliation, and supplication; and that in turn would necessitate a separating of their minds from all other cares and concerns, that they might give themselves undistractedly and earnestly unto those solemn duties. Such acts of devotion can only be suitably performed as the thoughts and affections are detached from the daily business and worries of this world. As they had been required to sanctify themselves before they received the Law, so now they were ordered to do so when about to witness a most fearful enforcing of its penalty.

Possibly some will be inclined to ask, Since a single individual only had committed this offence, or at most, with the connivance of his family (Jos 7:21), what reason or propriety was there in calling upon *all* the people to employ themselves in solemn self-examination? How could those who knew they were innocent of perpetrating a serious crime, sincerely engage in such a task? Those who are truly jealous of the glory of God and who are painfully conscious of the fact that "in many things we offend all" (Jam 3:2) will have no difficulty in meeting such an objection. The name of the LORD had been grievously sullied by the

enemy's triumph at Ai, and His saints could not but bitterly mourn over it. Furthermore, the whole nation had been put to shame when their soldiers had fled before the Canaanites; yea, the nation was yet in imminent danger while exposed to "the fierceness of his [God's] anger" (Jos 7:26), and therefore, it was most fitting that there should be an humbling of the entire congregation before the LORD—as the example of Joshua and their elders (Jos 7:6) had intimated. Moreover, as Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, "The sins of *others* may be improved by *us*, as furtherances of our sanctification, as the scandal of the incestuous Corinthian occasioned a blessed reformation in the church: 2 Corinthians 7:11." Every time a saint is overtaken in a fault, it should give point unto his fellows of that warning, "Let him that thinketh *he* standeth take heed lest he fall" (1Co 10:12).

Ere passing on, one other question needs to be noticed: if the "sanctify the people" (Jos 7:13) unto Joshua foreshadowed Christ's sanctification of His Church, then *what* was spiritually connoted by his bidding the people, "sanctify yourselves"? There was a double sanctification: one by Joshua and one by themselves! That twofoldness of truth appears again and again in connection with God's people. As believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, they *are* saved (Act 16:31), yet they are bidden to work out their own salvation (Phi 2:12 and compare 1Ti 4:16). They are new creatures in Christ, yet exhorted to put on the new man (Eph 4:24). They are now clean, and yet need to have their feet washed. They are complete in Christ (Col 2:10), yet are bidden to grow in grace and add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, etc. (2Pe 1:5). Every believer has been "perfected for ever" (Heb 10:14), yet confesses that he is not already perfect (Phi 3:12). The one refers to what they are in Christ, the other to what they are in themselves. Unless the Christian reader learns to draw that distinction, much in the epistles will seem almost a meaningless jumble, if not a series of contradictions. There is a tremendous difference between how the believer appears in the sight of God, and how he looks in his own eyes and those of his fellows. He stands before God in the infinite value of Christ's righteousness, while in his actual experience, he is warring against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and is often worsted by them.

"Sanctification" is still more complex, for a *threefold* distinction is necessary in order to bring into view its leading features, namely, our federal, personal, and practical holiness. By our fall in Adam, we lost not only the favour of God, but the purity of our nature, and therefore, we need to be both reconciled to Him and sanctified in our inner man. The former is secured by the work of Christ; the latter is effected by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The former is judicial; the latter is vital. Christ is the covenant Head of His people, and since He is the Holy One, all in Him are representatively holy. He is their holiness as truly as He is their righteousness: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30). He is "made unto them" sanctification in precisely the same way as God "made him to be sin for us" (2Co 5:21), namely, by legal reckoning, by imputation. But that is not all: believers are not only sanctified federally and legally, but personally and vitally in themselves. In consequence of their covenant with Christ, the Holy Spirit is sent to quicken them into newness of life, to indwell them, to abide with them forever. This is their "sanctification of the Spirit" (2Th 2:13).

The *fruit* of the believer's sanctification in Christ and of the Spirit's indwelling are, in various ways and degrees, made manifest in their daily lives, which is what we term *practical* sanctification. A principle of holiness is imparted at regeneration, and the workings and effects of the same soon appear in the conduct. Sanctification of the Spirit produces a real and radical change in its favoured subject, and so transforms his behaviour "as it becometh the Gospel of Christ" (Phi 1:27). That which has been wrought within every believer is manifested without, by an obedient walk in the paths of holiness as marked out in the Word. Thereby, evidence is given that they have been created "after God...in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24). It is on the basis of their federal and vital oneness with Christ that exhortations unto practical holiness are addressed to them: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1Jo 2:6). And it is by virtue of the Spirit's sanctification that such exhortations are exactly suited to the new nature He has wrought in them: "Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph 5:3). Those whom the Spirit has made "saints" (i.e. "sanctified ones") are to conduct themselves *as such* (Rom 6:1-2). The nation of Israel had been set apart unto the LORD, and that call, "sanctify yourselves," was the equivalent of saying, act accordingly. To us the word is, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1; and compare 1Pe 1:15).

“Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.” “The Lord did not point out the criminal immediately, but He left the matter in ambiguity for some time, and at last brought it to light gradually: that both magistrates and people might learn to do their duty, and to keep a vigilant eye over one another; and that the delay and process might make the transaction more solemn, and excite the more careful self-examination and sanctification of themselves by every method appointed under the law”—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). Similarly did the Saviour say unto His apostles, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (Joh 6:70). Later He informed them that one of them would betray Him, though still without actually naming the one who would be guilty of such horrible perfidy; which resulted in each of the eleven asking: “Lord, is it I?” (Mat 26:22). Such ought to be the first concern of each of us, once it becomes evident that the light of God’s countenance is no longer shining upon the company of saints with whom we are in fellowship: bowing before a heart-searching God and asking, Am I responsible for the withdrawal of Thy favour? Where such a spirit obtains among the members, it will not be long ere the One who is jealous of the honour of His house makes known the cause of His displeasure.

“In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man” (Jos 7:14). First, the opening words of this verse teach us that once an evil be known, there must be no delay in dealing with it—true alike whether it respects an assembly or where only a single individual be concerned. The honour of God and our own welfare alike demand prompt action when any “accursed thing” be involved. To procrastinate in such a case is like playing with fire. Delay in such a matter is a sure sign our hearts are not right with God. By all means investigate thoroughly and make sure that God *has been* publicly slighted, and then be not tardy in dealing with the offender. Next, we should note the LORD’s insistence upon what Joshua had previously disregarded, namely, the *unity* of Israel. In heeding the counsel of the spies and detaching three thousand from the body of the nation (Jos 7:3), he acted contrary to the pattern God gave him in the crossing of Jordan and taking of Jericho. “*Israel* hath sinned” (Jos 7:11), God declared, and now He required that the whole of the tribes should share in the shame of Achan’s offence—as later He gave orders, “Take all the people of war” against Ai (Jos 8:1).

“In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof.” The culprit had not been named, and before he was identified, there must be a searching investigation. Very solemn indeed was the procedure followed. Most probably the whole congregation was assembled before the tabernacle. The word “brought” is the one generally used in connection with offering of the sacrifices (Lev 1:2, 10)—“bring,” therefore, has the force here of the people being presented for the LORD’s inspection. Doubtless it was the “princes” or heads of each tribe which came, respectively, before Joshua and Eleazar. Three times over in this verse, we have the expression, “Which the LORD shall take” (Jos 7:14). We naturally inquire, what is signified thereby? In what way or by what process did He do so? If Scripture be compared with Scripture, it seems clear that the LORD here distinguished between the innocent and the guilty by means of the Urim and Thummim in the high priest’s breastplate. When Joshua was first set apart unto his office, orders were given that “he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment [decision or verdict] of Urim before the LORD” (Num 27:21). Under certain circumstances, the will of God was made known via the Urim and Thummim, and evidently, Eleazar “asked counsel” for Joshua by them on this occasion.

Of Saul it is said that “when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets” (1Sa 28:6)—proof of His having abandoned the apostate king. Thence we gather that by means of the Urim and Thummim, prophetic guidance was at certain times obtained from God. This is further borne out of Ezra 2:63, when Nehemiah forbade the rejected children of the priests eating of the most holy things, he added, “till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim”—through which the divine mind will again be revealed. From these passages, the late Dr. Ethelbert William (E. W.) Bullinger (1837-1913) drew the following deductions: “The Urim and Thummim were probably two precious stones, which were drawn out as a lot to give Jehovah’s judgment. ‘The lot is cast into the lap [Hebrew “bosom”]; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD’ (Pro 16:33)—bosom is here put for the clothing or covering over it: compare Exodus 4:6-7; Ruth 4:16... Thus those two placed in the ‘bag’ and one drawn out would give the judicial decision, which would be ‘of the LORD.’ Hence, the

breastplate itself was known as ‘the breastplate of judgment’ (Exo 28:15), because by that Jehovah’s judgment was obtained when it was needed. Hence, when the land was divided ‘by lot’ (Num 26:55), Eleazar the high priest must be present (Num 34:17; Jos 17:14).”

Both words are in the plural number, though (as is often the case in the Hebrew); probably it is what is known as “the plural of majesty”—used for the purpose of *emphasizing* the importance of a thing or the dignity of an object. It is likely that the “Urim” was a single stone or object and the “Thummim” another, though we cannot be certain. The English equivalent for those words is “light” or “lights” and “perfections”; in the Septuagint, they are rendered by “delosis” and “aletheim,” meaning “manifestation and truth.” As the high priest thrust his hand into the bag of his breastplate (note “doubled” in Exodus 28:16), possibly the bringing forth of the “Urim” indicated the LORD’s *yes*; and the “Thummim,” His *no*, or vice-versa. In the instance we are now considering, most likely the appearing of the Urim signified the bringing to light of the guilty; whereas the issuing of the Thummim announced the “perfection” or sincerity of the innocent. Thus, as the head or heads of each tribe stood before Eleazar, he would draw out the Thummim until the turn of Judah arrived, as indicated by the Urim. The same process was followed after the guilty tribe had been identified: the heads of its leading “families” standing before the LORD’s representative, and when the particular family was identified, the same with its “households,” until the culprit himself stood unmasked before all.

“And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel” (Jos 7:15). Solemn indeed was the transaction which we have endeavoured to picture above, fearful the trial of all who took part in it. A threefold reason may be suggested for the leisurely nature of this inquisition. First, it manifested the calmness and thoroughness of the Judge of all the earth: He is ever a God of order, departing not therefrom when sitting in judgment. Second, the terribleness of their ordeal would impress upon Israel the reality of the holy covenant which God had made with them, and demonstrate before them again the majesty of the divine Law—seen in arresting the waters of Jordan, overthrowing the walls of Jericho, and now equally so in taking vengeance on the transgressor. Third, in affording the guilty one further space for repentance: but alas, his heart was hardened and he refused to come forward and own that *he* was the cause of the whole trouble. The dreadful sentence that he should be “burned...with fire” does not necessarily signify he was to be roasted alive—Joshua 7:25 seems to clearly show otherwise. If it be asked, Why burn them and their possessions if they were already dead from stoning? To express still more vividly the divine detestation, and that nothing whatever of the accursed thing should remain.



THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

26. *In the Soul, Part 4*

This personal and secret revelation of God in the soul is a *miracle*, as truly and as much so as when darkness enveloped the chaos of Genesis 1:3, and God by a mere fiat said, "Let there be light: and there was light." This is clear from "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face [or 'person'] of Jesus Christ" (2Co 4:6). In His own ordained hour, by a sovereign and all-mighty act on His part, a supernatural, saving and sanctifying knowledge of God is communicated to the souls of each of His elect. This knowledge of God is spiritual and altogether from above, being wholly divine and heavenly. Being miraculous, this unique experience is profoundly *mysterious*. Its favoured subject contributes nothing whatever to it, not so much a desiring or soliciting the same. "There is none that seeketh after God... And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom 3:11, 17-18). It could not be otherwise, for by nature all are, spiritually speaking, "*dead* in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). There can be no spiritual sight of spiritual objects, no spiritual hearing, still less any spiritual actions, until spiritual life is imparted to the soul.

No one can possibly have any spiritual hatred of sin, any pantings after holiness, any saving faith in Christ, until he has actually "passed from death unto life" (Joh 5:24). In every instance where God graciously gives this inward and vivifying revelation of Himself, He declares, "I am found of them that *sought me not*" (Isa 65:1)—the subsequent seeking of the souls is the reflex, the consequent, the effect, of His initial seeking of it. As we love Him because He first loved us (1Jo 4:19), so we call upon Him (Rom 10:13) because His effectual call (1Pe 2:9) preceded and capacitated ours. The "Spirit of life" (Rom 8:2) must first join Himself to the spiritually-dead soul in quickening power, before he has any spiritual life or light. In that initial operation of the Spirit, the soul is wholly passive and unconscious. Regeneration is not something which we actually "receive," but is wrought in its subject once and for all. Was not natural life communicated to me without any act of mine? What act did I perform when a living soul was imparted to me? None: it was utterly impossible that I should. Being and life were divinely given to me without any volition whatever on my part.

The soul must be divinely renovated before it is able to discern or relish spiritual things. The natural man, totally depraved as he is, can neither perceive the reality of spiritual things, be impressed with their excellence, or have his affections drawn after them. How can the natural man savingly believe in Christ when he has no grace, no power of will upwards, no sufficiency in himself? Coming to Christ is a spiritual motion, for it is the soul going out to Him. But motion presupposes life, and as there can be no natural motion or movement without natural life, so it is spiritually. Deny that, and you deny the indispensability of the Spirit's work of grace to bestow life, light, and sight. Something in addition to life and light is required: the Spirit must remove from our eyes the scales of pride and enmity before we can perceive our ruined condition. Coming to Christ imports both a sense of need and a hope of relief: it is an actual closing with Him as He is freely offered to sinners in the Gospel, by a practical assent of the understanding and hearty consent of the will.

By the Spirit alone are we awakened from the sleep of carnal sloth and unconcern for our eternal welfare. By Him alone are we given to perceive the spirituality and strictness of the divine Law, and feel its condemning power in our conscience. He it is who shows us ourselves and brings us to realize that our very nature is a sewer of filth. He it is who reveals to us our desperate need of Christ, who overcomes our hostility to Him, and makes us willing to receive Him as our Prophet to teach and instruct us, our Priest to atone and make intercession for us, and our King to rule over and fight for us. It is wholly by His powerful operation that Christ is formed in us "the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). By Him alone do we obtain an experimental and intuitional knowledge of Christ. Said the Saviour, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and *shall shew* it unto you" (Joh 16:14-15). "Shew it" not in the mere letter of it (there is no need for Him to do *that*, for by a little diligence we can grasp the literal or grammatical meaning for ourselves), but in the spirituality, blessedness, and power thereof.

The preciousness and potency of the things of Christ are set home on the renewed mind by the grace and energy of the Spirit in such a manner that the believer is inwardly assimilated thereto. He shows them

not to his reasoning faculty but to his heart, and in such a way as to impress a real image thereof, fixing the same indelibly in his affections. He it is who gives unto him soul-satisfying, heart-warming apprehensions of the Saviour's love, so that at times he is quite lifted out of himself, his thoughts being raised above the things of time and sense, to be entirely absorbed with the "altogether lovely" (Song 5:16) One, and thus vouchsafes him an earnest and foretaste of his eternal joy. It is the Spirit's special office to magnify Christ: to make Him real unto His redeemed, to endear Him to their souls, until He becomes their "All in all." Every true thought entertained of Christ, every exercise of the believer's affections upon Him, is through the effectual influence of the Spirit. All true fellowship and communion which the Christian has with the Redeemer, all practical conformity unto His holy image, is by His gracious operations. We are completely dependent upon Him for every spiritual breath we draw and spiritual motion we make.

But we have been somewhat carried away—it is not easy for love to heed the requirements of logic! The last three paragraphs should have been preceded by the statement that, though an inward revelation of God to the soul be both truly miraculous and profoundly mysterious, yet it may be identified and *known* to its participant. To the participant we say, for it is no less impossible to explain the same by mere words to one who has had no actual experience of the same, than it would be to convey any intelligible concept of colour to one born blind; or of sound, to one born totally deaf. It may be known by its attendants and by its fruits. When life and being were given me naturally, all that followed was but the effects and consequences of the same. In due time, I was brought forth into the world—a feeble and needy, but living and active creature, yet entirely dependent upon others. So at regeneration, the soul has spiritual life imparted to it and is born again; and all that follows in the experiences of that soul is but the effects and fruits thereof, making manifest the reality of it, so that by comparison of its present history with its past, and by an examination of both in the light of Holy Writ, the great change may be clearly and indubitably cognized.

God has endowed the soul with the power of reflection, so that it may be conscious of its own condition and operations. Therefore does He bid professing Christians, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2Co 13:5). The Psalmist tells us, "I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search" (Psa 77:6). God has so wondrously constituted man that he is able to look within and form a judgment of himself and of his actions; and at regeneration, he is given "the spirit...of a sound mind" (2Ti 1:7), so that he may form an impartial and true judgment of himself. While some are too introspective, others are not sufficiently so for their own good. The regenerate soul has power not only to put forth a direct act of faith upon Christ, but also to discern that act: "I know whom I have believed" (2Ti 1:12). In this way, Christians may attain unto a *certainty* of their saving knowledge of and union with Christ. The more so since they have received the gift of the blessed Spirit, by which they "might *know* the things that are freely given to us of God" (1Co 2:12). "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1Jo 4:13), which is apparent from His operations within us.

It most highly concerns each reader of these articles to examine and *try* his knowledge of God, and make sure it be something more than a merely natural and notional one, namely, that he has been favoured with a spiritual and experiential discovery of God to his soul. "Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them...have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught *by him*, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man" (Eph 4:18-23). There a contrast is drawn between the unregenerate Gentiles and the Ephesian saints. The latter had learned both from the precepts and example of Christ. The question for them to make sure about was, Had they really been taught inwardly and effectually by Him, so that a vital change was evident in their character and conduct? That "if so be" intimated that nothing was to be taken for granted. They must put themselves to the proof and ascertain whether the truth dwelt in and regulated them as it did the Saviour: whether in short, the teaching they had received was inoperative, or whether it had produced a radical change in their daily lives. By its fruit is the tree known.

The inward and immediate revelation of God to a soul is made manifest by its *accompaniments*. It is accompanied by a principle of life, of grace, of holiness. It is attended with light and warmth and power, producing a great and glorious change within, renovating each faculty of the soul. Therein it differs radically from the "conversions" of modern evangelism, which effects no such change. It is attended with the opening of the eyes of the understanding, enabling its subject to see God, Christ, self, sin, the world, eternity, in a light he did not previously. Such sights, under the gracious influences of the Spirit, lead to the

experiences of conviction, contrition, and conversion, described in the preceding articles. The quickened soul not only now discovers the true nature of sin, but feels the guilt and burden of it, and unfeignedly sorrows for and hates it. He is brought to realize the worthlessness of all self-help and creature performances. He is enabled to take in, little by little, a knowledge of Christ from the Word, by which means he is led to an acquaintance with Him and his will is brought to a full surrender to Him. Thus there is an efficacy accompanying the Spirit's teaching which is not found in any man's: illuminating the understanding, searching the conscience, engaging the affections, drawing the heart unto it, sanctifying the will.

As there is both an outward and an inward "hearing" of the things of God (Act 26:26), an ineffectual "learning" of the truth (2Ti 3:7) and an effectual one (Eph 4:20-22), so there is a knowledge of God which is inefficacious (Rom 1:21), and a knowledge of Him which is saving (Joh 17:3). *How* am I to ascertain that mine is the *latter*? Answer: from its *effects*. It is not the quantity but the quality, not the degree or extent of the knowledge, but the kind of it that matters, and that is evidenced by its products. A real Christian may have a far inferior intellectual grasp of the truth than has an unregenerate theologian, and yet possess a spiritual and sanctifying knowledge thereof to which he, after all his studying, is a stranger. Concerning all the renewed, God says, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1Jo 2:27). That "Anointing" is the person and operations of the Holy Spirit, and where He indwells a soul no man is needed to teach him there is a God, that the Bible is His Word, that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, etc. Let us now describe some of the effects of this divine anointing.

First, it is a *realizing* knowledge. Its grand Object is no longer known theoretically and inferentially, but actually and immediately, not by a process of reasoning but intuitively. God, who is spirit and invisible, is made visible and palpable to the soul. Does that strike some of our readers as being too strong a statement? It would not had they experienced the same; and it should not if they be at all familiar with Holy Writ, for of Moses it is said, "he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27). God was real to his faith, though imperceptible to his senses. At the new birth, such a discovery of God is made to the heart that its subject avers with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: *but now* mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5). The recipient of that manifestation is awed by a sense of His majesty, His authority, His power, His holiness, His glory. Such a revelation of the Most High is overwhelming: he dare not trifle any longer with Him, for he now knows something of the being and character of the One with whom he has to do. In like manner, the Gospel becomes to him something very different from a merely external proclamation thereof by God's servants, namely, "the ministration of the spirit" (2Co 3:8) inwardly.

In the light of God, the soul sees things as they actually are. Hitherto, if he had not a false concept of them, it was but a notional acquaintance at best. But now he views himself, the present life, the hereafter, as *God* does, perceiving that all under the sun is but "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecc 1:14). When truth is applied by the Holy Spirit, its authority and spirituality are discerned, its power and pungency are felt, its savour and sweetness are tasted, its excellency and uniqueness are realized. When God is inwardly revealed to a person, he becomes better acquainted with Him in five minutes *this way*, than in a lifetime of reading books and hearing sermons about Him. It is not an acquired knowledge, but an infused one, obtained by no mental efforts, but is divinely imparted. As a very different image is begotten in the mind by actually seeing a person face to face, than by looking upon his portrait, so by the secret operations of the Spirit, a spiritual subsistence of God is wrought in the soul. Let the ablest artist paint a picture of the sun, let him use the brightest pigments and most brilliant colours, yet what a wan and insipid representation does he make in comparison to the shining and splendour of the sun itself! Glorious apprehensions of God and His Christ are conveyed and begotten in the renewed soul by the spirit. He has now "seen" the Son (Joh 6:40) for himself, has "heard" His voice (Joh 5:25), "handled" Him by faith (1Jo 1:1), "*tasted* that the Lord is gracious" (1Pe 2:3).

Second, it is a convincing and *certifying* knowledge. By this inward and gracious teaching of God, there is given to the heart such personal evidence of the wonders of wisdom and the riches of His grace as set forth in the Gospel, that he is fully persuaded of the same. A firm and unshakeable assurance of the verity of what is revealed in the written Word is conveyed to the soul, for the Spirit works an inward *experience* of the same in him, so that their reality and actuality is known and acknowledged. There is an ocular demonstration made to him by the light of the Word and the power of the Spirit revealing and applying them to the one born again, so that the teachings of the Scripture and the experiences of the believer, by

these means, answer to one another as do the figures in the wax and the engravings in the seal. As a Spirit-taught person reads the Bible, especially much in the Psalms or a chapter like Romans 7, he finds the workings of his heart are accurately portrayed there, and says, "That *is* exactly my case." Such an experience supplies far stronger proof than can either reason or sense, and though faith be occupied with things not seen by the eyes of the body and which are far above the reach of reason, yet it produces a conviction and certainty which is more conclusive and invincible than any logical demonstration.

The internal witness of the Spirit is much more potent and satisfying than all arguments grounded upon human reasoning. The natural man may be intellectually convinced that the Bible is the Word of God, and yet never have had an experiential sense of the spirituality of His Law and a heart conviction that he is a guilty transgressor of it. He may entertain no doubt whatever that the Lord Jesus is the only refuge from the wrath to come, and still be a complete stranger in his soul to His so-great salvation. A *spiritual assurance* that the Scriptures are divine can no more be obtained without the inward witness of the Spirit than can a spiritual understanding of their contents. It is an essential part of His distinctive work to produce a spiritual and supernatural faith in the hearts of God's elect, so that they receive the Word on the alone testimony of its Author. When that faith has been communicated, he can no more doubt again the integrity of the Scriptures than his own existence, for he now "know[s] the *certainty* of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luk 1:4). Such an assurance will cause him to cling to the truth and confess it, though there were not another person on earth who did so. He now values the Bible as his dearest earthly possession, and no matter how he might be tempted to do so, will steadfastly refuse to "sell" or part with the truth.

Third, it is an *affecting* knowledge. The notions possessed by the natural man, Scriptural though they be, exert no spiritual influence upon him and produce no godliness of character or conduct. They are inoperative, ineffectual, and inefficacious. He may perceive clearly that sin is hateful to God and harmful to himself—that if cherished and continued in, it will certainly damn him—yet his lusts dominate him. He may be well informed upon the excellence of holiness, and the necessity of possessing it if ever he is to enter heaven, yet self-love and self-interests turn the scale and prevent his seeking it wholeheartedly. A natural knowledge of spiritual things penetrates no deeper than the brain, neither influencing the heart nor moving the will. The empty professor may subscribe sincerely to the doctrine of man's total depravity, but it never moves him to cry from the depths of an anguished soul, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom 7:24). The doctrinal light which the unregenerate have is like that of the moon's: it quickens not, possesses no warmth, and produces no fruit. A merely theoretical knowledge of the Scriptures—however accurate or extensive it may be—leaves the heart dead, cold, and barren.

Radically different is that spiritual knowledge which God imparts to the renewed mind. It has a vitalizing, convincing, moving, and powerful effect upon the whole of the inner man. It conveys a real subsistence of divine things to the soul, so that the understanding discerns and knows them, the affections delight in and cleave to them, and the will is influenced and moved by the them. "Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee *to profit*" (Isa 48:17). He teaches so much of the evil of sin, as makes it the most bitter and burdensome thing in the world to us. He teaches us so much of our need for and the worth of Christ, as moves us to freely take His yoke upon us—which none do without they have been divinely tamed. Spiritual light is like that of the sun's, which not only illuminates, but warms and fructifies—and therefore is Christ designated, "the Sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2). All the real teaching of the Spirit has a powerful tendency to draw away from self unto Christ, to a fixation in and living upon Him, to find all our springs in Him, and to prove Him to be our everlasting strength.



GLORIOUS SINAI

“Now *therefore*, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exo 19:5-6). Weigh attentively that “therefore,” for it is a conclusion drawn from what is said in the previous verse, and shows that God was addressing His redeemed people as already standing in such a relation of nearness to Himself as secured for them an interest in His faithfulness and love. He appeals to the proofs which He had already given of this, as amply sufficient to remove all doubt from their minds, and to warrant them expecting whatever else might be needed to promote His glory and complete their happiness. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice”: it was not because they had been obedient that God had done such great things for them and unto them; but since He *had* done them, that they might now be sensible of their privilege and duty in henceforth rendering submission to Him, and by obeying, fulfil the high destiny to which He had called them.

There was nothing in the above declaration which in any wise conflicted with the LORD’s dealings with Abraham himself. After He had, in sovereign grace, effectually called him, and averred, “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen 15:1), He appeared unto him again and said, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1)—a word which was comprehensive of full subjection to Himself and of righteous behaviour on the patriarch’s part. Whatever there was new in *form* in that which was given at Sinai, there was nothing new in principle from what had been revealed long before—God has ever maintained His claims upon and required the fruits of holiness from the objects of His grace, and has dealt with them accordingly—ordering His providences in consonance with their conduct. “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; *that* [in order that] the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen 18:19). The patriarch must walk obediently, in conformity with God’s revealed will, if he was to receive the fulfilment of the divine promises!

When Jehovah confirmed His covenant to Abraham by oath, He expressly declared, “By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee...And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; *because* thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:16-18). It is true, blessedly true, that God dealt with Abraham in pure grace; but it is equally true that He dealt with him as a *responsible* creature, as subject to the divine authority. God has established an inseparable connection between holiness and happiness, between our pleasing Him and our enjoyment of His providential smile. So far is it from being the case that “the father [or prototype] of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11) was “never under law,” when the LORD renewed the covenant with Isaac, He distinctly affirmed, “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed [the original covenant promise]; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws (Gen 26:4-5)—such a piling up of terms renders misapprehension excuseless.

Equally clear is it from Scripture that the Hebrews themselves were under Law before they reached Sinai: “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee” (Exo 15:26). Is it not strange to find men who claim to be “Bible teachers” ignoring such plain passages! Should the quibble be raised that the reference there unto God’s “commandments” and “statutes” was *prospective* (i.e. anticipatory of the Law which was shortly to be given them), it is removed by a reference to “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in *my law*, or no” (Exo 16:4). The meaning of that is partly explained in “To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD” (Exo 16:23). Alas for their response: “That there went out some of the people on the seventh day for *to gather*” (verse 27). Mark carefully God’s complaint, “*How long* refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?” (verse 28). Thus the reference in Exodus 15:26 and 16:4 was retrospective.

It has been necessary to labour the point in order that decisive evidence should be produced to show that it is a flagrant error to assert God’s people were brought under the Law for the *first time* at Sinai. The Scriptures cited above make it abundantly clear that God introduced no change in His dealings with Abra-

ham's descendants when He said to them, "Now therefore, if ye will *obey* my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Exo 19:5). Let it also be carefully noted that the LORD did not now impose His Law upon the nation by mere sovereign authority, but instead proposed it as the basis of a covenant with them, as is evident from the hypothetical "if." A covenant is always a *mutual* contract, voluntarily entered into by two parties, and consists both of conditions or terms and promises or bestowments. The LORD was about to enter into a formal agreement with Israel, and He first made known the ground of the same: their being brought into intimate relation to Himself, then the terms thereof—their obedience to Him; then the advantage accruing to them—"ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me"; then its design—"ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exo 19:6).

Because the LORD had identified Himself so closely with Israel, it was but meet that they should now identify themselves with Him. Brought into near relationship and favoured communion with the Holy One, it was equitable that henceforth they should conduct themselves accordingly. As God's "peculiar treasure" (Exo 19:5), they owed it to Him to comport themselves *as* His separated people. If *He* was willing to enter into a covenant engagement with them, then surely *they* should respond thereto. Upon their so doing, He would make them "a kingdom of priests" (verse 6), vouchsafing communications of His will, and admitting them into His presence as accepted worshippers. They would hereby become "an holy nation" (verse 6), distinguished from all others as devoted to Jehovah's honour and service, and exemplifying the same unto the world around them. Moses accordingly summoned the responsible heads of the tribes and made known to them this gracious overture, and we are told, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (verse 8). Convinced of the benignity and propriety of such a proposal, they readily and unitedly signified their consent thereto.

Moses at once reported unto the LORD of Israel's willingness. And He, be it noted, no more regarded their promise of obedience as a carnal and presumptuous boast than He did Joshua's when he affirmed, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Jos 24:15). So far from being displeased, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever" (Exo 19:9)—that is, all room for thinking he might have imposed upon them, would be removed. When he first informed them of the LORD's appearing to him at the back side of the desert, and that He had looked upon their affliction, "the people believed" (Exo 4:29-31); but a little later, upon Pharaoh's increased severity, they murmured against Moses and Aaron; and when he announced that the LORD would redeem them with a stretched out arm and bring them into the land which He swore to give unto their fathers, "they hearkened not unto Moses" (Exo 6:9). But now they should *know* that the Law he would deliver unto them was indeed the LORD's, since they had heard with their own ears that which He spake unto them.

That "thick cloud" intimated they were not to pry into "secret things"; and since dreadful thunderings and lightnings issued from it continually, to command an awe-inspiring adoration of that which *was* "revealed" (Deu 29:29). The Voice speaking out of that cloud was, as said above, also designed to put honour upon Moses, to firmly establish him in the confidence of Israel as Jehovah's vicegerent, that henceforth they should believe his testimony and receive the commandments of God without question. "In like manner, the Holy Spirit descended visibly upon Christ at His baptism, and all that were present heard God speaking to Him (Mat 3:17), that afterward without the repetition of such visible tokens, they might believe Him. So likewise the Spirit descended in cloven tongues upon the apostles (Act 2:3) that they might be believed. Observe, when these had declared themselves willing to obey the voice of God, then God promised they should hear His voice; for if any man be resolved to do His will, he shall know: John 7:17"—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Our readiness to hear and heed the LORD's ministers is often rewarded by His speaking to us, in power, direct from His Word.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai" (Exo 19:10-11). Here again there is a double emphasis placed upon that to which we called attention in connection with the opening verse of this chapter: it was not only in the "third month," but on the third day of it that this glorious transaction took place—three being the number of *manifestation*, for it was here at Sinai that the person and perfections of Jehovah were so illustriously displayed (compare Deu 5:24). The demand for them to be sanctified was a call to turn aside from their ordinary activities, and devote the intervening time to self-examination, meditation, and prayer, that their hearts and minds might be prepared for a drawing nigh unto the Holy One. The washing of their

clothes was to teach them the LORD will only draw nigh unto those who are morally clean (see James 4:8)—it is sin which separates from God (Isa 59:2).

“And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it” (Exo 19:12). All of these instructions were duly carried out by Moses and the people. “And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly” (Exo 19:16-18). Everything was designed to fill them with reverence and godly fear as they assembled to meet with their mighty Redeemer and King. The visible tokens of His presence, His tremendous appearance before them, the terrifying phenomena, were the insignia of the dignity and honour of such an august Being. The manifestation of Jehovah’s glory and the splendour of His majesty demonstrated the loftiness and holiness of the One with whom they were here covenanting.

Turning now to Exodus 20, the first thing which requires to be attended to is that the One who promulgated the Law on this memorable occasion was none other than God the Son! This is made clear from Psalm 68. First, we are told there, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place” (verse 17): “When the Law was given, for Christ was there then...which Sinai is called the holy place from the presence of God there and the Law given from it”—John Gill (1697-1771). Then, in the next verse, we are enabled to definitely identify which of the Persons of the Godhead is there specifically in view: “*Thou* [the One just mentioned, ‘the Lord’] hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.” That very passage is quoted in Ephesians 4:7-13 and is expressly appropriated unto Christ Himself. There was a vast assembly of the angels congregated at Sinai, and Christ, the great “Angel” or “Messenger” (same word) of the covenant (see Exo 23:20; Isa 63:9; Mal 3:1) was at the head of and in the midst of them.

In the above passage, Christ is pictured as a mighty Prince and Conqueror, with a retinue of the celestial beings as His attendants, coming forth to take possession of His throne in Israel’s midst. How that added to the lustre of glorious Sinai on this unprecedented occasion is at once evident. Most blessed, too, was what it foreshadowed: “The glorious ascending of God from Sinai, after the giving of the Law, was a representation of His ascending up far above all heavens that He might fill all things; and as He then ‘led captivity captive’ in the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who had long held His people in captivity and cruel bondage, so dealt the Lord Christ in the destruction and captivity of Satan and all his forces (Col 2:15)”—John Owen (1616-1683). Christ, attended by the celestial hosts at Sinai, was designed to adumbrate the blessed fact that the holy angels are “all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) remarked on Psalm 68:17, “The Psalmist speaketh of Christ as the Mediator and King of His Church: no kingdom hath such defence, and such potent and numerous armies to fight their battles as the Church hath.”

Though no direct mention of this striking feature be made in Exodus, yet there are quite a few passages in Holy Writ which refer to the same. Thus, “The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints [holy ones]” (Deu 33:2). “Who have received the law by the disposition of *angels*” (Act 7:53). “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal 3:19). “For if the word spoken by *angels* [i.e. the Law] was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation”! (Heb 2:2-3), which is now proclaimed by the Gospel. Christ was the One in their midst and the Speaker of what was said on Sinai, as is further proved by Acts 7:37-38: “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me [Moses]; him shall ye hear. *This is he*, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him [Moses] in the mount *Sina* [or *Sinai*], and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.”

In the second place, let us attend closely to the particular aspects in which the divine Lawgiver presented Himself unto Israel on this occasion. This comes out clearly in His opening words to them. The “God spake all these words, saying,” of Exodus 20:1 is simply an introductory remark of the inspired historian; it is the next verse which records His initial declaration, namely, “I am the LORD thy God, which

have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” That personal announcement prefacing the Ten Commandments calls for our study and admiration. There God announced Himself in a threefold character. First, “I am Jehovah,” the self-existent and self-sufficient One, the Fountain of all being, and therefore having the incontestable right to command them, and all creatures. It was the great “I am” who addressed them, the eternal and immutable One—a representation infinitely elevated above all the concepts of idolatry and ancient philosophy. Second, He was *their* God in covenant with them, and that, with their own free consent. Jehovah had promised unto Abraham, “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, *to be a God unto thee*, and to thy seed after thee” (Gen 17:7; and see Exo 3:6; Heb 8:10). “He had laid Himself under obligation to them by promise, and therefore, He might justly lay His obligations upon them by precept”—M. Henry (1662-1714).

Third, God here presented Himself to them as their gracious *Redeemer*: “Which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt,” thereby pledging His faithfulness, love, and sufficiency to further deliver them from evil and bring them into His designed good. “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars [subdued] unto thee” (Deut 33:29). It also placed them under additional obligation to Him, for they were now bound by personal gratitude to serve and render obedience to Him. Redemption always confers a right unto the redeemer. In coming forth to them in such a character to declare the Law which was henceforth to bind their conscience and regulate their conduct both toward the LORD and one another, there was embodied the all-important and salutary principle that redemption carries in its bosom a conformity to the divine will, and that only when the soul is so conformed is the work of deliverance from bondage complete. Such, too, is the plain teaching of the New Testament: see 1 Corinthians 6:20.

Finally, “I am the LORD your God” (Exo 6:7) was addressed *singly* to each one in the camp of Israel. It was not “your” collectively, but “thy” individually, as though spoken directly to each one separately. Not only did that divine declaration point immediately to each one present at Sinai when the Law was delivered and the Covenant established, but it also looked forward to all succeeding generations, so that God said to each of Abraham’s posterity entering this world, “I am the LORD *thy* God” as truly as He did to those assembled at Horeb. Moreover, no sooner did one out of the nations join himself to the commonwealth of Israel, than the same was said to *him*, so that in this respect, a door of hope was opened unto the Gentiles.

