

The Spirit Regenerating

(From A.W. Pink's *Studies in the Scriptures*).

The absolute necessity for the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit in order to a sinner's being converted to God lies in his being totally depraved. Fallen man is without the least degree of right disposition or principles from which holy exercises may proceed; yea, he is completely under a contrary disposition: there is no right exercise of heart in him, but *every* motion of his will is corrupt and sinful. If this were not the case, there would be no need for him to be born again and made "a new creature." If the sinner were not wholly corrupt he would submit to Christ without any supernatural operation of the Spirit; but fallen man is so completely sunk in corruption that he has not the faintest real desire for God, but is filled with enmity against Him (Rom. 8:7). Therefore does Scripture affirm him to be "*dead* in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13). The latter verse expounds the former. There an explanation is given as to why any fallen descendant of Adam ever spiritually receives Christ as his Lord and Master, and savingly believes on His name.

First, it is not because grace runs in the blood—as the Jews supposed. Holiness is not transmitted from father to son. The child of the most pious parents is by nature equally as corrupt and is as far from God as is the offspring of infidels. Second, it is not because of any natural willingness—as Arminians contend: "nor of the will of the flesh" refers to man in his natural and corrupt state. He is not regenerated by any instinct, choice, or exertion of his own; he does not by any personal endeavour contribute anything towards being born again; nor does he cooperate in the least degree with the efficient cause; instead, every inclination of his heart, every exercise of his will, is in direct opposition thereto.

Third, the new birth is not brought about by the power and influence of others. No sinner is ever born again as the result of persuasions and endeavours of preachers or Christian workers. However pious and wise they are, and however earnestly and strenuously they exert themselves to bring others to holiness, they do in no degree produce the effect. "If all the angels and saints in heaven and all the godly on earth should join their wills and endeavours and unitedly exert all their powers to regenerate one sinner, they could not effect it; yea, they could do nothing toward it. It is an effect *infinitely* beyond the reach of finite wisdom and power: 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7" (S. Hopkins).

"You may listen to the preacher
God's own truth be clearly shown,
But you need a greater teacher
From the everlasting throne;
Application is the work of God alone."

In regeneration one of God's elect is the subject, and the Spirit of God is the sole agent. The subject of the new birth is wholly passive: he does not act, but is acted upon. The sovereign work of the Spirit in the soul precedes *all* holy exercises of heart—such as sorrow for sin, faith in Christ, love toward God. This great change is wrought in spite of all the opposition of the natural heart against God: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). This great change is not a gradual and protracted process, but is *instantaneous*: in an instant of time the favoured subject of it passes from death unto life.

In regeneration the Spirit imparts a real, new, and immortal life; a life not such as that which was inherited from the first Adam, who was "a living soul," but such as is derived from the last Adam, who is "a quickening Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). This new creation, though as real as the first, is widely different from it; that was an original or primary creation in the dust of the earth becoming man by the word of God's power; this is the regeneration of an actual and existing man—fallen and depraved, yet rational and accountable—into an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ. The outcome is a "new man," yet it is the same person, only "renewed."

“Regeneration consists in a new, spiritual, supernatural, vital principle, or habit of grace infused into the soul, the mind, the will, and affections, by the power of the Holy Spirit, disposing and enabling them in whom it is, unto spiritual, supernatural, vital actings and spiritual obedience” (John Owen). No new faculties are created, but instead, the powers of the soul are spiritualized and made alive unto God, fitted to enjoy God and hold communion with Him. Regeneration consists in a radical change of heart, for there is implanted a new disposition as the foundation of all holy exercises; the mind being renovated, the affections elevated, and the will emancipated from the bondage of sin. The effect of this is that the one who is born again loves spiritual things *as spiritual*, and values spiritual blessings on account of their being purely spiritual.

In view of a certain school of teaching upon “the two *natures* in the believer,” some readers may experience difficulty over our statement above that at regeneration no new faculties are created, the soul remaining, substantially, the same as it was before. No, not even in the glorified state will any addition be made to the human constitution, though its faculties will then be completely unfettered and further enlarged and elevated. Perhaps this thought will be the more easily grasped if we illustrate it by a striking case recorded in 2 Kings 6:17, “Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

No new faculties were communicated unto Elisha’s servant, but the powers of his visive organ were so enlarged that he was now able to discern objects which before were invisible to him. So it is with our understandings at regeneration: the mind (abstractly considered) is the same in the unregenerate as in the regenerate, but in the case of the latter, the Spirit has so quickened it that it is now able to take in spiritual objects and act toward them. This new spiritual visive power with which the understanding is endowed at the new birth is a *quality*, super-added to the original faculties. As this is a point of importance, yet one which some find it difficult to grasp, we will proceed to dwell upon it a moment longer.

The bodily eye of the saint after resurrection will be elevated to see angels (which are now invisible), and therefore may be rightly termed a *new* eye, yea, a spiritual eye—even as the whole body will be a “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44)—yet that change will be but the super induction of new spiritual qualities for the eye (and the whole body) unto spiritual objects. In like manner, the entire being of one who is born again is so spiritualized or endued with “spirit” (John 3:6) as to be styled a “new man,” a “spiritual” man; nevertheless, it is but the original man “renewed,” and not the creating of a new being.

After regeneration things appear in an altogether new light, and the heart exercises itself after quite a new manner. God is now seen as the sum of all excellency. The reasonableness and spirituality of His Law is so perceived that the heart approves of it. The infinite evil of sin is discerned. The one born again, judges, condemns, and loathes himself, and wonders that he was not long ago cast into Hell. He marvels at the grace of God in giving Christ to die for such a wretch. Constrained by the love of Christ, he now renounces the ways of sin and gives himself up to serve God. Hereby we may discover *what it is* which persons are to inquire after in order to determine whether they have been born again, namely, by the exercises of their hearts, and the influences and effects these have upon their conduct.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

75. *The Faith of Israel: 11:29.*

The Apostle's object in this 11th chapter of Hebrews is to show the power of real faith in God to produce supernatural acts, to overcome difficulties which are insuperable to mere nature, and to endure trials which are too much for flesh and blood to bear up under. Various examples have been adduced in illustration. A further notable one is now before us. In it we see how faith enabled Israel to fearlessly venture themselves to enter a strangely formed valley between two mountainous ridges of water, and to reach in safety the opposite shore. In like manner, a real faith in God will enable the Christian to pass through trials and troubles which destroy multitudes of his fellow-creatures, and which will in due time conduct him into the enjoyment of perfect bliss.

The force of the above example is greatly heightened by a striking and most solemn contrast. The power of faith in enabling Israel to safely cross the Red Sea is demonstrated by the helpless and hopeless destruction of the Egyptians, who sought to follow them. "The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen" (Exo. 14:23). But they had no faith. They were moved by passion, by hatred of the Hebrews. It was night when the army of God undertook their strange journey, yet though dark, the hosts of Pharaoh presumptuously and blindly followed. But now had arrived the hour when the long-insulted Divine forbearance was to be avenged.

"And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians" (Exo. 14:24, 25). But it was too late. The haughty monarch of Egypt and his powerful retinue now discovered how vain it was to fling themselves against the bosses of Jehovah's buckler: that which had been a channel of deliverance to the believing Israelites, became the grave of their enemies. Thereby are we shown that all attempts of unbelievers to obtain what faith secures is utterly futile, and doomed to certain disappointment.

But here a difficulty presents itself, and a formidable one it has proved unto most of those who sought to grapple with it. In our text we are told that, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea," whereas in Hebrews 3:18, 19 it is said, "To whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Was, then, their faith only a temporary one, like that of the stony-ground hearers? No, for the "faith" mentioned in every other verse in Hebrews 11 was a saving one, and we dare not arbitrarily assume this in verse 29 was an altogether different one.

The solution of our present difficulty lies in attentively noting the pronoun which the Holy Spirit has here employed: "By faith *they* passed through the Red Sea." It is not there said that "By faith the children of Israel" did so, for it is very evident from their later history that the vast majority of them were "a very forward generation, children in whom is *no* faith" (Deut. 32:29). The reference, then, in our text is unto Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, and the believing remnant among the Hebrews. But, it may be asked, Did not the unbelieving portion of the Nation also pass safely through the Red Sea? Truly, and therein we have an illustration of the fact that unbelievers are frequently made partakers of temporal blessings as the result of their association with the people of God. Another example of this principle is found in Acts 27:24, where we see that an entire ship's company were spared for Paul's sake.

"By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned" (11:29). In seeking to expound this verse we cannot do better than adopt the division of the Puritan Manton thereon, considering it three ways: historically, sacramentally, and applicatively. First, then, historically.

Our text takes us back to what is recorded in Exodus 14. There we learn that when at last Pharaoh consented to let the Hebrews go, he soon repented of his grant, and being informed by his spies that the Israelites were entangled in the straits of Pihahiroth, he determined to pursue, and either recover or destroy them. At the head of a great military force he swiftly went after them. The consequence was that "When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exo. 14:10-12).

A truly desperate situation now faced Moses and the company he was leading. "Shut in, between the great fortress 'Migdol,' which was on the 'Shur' or wall (built to protect Egypt from Asia), and the sea, with Pharaoh's host behind them, and shut in on the other side by the wilderness: Exodus 14:2, 3. It was indeed a crisis" (E.W.B.). What could the poor Israelites do? Fight they dare not, being a multitude of undisciplined people, of all sexes and ages, and pursued by a regular and powerful army of enemies. Flee they could not, for they were completely hemmed in on every side. To all outward appearances their case seemed hopeless; and to human reason, nothing but sore destruction might be expected.

The situation which confronted Israel *was* a hopeless one so far as *they* were concerned, and had not the Lord shown Himself strong on their behalf, they had undoubtedly perished. But, "if God be *for* us, who can be against us?" Ah, my reader, that is the great thing for each of us to make sure of, and when we have done so, to seek grace to rest with unshaken confidence upon it. Has not God promised, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee" (Isa. 43:2)! What better assurance than that can the believing heart ask for? No matter how deep and wide-stretching, no matter how dark and foreboding the "waters" of adverse circumstances may be unto sight and sense, has not He who cannot lie declared, "They *shall not* overflow thee"!

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exo. 14:13). Undeterred by the chiding of the people, and wisely making no reply thereto, Moses turned their minds away from the outward danger and directed their thoughts unto Jehovah. They had "lifted up their eyes" and beheld the Egyptians (v.10), and in consequence they were sore afraid; but there was something else for *faith* to "see," namely, "the salvation (or deliverance) of the LORD," which was not yet visible to natural sight. If they were steadfastly occupied with *that* their trembling hearts would be stilled.

Admire, dear reader, the confident assurance which Divine grace wrought in the heart of Moses, for by nature he was a frail man of like passions and infirmities as we. But there was no wavering or doubting on his part: "see the salvation of the LORD, which He *will* show to you to day": that was the language of faith—of a supernatural, God-given faith. Moses was not engaged with the difficulties and dangers of the trying situation which confronted them; instead, he was occupied with One before whom all difficulties disappear like mists before the rising sun. "The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (v. 14). Once the soul is able to rest on that fact, doubtings end and alarms are silenced.

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Faith must have a foundation to stand upon, and the only firm and sure one is the promise of the living God. "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you to day... The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" afforded the necessary ground for the faith of each believing Hebrew to rest upon. The eye of faith must see that Divine "salvation" or deliverance, before the eye of sense beholds it: only the sure word of God could give strength to their hearts to advance into the ocean before them. When the promise had been "heard," and not before, then came the order "Go forward."

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea” (Exo. 14:15, 16). Thus we learn that the heart of Moses was engaged in silent supplication at this time. The Lord’s statement here is not to be understood as a rebuke. No, Moses was waiting the word of command, and until it was given, he stayed himself from the Lord. “And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left” (v. 22).

“When Moses gave the signal by his rod, the sea miraculously retreated, standing up like heaps of congealed ice on either side while they passed through. This is done, and they go on safely; the sea flanked them on both sides; the rear was secured by the cloudy and fiery pillar interposing between them and Pharaoh’s army, till such a time as all were out of danger, and safely arrived at the further shore; and so neither man nor child was hurt. The Egyptians followed the chase, as malice is perverse and blind, and those whom God designeth to destruction take the ready course to bring it upon their own heads; for at the signal again of Moses stretching forth his rod, the returning waters swallowed them all up in a moment” (T. Manton).

“A greater instance, with respect unto the work of Divine providence, of the power of faith on the one hand, and of unbelief with obdurate presumption on the other, there is not on record in the whole book of God. Here we have the end and issue of the long controversy that was between these two people, the Egyptians and the Israelites; a certain type and evidence of what will be the last end of the contest between the world and the church. Their long conflict shall end in the complete salvation of the one, and the utter destruction of the other” (John Owen).

Though it was night, the Divine pillar of cloud “gave light” unto Israel (Exo. 14:20). Dreadful indeed must have appeared those walls of water, for the sea would be raised unto a very great height on either side of them. It called for no ordinary faith to put themselves between such walls, as were ready in their own nature to fall on them unto their destruction any moment, abiding upright only under an invisible restraint. But they had the command of God for their warrant and the promise of God for their security, and these, when laid hold of, are sufficient to overcome all fears and dangers. That Moses himself, to guide and encourage them (and as the type of Christ) took the lead, is clear from Isaiah 63:11-12, God “led them by the right hand of Moses” through the sea.

Let us now briefly consider the remarkable incident related in our text from a *sacramental* viewpoint. In 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2 we are told, “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” From this Scripture we learn that Israel’s passage through the Red Sea had the same signification that Christian baptism now has. The points of resemblance are many, and were developed at length by Manton, and more so by Gouge, from whom we here give a digest.

1. The ministry of Moses was confirmed by this miracle, so that the Israelites were obliged to take him for their leader and lawgiver: so the miracles wrought by Christ assure us that He was sent by God as our lawgiver, which we must hear and obey. 2. Israel’s experience is (figuratively) denominated a “baptism” because it signified the difference which God puts between His people and His enemies: the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians was sealed by their passage through the Red Sea. Similarly baptism is said to be an answering figure to the ark of Noah (1 Peter 3:20, 21): as those in the ark were exempted from the deluge, so those in Christ are exempted from the deluge of wrath which will yet overwhelm the world.

3. They were baptised “in the cloud and in the sea,” because by submitting to God’s command they gave up themselves to His direction: so in baptism we dedicate ourselves unto Christ, avowing Him to be our Lord and Master. 4. The passing through the Red Sea and baptism had both the same outward sign, which is water (Matt. 3:6). 5. They had like rites, which were entering into the water and coming out of it (Acts 8:38, 39). 6. They had both the same ground, which was God’s command and promise (Exo. 14:13, 16 and Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:16). 7. They were both for the same people, namely, the children of God (Matt. 28:19). 8. They were but once administered (Eph. 4:5).

Let us now consider some of the *practical* lessons which this marvelous incident is designed to teach us. 1. The children of God are sometimes called on *to face great trials*: a Red Sea of difficulty and trouble confronts them. Let it be duly observed that it was not an enemy who put the sea there, but God Himself! This tells us that the Red Sea represents some great and trying providence which the Lord places in the path of each newborn Christian: it is in order to try his faith and test the sincerity of his trust in God. Often this trial is encountered soon after conversion. Sometimes it arises from opposition of ungodly members of our own family. Or, you are engaged in some business—perhaps requiring you to work on the Sabbath day—in which you cannot now conscientiously continue. It means renouncing your means of livelihood, and you cannot see how it can be done and provide things honest in the sight of all men. As you emerged from the bondage of Egypt you thought it would be easy to surrender everything to God, but now a Red Sea of testing is before you, and it appears unfordable.

2. The children of God are sometimes *terrified by powerful enemies*. The Egyptian who pursued Israel up to the Red Sea may be spiritualized to represent those sins of the Christians from which he expected to be completely delivered. For a little while after conversion sin does not much trouble the newly-regenerated saint: he is filled with joy and praise at the great things which the Lord has done for him. But it is not long before he discovers with the Apostle “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:23). Satan now pursues the young saint, and often it seems as though all the powers of hell were let loose against him. At such a time our sins appear more formidable to us than before they were forgiven: in Egypt our taskmasters only appeared with their whips, but now they are mounted and in chariots! Ah, after conversion sin looks far more frightful to the saint than ever it did before, and we feel the plague of our heart much more acutely.

3. The people of God are often *troubled with faint hearts*. When the children of Israel saw the Egyptians they were sore afraid, and when they beheld the Red Sea they murmured against their deliverer. A faint heart is the worst foe a Christian has here; when the anchor of faith is fixed deep in the Rock, he need never fear the storm; but when the hand of faith is palsied, or the eye of faith be dim, it will go hard with us. When faith is dormant the most insignificant stream will make us quiver and cry I shall be drowned in the flood; but when faith is dominant he fears not an ocean of difficulty or danger. The babe in Christ has but little faith, for he has but little experience: he has not yet proved God’s promises and knows not His faithfulness. But as he grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, and becomes established in the faith, he will not despair before Red Seas and Egyptians; but meanwhile, he often trembles and asks, “How shall I ever find deliverance?”

4. The people of God are here instructed *how to act under great trials*. The first word which the Israelites received in the hour of their great emergency was, “Fear ye not, stand still”; the second was “And see the salvation (deliverance) of the LORD, which he will show to you to day”; the third was, “Go forward” (Exo. 14:13, 15). It is of first importance that we should diligently attend to the Divine order of those three things: we are not equipped and ready to “Go forward” until we have “seen” (by faith) the “salvation of the LORD,” and that cannot be properly seen until our fears are calmed and we stand still; or, in other words, till we turn from all self-help and cease from all the feverish activities of the flesh.

The continuous call of God to the Christian is “Go forward”: persevering steadfastly along the path of duty, walking in that narrow way which the Divine commands and precepts have laid down for us. No matter what obstacles may confront you, no matter what your circumstances may be, no matter what Red Sea of difficulty or danger be before you, “Go forward” is God’s authoritative word to you. “Ah, but often that is far from being an easy thing to do!” Quite true, dear friend; yea, we will state it still more strongly: it is often *impossible* to mere nature. What, then, is to be done when the heart faints, when the soul is well-nigh overwhelmed by the greatness of the difficulty or danger, standing right in your path? Two things; first “Stand still.” Your own efforts to better matters have brought no relief, your own wisdom can devise no solutions; very well, then “stand still”: cease from all attempts at self-help.

“But,” you answer, “I have my responsibilities to discharge, my duties to perform.” Quite true: but admittedly you have now reached the place where a Red Sea is before you; you are dismayed and know not which way to turn. Here, then, is God’s word to you in this dire emergency: “Stand still.” This means, Get down on your knees, and cry unto the Lord: tell Him all about your trouble, unburden yourself freely and fully unto Him; spread your urgent need before Him. Probably, you answer, “I have done so, and thus far no way through my Red Sea has appeared before me.” Then you are now ready for His next word.

“And see the salvation (deliverance) of the LORD, which He *will* show you.” And what does that mean? This, *the exercise of faith* in the living God, the trusting in Him *to undertake* for you, the confident expectation He *will do so*. Cry unto the Holy Spirit to work this faith in you: remain on your knees until He has given you real assurance that your Father *will* show Himself strong on your behalf; wait before Him till one of His promises is applied to your heart in power. *Then* you are ready to “Go forward,” to resume your duties and discharge your responsibilities: to look for work, to go on with renewed strength. That Christian is only ready to “Go forward” when faith has *seen* that which is invisible to sight and sense, namely, the “salvation (deliverance) of the LORD” *before* it is actually wrought for us!

The way in which the Christian is required to walk as he journeys through this world on his way to Heaven is *the path of obedience* to God’s commands. Naught but a spiritual faith inclines the heart to comply with God’s demands, and upon compliance to expect the mercy promised:

“LORD, I have hoped for Thy salvation, and done Thy commandments” (Psa. 119:166). This is the great business of faith: as the Israelites were to obey God, and to wait for His deliverance out of their imminent danger. Naught but a God-given faith imparts courage to obey God in the most difficult crisis. If we be bidden to go into the Red Sea we must not forbear, for none of God’s commands are to be disputed, however contrary they be to flesh and blood. Faith teaches us to depend upon God in the greatest extremities. Faith receives the promise of God upon the condition or terms which He has specified. If Israel were to receive the “salvation of the LORD,” they *must* do what He bade. Faith and obedience can no more be separated than can light and heat in the sun.

As Abraham, at the call of God, went out of Chaldea, “not knowing whither he went,” so Israel was required to “Go forward” through the Red Sea stretched before them. Probably it was not until their feet touched the brink that the waters divided. Nature might have gone over it, but *faith* passed safely “through” it! They feared they would be destroyed by Pharaoh’s hosts. The very last thing that they would have looked to as a means of escape would be the sea! Yet, in obedience to the Divine command, “The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left” (Exo. 14:22). Learn, then, dear reader, we never lose by obeying God.

“By faith they passed through the Red Sea” (Heb. 11:29). True faith lifts a man above himself, puts into him a spirit which is more than human, and enables him to rise above the obstacles of reason and sense. Faith emboldened the hitherto trembling Israelites to venture through that strange chasm between the watery walls. “As by dry land” is added to magnify the Divine providence in making a path in the ocean’s bottom fit for women and children to tread upon—like a plain and beaten highway. By faith they “passed through”: they took not only a few steps, but continued to perseveringly march mile after mile and hour after hour. Hesitate not, my brethren, to venture upon anything which God calleth you unto; be assured that He will safely carry you through all difficulties and dangers. “Which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned”: the very means of Israel’s deliverance was their destruction: *see* 2 Corinthians 2:16! It was a just retribution for the slaying of the male Hebrew children in the waters (Exo. 1:22).

5. The people of God may *be assured of the Divine providence*. When Israel “by faith,” obeyed the Divine command to “Go forward,” God wrought a miracle and delivered them from their dire situation. This is recorded for the encouragement of *our* hearts. It was God who had placed the Red Sea where it was, and it was God who opened the way for Israel through it. So, Christian reader, it is God (and *not* the Devil) who has brought about the problem, the emergency, the danger which now confronts you; for “*of Him... are all things*” (Rom. 11:36). As He has made thy Red Sea, only He can cleave a way through it for you. Trust, then, in His unerring wisdom. Count upon His mighty power working on your behalf. “Stand still” and rest yourself upon God. View “by faith” anticipatively, expectantly, His “salvation” or deliverance. “Go forward” in obedience to His commands, and He will show Himself strong on thy behalf. *He* never fails those who fully trust and unreservedly obey Him.—A.W.P.

The Life of David

27. *His Pursuit of the Amalekites.*

We are now to be engaged with *the blessed sequel* to David's putting matters right between his soul and God, and his encouraging himself in the Lord. At the close of the preceding article we saw that the first result of his returning to God was that he summoned the high priest with his ephod, and "inquired of the Lord" whether or not he should pursue after those who had burned Ziklag and carried away his wives captive. This exemplifies a principle which is ever operative when there has been a true reformation of heart: our own wisdom and strength are disowned, and Divine help and guidance are earnestly sought. Herein are we able to check up the state of our souls and discover whether or not we are really walking with the Lord. Backsliding and a spirit of independence ever go together; contrariwise, communion with God and dependence upon Him are never separated.

As we pointed out in our last article on David, the Mosaic law required that Israel's ruler should stand before the priest, who would ask counsel for him as to whether he should go out or no (Num. 27:21). In like manner, the saint today is bidden to "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psa. 37:5). No step in life should be taken, be it great or small, without first waiting upon God for direction: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). To seek not wisdom from above is to act in self-sufficiency and self-will; to honestly and earnestly apply for that wisdom betokens a heart in subjection to God, desirous of doing that which is pleasing to Him.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him": if this be faithfully done, then we may be fully assured that "and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6). The serious trouble into which David fell when he sought refuge in the land of Gath had arisen immediately from failure *to enquire of the Lord*; but now he consulted Him through the high priest: "Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them?" (1 Sam. 30:8). Blessed indeed is this. Would that we might learn to imitate him, for our fleshly efforts to undo the consequences of our unbelief and folly only cause us to continue going on in the same path which brought God's chastening upon us; and this is certain to end in further disappointment. "Be still, and know that I am God" is the word we need to heed at such a time: to unsparingly judge ourselves, and suffer the hand that has smitten to now lead in *His* path, is the only way to recovery. Only then do we give evidence that disappointment and sorrow have been *blest* to our souls.

Unspeakably precious is it to note the Lord's response to David's inquiry: "And He answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all" (1 Sam. 30:8). "See the goodness and perfectness of the grace of God. There was no delay in this answer—no reserve—no ambiguity; more even was told than David had asked. He was told not only that he might pursue, but that he should surely recover all. In a moment the black cloud of sorrow, that had hung so darkly over David's soul, was gone: agony gave place to joy: and he whom his companions had been dooming to death, stood suddenly before them as the honoured servant of the Lord his God, commissioned to pursue and to conquer. He did pursue, and all was as God had said" (B.W. Newton).

"So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him" (1 Sam. 30:9). The force of this can only be perceived and appreciated by recalling what was before us in verse 6: "David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him"! What a change we behold now! The enmity of his men has been stilled, and they are again ready to follow their leader. Herein we see the third consequence of David's spiritual return and encouraging himself in the Lord. First, he had submitted to the Divine order, and sought guidance from God. Second, he had promptly received a gracious response, the Lord granting the assurance he so much desired. And now the power of God fell upon the hearts of his men, entirely subduing their mutiny, and making them willing, weary and worn as they were, to follow David in a hurried march after the Amalekites. O how much do we lose, dear reader, when we fail to right matters with God!

“So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him.” Here is David’s response to the word he had received from God through the high priest. Without taking rest or refreshment, he at once set out in pursuit of the ravagers. Tired and weak as he well might be, David was now nerved to fresh endeavours. Ah, is it not written, “They that wait upon the LORD shall *renew their strength*; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:31). So it ever is. If we truly desire spiritual guidance of the Lord, and humbly and trustfully seek it from Him, our inner man will be renewed, and we shall be empowered to follow the path of His ordering.

“And came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed” (v. 9). This teaches us that when we *are* in the current of the revealed will of God, all will not, necessarily, be plain sailing. We must be prepared to meet with difficulties and obstacles even in the path of obedience. It was *by faith* in the word that he had received from Jehovah that David turned from the ruins of Ziklag, and faith must be *tested*. A severe trial now confronted David: fatigued from their former journey and their spirits further depressed by the sad scene they had gazed upon, many of his men, though willing, were unable to proceed farther; and he left no less than two hundred behind at the brook Besor.

“But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor” (v. 10). Considerate of the state of his men, David would not drive or force those who were faint to accompany him. Further proof was this that our hero was now again in communion with God, for “*He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust*” (Psa. 103:14)—alas, how often do those who profess His name seem to forget this. But though his company was now reduced by one third, and, as verse 17 plainly intimates, was far inferior to the forces of the Amalekites, yet David relied implicitly on the Word of the Lord, and continued to push forward.

“And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom belondest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire. And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company” (vv. 11-15). We shall consider these verses from two angles: as they add to what has been before us above; as they contain a lovely Gospel picture.

In the verses just quoted we may perceive the seventh consequence which followed David’s righting things with God. First, he encouraged himself in the Lord: verse 6. Second, he submitted to the Divine order and sought guidance from God: verses 7, 8. Third, he obtained light for his path and assurance of God’s help: verse 8. Fourth, the power of God fell upon the hearts of his men, subduing their mutiny (v. 6) and making them willing to follow him on a difficult and daring enterprise: verse 9. Fifth, the renewing of David’s strength, so that he was able to start out on a forced and swift march: verse 9. Sixth, grace granted him to overcome a sore trial of faith: verse 10. And now we are to observe how the Lord showed himself strong on their behalf by ordering His providence to work in David’s favour. Such are some of the Divine mercies which we may confidently expect when the channel of blessing between our souls and God is no longer choked by unjudged and unconfessed sins.

A most remarkable intervention of Divine providence is here before us. David was pursuing the Amalekites, and from this incident we gather that he knew not in which direction they had gone, nor how far ahead they were. God did not work a miracle for them, but by natural means provided him with a needed guide. The men of David came across one in a field, who was sick and famished. He turned out to be an Egyptian slave, whom his master had barbarously abandoned. Upon being brought to David, he furnished full particulars, and after receiving assurance that his life should be spared, agreed to conduct David and his men to the place where the Amalekites were encamped. Let us admire the various details in this wondrous secret provision which God now made for David, and the combined factors which entered into it.

First, stand in awe of the high sovereignty of God which suffered this Egyptian slave to fall sick: verse 13. Second, in permitting his master to act so inhumanely, by leaving him to perish by the wayside: verse 13. Third, in moving David's men to spare his life (v. 11), when they had every reason to believe he had taken part in the burning of Ziklag. Fourth, in the fact that he was himself an Egyptian and not an Amalekite (v. 11)—had he been the latter, they were bound to kill him: Deuteronomy 25:19. Fifth, in moving David to show him kindness: verse 11. Sixth, in causing the food given to so quickly revive him: verse 12. Seventh, in inclining him to freely answer David's inquiries and be willing to lead him to the camp of the Amalekites. Each of these seven factors had to combine, or the result had never been reached: God made "all things *work together*" for David's good. So He does for us: His providences, day by day, work just as wondrously on our behalf.

Approaching these verses (11-15) now from another angle, let us see portrayed in them a beautiful type of a lost sinner being saved by Christ. There are so many distinct lines in this lovely Gospel picture that we can here do little more than point out each one separately. 1. *His citizenship*: "And they found an Egyptian in the field" (v. 11). In Scripture Egypt is a symbol of the world: the moral world to which the unregenerate belong and in which they seek their satisfaction. As another has said, "It had its beginning in Cain's day, when he 'went out from the presence of the Lord,' and he and his descendants builded cities, sought out witty inventions of brass and iron, manufactured musical instruments, and went in for a good time generally, in forgetfulness of God. And that continues to this day. The land of Egypt figures this. There Pharaoh, type of Satan, ruled and tyrannized."

2. *His woeful condition*: "I fell sick" (v. 13). Such is the state of every descendant of fallen Adam. An awful disease is at work in the unregenerate: that disease is *sin*, and "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). It is sin which has robbed the soul of its original beauty: darkening the understanding, corrupting the heart, perverting the will, and paralyzing all our faculties so far as their exercise Godward is concerned. But not only was this Egyptian desperately sick, he was *starving*: he had had nothing to eat or drink for three days. Well might he cry, "I perish with hunger" (Luke 15:17).

3. *His sad plight*: "my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick" (v. 13). He was a slave, and now that his master thought he would be of no further use to him, he heartlessly abandoned him and left him to perish. "And that is the way the devil treats his servants. He uses them as his tools as long as he can. Then, when he cannot use them any more, he leaves them to their folly. Thus he treated Judas, and hosts of others before and since" (C. Knapp).

4. *His deliverance*: "And brought him to David" (v. 11). No doubt he was too weak and ill to come of himself; and even had he the ability, he had never used it thus, for David was an utter stranger to him! Thus it is with the unregenerate sinner and that blessed One whom David foreshadowed. Therefore did Christ say, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6:44). Each of God's elect is "brought" to Christ by the Holy Spirit.

5. *His deliverer*. No doubt this half-dead Egyptian presented a woe-begone spectacle, as he was led or carried into the presence of the man after God's own heart. But his very ruin and wretchedness drew out the compassion of David toward him. Thus it is with the Saviour: no matter what ravages sin has wrought, nor how morally repulsive it has made its victim, Christ never refuses to receive and befriend one whom the Father draws to Him.

6. *His entertainment*: “And gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins” (vv. 11, 12). Precious line in our picture is this of the Divine grace which is stored up in Christ. None brought to Him by the Spirit are ever sent empty away. How this reminds us of the royal welcome which the Prodigal received and the rich fare that was set before him.

7. *His confession*. When David asked him to whom he belonged and whence he came, he gave an honest and straight-forward reply: “He said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite” (v. 13). Strikingly did this adumbrate the fact that when an elect sinner has been brought to Christ, and been given the bread and water of life, he takes his proper place, and candidly acknowledges what he was and is by nature. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us” (1 John 1:9).

8. *His obligation*: “And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company?” (v. 15). In this way we may see how David pressed his claims upon the one whom he had befriended, though it is blessed to mark that it was more in the form of an appeal than a direct command. In like manner, the word to the converted is, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

9. *His desire for assurance*: “And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company” (v. 15). There could be no joy in the service of his new master until assured that he should not be returned unto the power of his old one. Blessed is it to know that Christ delivers His people not only from the wrath to come, but also from the dominion of sin.

10. *His gratitude*: “And when he had brought him down” (v. 16). He was now devoted to the interests of David, and did as he requested. So Christians are told, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*” (Eph. 2:10). O for grace to serve Christ as ardently as we did sin and Satan in our unregenerate days.—A.W.P.

Dispensationalism

8. *The Law of God.*

The moral law is the eternal rule of righteousness which God has given to men, requiring them to love Him with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves. In the very nature of the case, such a law can neither be repealed nor modified. The grand reason why the great Governor of the world gave such a law *was because it was infinitely fit we should* love Him with all our hearts; nothing less was due Him. For us to suppose that God should ever annul or alter this law when the grounds and reasons of His first making it remain as forcible as ever, when what it requires is as right as ever, and when it becomes Him as the moral Ruler of His creatures to require it from them as much as ever;—to suppose such a thing constitutes the highest reproach upon all God’s moral perfections. It would suppose Him releasing His creatures from doing right, and giving them license to do wrong. So far from man being benefited by having such a law abrogated or altered, it would be one of the greatest and sorest calamities that could happen.

How sad it is, then, to think that the mind of fallen man is enmity against the Law-Giver! And how humbling when the Christian realizes that there is still within him that which is opposed to such a holy, such a righteousness, such a spiritual law! And why is it that fallen man hates the law? Because it *condemns* him. But let the Christian place the blame where it truly belongs: within and not without. The law condemns none whose heart and life is in conformity with it. *Sin is the cause* of the condemnation. We have none but ourselves to blame when the holy law denounces our wrong-doing. Instead of looking askance at the law, the Christian should eye it with profound gratitude, for it is the very instrument which the Holy Spirit uses to convince him of his self-will and self-love, for “*by the law is the knowledge of sin*” (Rom. 3:20).

How sad and serious, then, is the error that Christ came here in order to make an end of the law. Instead, it was foretold centuries beforehand “He will *magnify* the law, and make it honourable” (Isa 42:21). To suppose that the Son of God became incarnate, suffered and died in order that the law might be repealed, would be to suppose that He had become the enemy of God—to His holiness and justice, His claims and His government—and that He had gone over to the side of His Father’s rebellious subjects. The law was, indeed, in the way of the sinner’s salvation, and *this* was the ground of the *necessity* for His incarnation, obedience and death. Yet that was so far from being designed to set the law aside, it was for the express purpose of fulfilling it: it was to obey its precepts and endure its penalty on the behalf of His people, so that the law was as much honoured as though His people had themselves obeyed it, or suffered its curse.

So far from the law having been repealed every Christless sinner is as much under the law today—as much under its demands, its condemnation and curse for his failure to meet those demands—as if Christ had never come into the world, and there were no Mediator between God and men. He who believes not in and surrenders to the lordship of Christ, he who is not united to Him by the Spirit so that His merits and righteousness (which consist in what He did and suffered to maintain and honour the law) is properly imputed to his account, is under the condemnation and wrath of God (i.e., the curse of His Law) as much as if there had been no Saviour. In proof of this we ask the reader to carefully ponder John 3:18-20, 36; Romans 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

So far from the Christian being released from the requirements of the law, he is as much under the law *as a rule* as he ever was, and under as great obligations to a perfect conformity unto it in heart and life, as the non-Christian is. And everything in him or of him which comes short of perfect holiness, or full obedience to the law—considered in its utmost spirituality and strictness—is perfectly inexcusable, and is as criminal (or evil) in him as if he were not a believer in Christ; yea, much more so, for the superior light, discernment, and advantages he has, and the special favors and privileges bestowed on him *do vastly increase his obligations* to perfect obedience, and therefore render every degree of opposition or want of conformity to the infinitely excellent Law of God immensely more heinous than in others.

The law, considered in all its unmodified strictness, requiring perfect holiness of character and conduct, is as much a rule for Christians to walk by now as ever it was. Christ never designed to deliver His people from their full obligations to the law, but instead greatly increased their obligations by what He has done for them. He has indeed made full atonement for *all* their sins against the law, and so has delivered them from the *curse* of the law, being Himself made a curse for them, so that they are, in *this* sense, “not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). They are no longer subject to the infinitely dreadful punishment which it pronounces upon the transgressor, for they have been completely delivered from this by a free pardon. But that has not cancelled their obligation to obey the law. The design of Christ’s blessed work was to deliver His people from all sin, and bring them to a full conformity to the law—and, eventually, this shall be fully realized.

To say that Christ came here to purchase a cancellation of the law would be procuring lawless liberty for rebellious subjects. No, He did not magnify the law and make it honourable, that His disciples might despise and violate it; but that they should be delivered from its condemnation and brought to delight in and obey its precepts. An unequivocal proof that the law *was not* set aside is seen in the fact that one of its commandments came in power to the conscience of Saul some years after the Cross: he distinctly says, “I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom. 7:7). Most certainly the Holy Spirit would never have applied an abrogated and superseded statute. Had the moral law been cancelled, the Spirit would no more have revived it than He would have restored the Levitical sacrifices.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest” (Exo. 34:1). “The treaty that was on foot between God and Israel, being broken off abruptly by their worshipping the golden calf, when peace was made, all must begin anew, not where they left off, *but from the beginning*. Thus backsliders must ‘repent, and do the first works’ (Rev. 2:5). Before, God Himself provided the tables, and wrote on them; now, Moses must hew him out the tables, and God would only write upon them. Thus, in the first writing of the law upon the heart of man in innocency, both the tables and the writing were the work of God; but when those were broken and defaced by sin, and the Divine Law was to be preserved in the Scriptures, God therein made use of the ministry of man, and Moses first. But the prophets and Apostles did only hew the tables, as it were, the writing was God’s still; for ‘all scripture is given by inspiration of God.’ Observe, when God was reconciled to them, He ordered the tables to be renewed, and wrote His Law in them, which plainly intimates to us:

“First, that even under the Gospel of peace and reconciliation by Christ (of which the intercession of Moses was typical), the moral law should *continue to oblige believers*. Though Christ has redeemed us from the ‘curse of the Law,’ yet not from the command of it, but still we are under the law to Christ; when our Saviour, in His sermon on the mount expounded the moral law, and vindicated it from the corrupt glosses with which the scribes and Pharisees had broken it (Matt. 5:19), He did in effect renew the tables, and make them like the first, that is, reduce the law to its primitive sense and intention. Secondly, that the best evidence of the pardon of sin, and peace with God, is the writing of the law in the heart. The first token God gave of His reconciliation to Israel was the renewing of the tables of the law; thus, the first article of the new covenant is ‘I will write My laws in their hearts’: Hebrews 8:10” (Matthew Henry).

The great blessing of the Gospel is that it is the appointed channel through which God gives grace *to keep the law*: ponder Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:27, Ephesians 4:24. “None enter into the Gospel state but those that readily and entirely give up themselves to the will of God; and therefore none can have benefited in the sin-offering and sacrifice of Christ but those that consent to return to their duty of the law and live in obedience to God. Surely God never pardons any while they are in rebellion and live under the full power and dominion of sin: no, they must consent to forsake sin and return to the allegiance due to their proper Lord” (T. Manton, 1660). Repentance (which is a sorrow for and repudiation of rebellion against God) precedes “the remission (forgiveness) of sins” (Mark 1:5). We must be “converted” (turned round and brought into subjection to God) in order that our “sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

The law does not and can not change; its requirements are not modified nor its penalty relieved by the Cross of Christ. But the Christian's *relation* to the law has been changed: he has been placed on a new footing in regard to it. Christ having substituted His obedience for us in the matter of *justification*, and endured in His own Person the law's condemnation, we are forever freed from its penalty, having in Him died to its curse. What, then, is the relation between the Christian and the law, which conversion and faith establishes? Answer, it is now *our Rule of Life* as it is held (so far as Christians are concerned, not in the hands of God as "Judge," but) in the hands of the Mediator: 1 Corinthians 9:21. The Christian's new relation to the law is that of Christ Himself: *His* feelings toward the law ought to be *ours*. He declared, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart"—the seat of the affections (Psa. 40:8); and the Christian having been made a partaker of His nature also "*delights* in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22), and the more he mortifies the flesh and walks in the Spirit, the greater is his love for the law, and the closer and fuller his conformity to it.

"Some speak as if the servant were greater than the Master, and the disciple above his Lord; as if the Lord Jesus honoured the law, and His people were to set it aside; as if He fulfilled it for us, that we might not need to fulfill it; as if He kept it, not that we might keep it, but that we might not keep it, but something else in its stead, they know not what. The plain truth is, we must either keep it or break it. Which of these men ought to do let those answer who speak of the believer having nothing more to do with the law. There is no midway. If it be not a saint's duty to keep the law, he may break it at pleasure, and go on sinning because grace abounds.

The word *duty* is objected to as inconsistent with the liberty of forgiveness and sonship. Foolish and idle cavil! What is duty? It is a thing *due by me to God*; that line of conduct which *I owe to God*. And do these objectors mean to say that because God has redeemed us from the curse of the law, therefore we *owe* Him nothing, we have no duty now to Him? Has not redemption rather made us doubly debtors? We owe Him more than ever, and we owe His Holy Law more than ever; more honour, more obedience. Duty has been doubled, not cancelled, by our being delivered from the law; he who says that duty has ceased, because deliverance has come, knows nothing of duty, or law, or deliverance. The greatest of all debtors in the universe is the redeemed man. What a strange sense of gratitude these men must have that, because love has cancelled the penalty of the law, and turned away its wrath, therefore reverence and obedience to that law are no longer *due*. Is *terror* in their estimation the only foundation of duty; and when love comes in and terror ceases, does duty become a bondage?

"No, they may say, but there is something higher than duty, there is privilege; it is that we contend for. I answer, the privilege of what? Of obeying the law? *That* they cannot do with; for they are no longer under the law, but under grace. What privilege, then? Of imitating Christ? Be it so. But can we imitate Him whose life was one great law-fulfilling without keeping the law? What privilege, again we ask? Of doing the will of God? Be it so. And what is law but the revealed will of God? And has our free forgiveness released us from the privilege of conformity to the revealed will of God?

"But what do they mean by thus rejecting the word duty, and contending for that of privilege? Privilege is not something distinct from duty, nor at variance with duty; but it is duty *and something more!* it is duty influenced by higher motives; duty un-compelled by terror or suspense. In privilege the *duty* is all there; but there is something super-added, in the shape of motive and relationship, which exalts and ennobles duty. It is my duty to obey government; it is my privilege to obey my parents. But in the latter case is duty gone because privilege has come in? Or has not the loving relationship between parent and child only intensified the duty by super-adding the privilege, and sweetening the obedience by the mutual love? 'The Love of Christ *constraineth*.' There is something more than both duty and privilege added" (Andrew Bonar, 1860).

Many object that the Ten Commandments are insufficient as a rule of duty for the Christian because they do not contain the whole of it. But in Matthew 22:37-39 Christ Himself reduced them unto two, for love to God and love to our neighbour comprehends *every* act of duty that can possibly be performed; he who loves God supremely, willingly obeys Him whatever forms He shall prescribe. The *new* commandment of love to the brethren is comprehended in the *old* commandment (1 John 2:7, 8), for he that loveth God cannot but love His image wherever it is seen: Galatians 5:13-15; Romans 13:8-10. God's commandment is "exceeding broad" (Psa. 119:96), and though the whole of Christian obedience be not *formally* expressed in the Ten Commandments, yet *virtually* it is. When Christ said, "On these two commandments hang *all* the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40), He made known the fact that all the exhortations and admonitions contained in the entire Scriptures are but an exposition and enforcing of the law. Few perceive the *extent* or scope of the Ten Commandments: what each one includes, implies, and involves. The Ten Commandments are the main root from which all other trunks and branches of duty are drawn.

Yet notwithstanding all that has now been pointed out in these articles, many imagine the whole of it is practically set aside or refuted by the words, "*Love is the fulfilling of the law*" (Rom. 13:10). Of course it is, and we have not written a single sentence which in the slightest degree contradicts or clashes with that Divine statement. From the moment of Adam's creation till now *love* has always been the "fulfilling" of the law. Where love be absent, no matter how carefully our actions be attended to, there is no real and acceptable fulfilling or keeping of the law, for the law itself enjoins and requires *love* to God and to our neighbour. The trouble is that the objector confounds the principle or *spring* of obedience (love) with the *rule* (the law) itself.

The law tells me what to do, love urges me to the doing of it. Romans 13:10 does not say, "love is a *substitute for* the law," but "love is the fulfilling of the law." To make love and law synonymous would be like confounding the railroad track on which the engine must run, with the power which pulls the train. "To make the rule of obedience that which is the moving cause of it, is the same thing as for a son to say to his father, 'Sir, I will do what you desire me when I feel inclined to do so, but I will not be *commanded*.' Whatever may be argued against the authority of God, I believe there are few if any parents who would put up with such language from their own children" (A. Fuller, 1814).—A.W.P.

The Providence of God

Carson on Esther.

Sometimes the servants of Christ excuse themselves from complete conformity to His institutions, and vindicate the observance of the commandments of men in the things of God, by alleging the field of usefulness that accommodation in these things lays open to them. If they can point to any good done by them, they suppose that it is God's approbation of their situation. But in this they deceive themselves. Their conduct, as a transgression of the Law of God, remains sinful, though His sovereignty turns their ignorance to His glory and the good of His people. Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. It is a foul calumny on God to suppose that it is necessary to disobey Him in order to do good. This takes it for granted that His laws defeat their own end. When in the wisdom of God, He makes the ignorance of His people to serve His purpose, this no more excuses their ignorance and their conduct that results from it, than the good effects of the death of Christ will justify the crime of Judas Iscariot. God will, no doubt, forgive the ignorance of His people, but He will never hold it innocent. He will never approve it. Through the instrumentality of His people who understand not the nature of His kingdom, God provides that multitudes hear the Gospel, who are to those in a scriptural situation altogether inaccessible. Yet this does not warrant the situation.

Some of the people of God are in mystical Babylon, and, no doubt, will in some way serve God's purpose in that vile situation, yet the voice of God does not cease to sound in their ears, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." A Christian who knows his duty would not break the least of the commandments of Jesus to enable him to turn the revenues of all the kings of the earth to the service of the cause of Christ. I might be asked, If all men should embrace my views of the nature of the Church of Christ and His ordinances, and act on them with rigor, what would be the consequence? Millions who now constantly hear the Gospel would be entirely shut up from it, and the hundreds of thousands of pounds that are raised annually for the spreading of the Gospel would fail. If none are to be embodied in the church except such as appear to be born again by the Spirit through the belief of the truth, how would the Gospel be supported? How would it be spread over the World? And so asks the child, If the moon is not nailed to the sky, will it not fall? This is a prosperous fear. *Leave God's province to Himself; fill your own well.* Follow Jesus, though it should lead the whole world to be involved in darkness. But there is no fear of such a result. Though God now makes use of the ignorance of His people to support and advance His cause; if they all knew their duty, He would give *still more* signal success. The silver and the gold are His. When it served Him, Jesus said to a rich man, "Zaccheus, come down; for today I must abide at thy house." *All the wealth of the world is at His absolute disposal, and the moment He needs it, He will call for it.* Let not the servants of God do evil that good may come. Let them not disobey Him that they may put themselves in a condition to serve Him. I would not set at nought the least of Christ's little ones. I will acknowledge all who know Him, as far as I can know them, notwithstanding all the ignorance they may labor under. But I will not, out of complaisance, cease to declare what I learn from the Word of God; I cannot cease to call on Christians to follow Jesus. Their ignorance is *sin*. The good which they do through ignorance is *no justification* of it. Esther saved the Jews, but by being in a situation to do so, she *transgressed* the law of her God.

The providence of God is seen in every step of the progress of Esther to her destined elevation. As in the case of Joseph, when sold into Egypt, God provided friends for her in all who had the means of seeing her. He filled every heart with good-will towards her, at first sight. The king's chamberlain was pleased with her from the first moment of her arrival, and accelerated her progress by every means in his power. "So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women" (2:8-9). When her turn came to approach the king "she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her" (v. 15). Surpassing as her beauty was this universal favour cannot be ascribed to it. In courts, envy and intrigue often prevail over every claim. Had not God disposed the hearts of those who beheld her, some far inferior beauty might have been the general favorite.

Notwithstanding her incomparable beauty, it was possible that the king's affections might have been anticipated by some of those who had previous access, or, from caprice, or peculiarity of taste he might have preferred another. But the providence of God had ordered this also, and no one pleased the king before the approach of the lovely Hadasah; and she obtained an instant preference. "So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti (vv. 16-17).

The conspiracy of two of the king's chamberlains is another event in which we may see the hand of God for effecting the elevation of Mordecai, preserving him from the wrath of Haman, and investing him with authority for the defense of his people, as well as the destruction of their enemies. A plot for the assassination of the sovereign is indeed no unprecedented thing in the courts of absolute monarchs. It is granted that the only impulse on the mind of the conspirators, exciting them to the murder of their master, was their resentment on account of whatever injury or provocation they had received. Their motives were not, in the remotest degree, to fulfill the counsel of God; nor are they sanctioned by Him. They are therefore themselves solely responsible for their wicked intentions. But that this conspiracy was ordered by God cannot surely be a matter of doubt with any who connect this fact with the others recorded in this history, and who believe the narrative to be the Word of God. It is here as evidently brought in to contribute towards the general issue as any incident in a drama. Take it away, and the whole chain is broken. Let us then admire the wonderful ways of Providence, in bringing about events through the freedom *and the sins* of human actions. Why did these officers receive provocation at this particular time? Why did they attend more to the gratification of their revenge than to their safety? Is a conspiracy to slay the sovereign the usual result of every great injury done by him to individuals? Why was not the conspiracy better conducted? Why was it made known and frustrated? Above all, why was Mordecai the man by whom it was discovered? Why was he the man to whom it was known? Take away this link of the chain, and all the other links are useless.

Whatever, then, was the means of bringing it to the knowledge of Mordecai, *it was God* that made it known to him, as much as if He had revealed it in a supernatural manner. Indeed, as Dr. Gill observes, “The latter Targum says, it was showed unto him by the Holy Spirit”; for the wisdom of man cannot see how the providence of God can arrange human actions to fulfill His purpose without any miracle. How many chances were there, humanly speaking, that no conspiracy should have existed at this time, or that it should not have been found out; or, if discovered, that Mordecai should not have been the discoverer? Was not the event evidently intended to lay a foundation for the future safety, elevation and power of Mordecai? How encouraging is this doctrine! The Lord’s people are frequently in danger. Their enemies lay snares for them, which no human wisdom can enable them to escape. How consoling it is for them to reflect on this wonderful narrative! Here is a fact that ought to encourage them in their most trying difficulties. *The Lord laid a plan, and prepared means for the deliverance of His people in the Persian empire, even before their enemies had prepared the plot for their destruction!* When therefore we are encompassed on every side, let us look to the hand of the Lord to execute the plan which He may have prepared for our deliverance. When Hagar cried unto the Lord, He showed her a well, which is as wonderful in Providence, if the fountain had been there from the creation, as if it had been opened by miracle.

Having considered God’s wise and gracious provision for the safety of His people during the approaching storm, we shall now attend to the events by which it was raised. We may discover the hand of God in this, no less than the former. The providence of God brings His people into danger, not because He is unable to ward off even the appearance of it, but that He may glorify Himself in their deliverance, and exercise their graces. Were they never in danger, they would be deprived some of the greatest opportunities of praising the wisdom, kindness, and watchfulness of His providential care; His enemies would want an occasion of manifesting their enmity to them and Him; and their faith would be without its necessary trials. But though, in one point of view, God wills the persecution of His people, the *sin* of the persecutor *is all his own*. He is ignorant of God’s purpose, and his enmity to them arises from his enmity to Him. Though he fulfills the appointment of God, yet he wickedly gratifies his own evil dispositions. It is a curious fact, but not a singular one, that God raised up Haman *to bring His people into danger*, as well as Esther to deliver them. In this, as in other things, the Divine wisdom is distinguished from the human in a striking manner. No man would nurture the wretch whom he should know to be the future enemy of himself and his offspring. But God exalted Haman in the court of the great king, above all the princes of the empire, for the very purpose of giving him an opportunity of manifesting his enmity against His people, and of attempting the destruction of the whole nation. He puts His enemies in the most favorable situation to oppose Him, that He may show with what ease He can discomfit the utmost efforts of their malevolence; nay, He makes the very wrath of man to praise Him, and the plans of His enemies to destroy His cause are made to effect its establishment.

The motives of Ahasuerus in the promotion of Haman were, no doubt, such as usually influence absolute sovereigns in conferring their favors, and in choosing the objects of their particular bounty. In the caprice of affection, they set no bounds to their liberality, and the most unworthy men in the empire are often their favorites. It is not strange, then, that it should have been so on the present occasion. But the direction of Providence is clear even amidst apparent casualties. It was God raised Haman, as well as He had for a like occasion raised Pharaoh. The individual, the character, the crisis of his exaltation, the height of his elevation, are linked together by Providence for a good purpose. In such a light is this combination of circumstances exhibited in the inspired text. It is brought forward as one of the grand incidents which contribute their influence to bring about the result. “After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him” (3:1). Why was Haman the favorite at this time? Why was he raised to such a pitch of glory?

The next event that presents itself to our consideration, as contributing to bring the Jews into danger at this time, is the refusal of Mordecai to honor Haman, according to the king's commandment. Notwithstanding all that the commentators have said to justify Mordecai, I cannot but think that this part of his conduct arose from ignorance of his duty, and that he might lawfully have done the thing which he refused to do. Were it certain that Haman was an Amalekite, the fact would not vindicate a Jew in refusing him honor in the court of Persia. The command to extirpate the Amalekites was given to Israel only as a nation, and living in their own land. "Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it" (Deut. 25:19). What had Mordecai to do with this command in his present situation? But if Haman was really an Amalekite, and if this was the ground on which Mordecai refused to honor him, whether it was valid or invalid, the providence of God is visible in the matter. Why was the favorite an Amalekite? Why was one of that nation, at such a time, preferred to all the subjects of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces? On this supposition, had he been a Persian, Mordecai would have honored him without scruple, and so no storm would have risen against the Jews.

It is alleged in favor of Mordecai, that an idolatrous reverence might have been required. Dr. Gill makes wonderful stretches to justify or excuse his conduct. As Divine honors were given to the kings of Persia, he thinks that they might also have been exacted for their favorite; but of this he gives no proof. *It might be*, will prove nothing; and nothing to justify such a supposition is in evidence from the passage. On the contrary, the thing which he is said to have refused is what he might lawfully have given. The king's command enjoined all his servants to "bow down and reverence Haman." What should prevent any man to comply with this injunction of supreme civil power? But Dr. Gill's ingenuity finds even in this an argument on his side. The fact that "*the king had so commanded concerning him*, shows," he thinks, "that it was more than civil honor and respect, for that in course would have been given him as the king's favorite." But this would not have been in all cases a matter of course, and that it was enjoined, there is the evidence of this record. The king requires nothing but *to bow and reverence*. Even had Haman pretended to be a god, of which there is not the slightest evidence, this would not excuse any one from bowing to him according to the king's commandment. Caius made himself a god, but should this have hindered his Christian subjects to bow down to him and reverence him? Even if there was a danger that it might be mistaken by some for religious worship, let the principle on which it is performed be declared, but let not what is lawfully due be withheld.

Dr. Gill argues that it must be more than civil respect that was required, because *that* the Jews did not refuse to give in the most humble and prostrate manner. This is just like saying that no Christian could refuse to uncover to the king, because Christians in general do this without scruple; yet William Penn would not uncover to King Charles. Besides, if Mordecai's conduct was influenced by a consideration of the nation of Haman, or anything in his individual character, this argument has no bearing. I cannot say why he refused: what I say is that he might have lawfully yielded all that was required.

The Doctrine of Justification

1. Introduction

Our first thought was to devote an introductory article unto a setting forth of the principle errors which have been entertained upon this subject by different men and parties, but after more deliberation we decided this would be for little or no profit to the majority of our readers. While there are times, no doubt, when it becomes the distasteful duty of God's servants to expose that which is calculated to deceive and injure His people, yet, as a general rule, the most effective way of getting rid of darkness is to let in the light. We desire, then, to pen these articles in the spirit of the godly John Owen, who, in the introduction to his ponderous treatise on this theme said, "More weight is to be put on the steady guidance of the mind and conscience of one believer, really exercised about the foundation of his peace and acceptance with God, than on the confutation of ten wrangling disputers... To declare and vindicate the truth unto the instruction and edification of such as love it in sincerity, to extricate their minds from those difficulties in this particular instance, which some endeavor to cast on all Gospel mysteries, to direct the consciences of them that inquire after abiding peace with God, and to establish the minds of them that do believe, are the things I have aimed at."

There was a time, not so long ago, when the blessed truth of Justification was one of the best known doctrines of the Christian faith, when it was regularly expounded by the preachers, and when the rank and file of church-goers were familiar with its leading aspects. But now, alas, a generation has arisen which is well-nigh totally ignorant of this precious theme, for with very rare exceptions it is no longer given a place in the pulpit, nor is scarcely anything written thereon in the religious magazines of our day; and, in consequence, comparatively few understand what the term itself connotes, still less are they clear as to the ground on which God justifies the ungodly. This places the writer at a considerable disadvantage, for while he wishes to avoid a superficial treatment of so vital a subject, yet to go into it deeply, and enter into detail, will make a heavy tax upon the mentality and patience of the average person. Nevertheless, we respectfully urge each Christian to make a real effort to gird up the loins of his mind and seek to prayerfully master these articles.

That which will make it harder to follow us through the present series is the fact that we are here treating of the *doctrinal* side of truth, rather than the practical; the judicial, rather than the experimental. Not that doctrine is *impracticable*; no indeed; far, far from it. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable (first) for *doctrine*, (and then) for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Doctrinal instruction was ever the foundation from which the Apostles issued precepts to regulate the walk. Not until the 6th chapter will any exhortation be found in the Roman Epistle: the first five are devoted entirely to doctrinal exposition. So again in the Epistle to the Ephesians: not until 4:1 is the first exhortation given. First the saints are reminded of the exceeding riches of God's grace, that the love of Christ may constrain them; and then they are urged to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.

While it be true that a real mental effort (as well as a prayerful heart) is required in order to grasp intelligently some of the finer distinctions which are essential to a proper apprehension of this doctrine, yet, let it be pointed out that the truth of justification is far from being a mere piece of abstract speculation. No, it is a statement of Divinely-revealed fact; it is a statement of fact which every member of our race ought to be deeply interested in. Each one of us has forfeited the favor of God, and each one of us needs to be restored to His favor. If we are not restored, then the outcome must inevitably be our utter ruin and hopeless perdition. How fallen creatures, how guilty rebels, how lost sinners, *are* restored to the favor of God, and given a standing before Him inestimably superior to that occupied by the holy angels, will (D.V.) engage our attention as we proceed with our subject.

As said Abram Booth in his splendid work “The Reign of Grace” (written in 1768), “Far from being a merely speculative point, it spreads its influence through the whole body of divinity (theology), runs through all Christian experience, and operates in every part of practical godliness. Such is its grand importance, that a mistake about it has a malignant efficacy, and is attended with a long train of dangerous consequences. Nor can this appear strange, when it is considered that this doctrine of justification is no other than the way of a *sinner’s acceptance with God*. Being of such peculiar moment, it is inseparably connected with many other evangelical truths, the harmony and beauty of which we cannot behold, while this is misunderstood. Till this appears in its glory, they will be involved in darkness. It is, if anything may be so called, a *fundamental* article; and certainly requires our most serious consideration” (from his chapter on “Justification”).

The great importance of the doctrine of justification was sublimely expressed by the Dutch Puritan, Witsius, when he said, “It tends much to display the glory of God, whose most exalted perfections shine forth with an eminent lustre in this matter. It sets forth the infinite *goodness* of God, by which He was inclined to procure salvation freely for lost and miserable man, ‘to the praise of the glory of His grace’ (Eph. 1:6). It displays also the strictest *justice*, by which He would not forgive even the smallest offense, but on condition of the sufficient engagement, or full satisfaction of the Mediator, ‘that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus’ (Rom 3:26). It shows further the unsearchable *wisdom* of the Deity, which found out a way for the exercise of the most gracious act of mercy, without injury to His strictest justice and infallible truth, which threatened death to the sinner: justice demanded that the soul that sinned should die (Rom. 1:32). Truth had pronounced the curses for not obeying the Lord (Deut. 28:15-68). Goodness, in the mean time, was inclined to adjudge life to some sinners, but by no other way than what became the majesty of the most holy God. Here wisdom interposed, saying, ‘I, even I, am He that bloteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins’ (Isa. 43:25). Nor shall you, His justice and His truth have any cause of complaint because full satisfaction shall be made to you by a mediator. Hence the incredible philanthropy of the Lord Jesus shineth forth, who, though Lord of all, was made subject to the law, not to the obedience of it only, but also to the curse: ‘hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him’ (2 Cor. 5:21).

Ought not the pious soul, who is deeply engaged in the devout meditation of these things, to break out into the praises of a justifying God, and sing with the church, “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression” (Micah 7:18). O the purity of that holiness which chose rather to punish the sins of the elect in His only begotten Son, than suffer them to go unpunished! O the abyss of His love to the world, for which He spared not His dearest Son, in order to spare sinners! O the depth of the riches of unsearchable wisdom, by which He exercises mercy towards the penitent guilty, without any stain to the honor of the most impartial Judge! O the treasures of love in Christ, whereby He became a curse for us, in order to deliver us therefrom! How becoming the justified soul, who is ready to dissolve in the sense of this love, with full exultation to sing a new song, a song of mutual return of love to a justifying God.

So important did the Apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, deem this doctrine, that the very first of his epistles in the New Testament is devoted to a full exposition thereof. The pivot on which turns the entire contents of the Epistle to the Romans is that notable expression “the righteousness of God”—than which is none of greater moment to be found in all the pages of Holy Writ, and which it behooves every Christian to make the utmost endeavor to clearly understand. It is an abstract expression denoting the satisfaction of Christ in its relation to the Divine Law. It is a descriptive name for the material cause of the sinner’s acceptance before God. “The righteousness of God” is a phrase referring to the finished work of the Mediator as approved by the Divine tribunal, being the meritorious cause of our acceptance before the throne of the Most High.

In the succeeding articles (D.V.) we shall examine in more detail this vital expression “the righteousness of God,” which connotes that perfect satisfaction which the Redeemer offered to Divine justice on the behalf of and in the stead of that people which had been given to Him. Suffice it now to say that that “righteousness” by which the believing sinner is justified is called “the righteousness of God” (Rom 1:17; 3:21) because He is the appointor, approver, and imputer of it. It is called “the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1) because He wrought it out and presented it unto God. It is called “the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:13) because faith is the apprehender and receiver of it. It is called “man’s righteousness” (Job 33:26) because it was paid for him and imputed to him. All these varied expressions refer to so many aspects of that one perfect obedience unto death which the Saviour performed for His people.

Yes, so vital did the Apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, esteem this doctrine of Justification, that he shows at length how the denial and perversion of it by the Jews was the chief reason of their being rejected by God: see the closing verses of Romans 9 and the beginning of chapter 10. Again; throughout the whole Epistle to the Galatians we find the Apostle engaged in most strenuously defending and zealously disputing with those who had assailed this basic truth. Therein he speaks of the contrary doctrine as ruinous and fatal to the souls of men, as subversive of the Cross of Christ, and calls it another gospel, solemnly declaring “though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you... let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). Alas, that under the latitudinal liberty and false “charity” of our day, there is now so little holy abhorrence of that preaching which repudiates the vicarious obedience of Christ which is imputed to the believer.

Under God, the preaching of this grand truth brought about the greatest revival which the Cause of Christ has enjoyed since the days of the Apostles. “This was the great fundamental distinguishing doctrine of the Reformation, and was regarded by all the Reformers as of primary and paramount importance. The leading charge which they adduced against the Church of Rome was that she had corrupted and perverted the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject in a way that was dangerous to the souls of men; and it was mainly by the exposition, enforcement, and application of the true doctrine of God’s Word in regard to it, that they assailed and overturned the leading doctrines and practices of the Papal system. There is no subject which possesses more of intrinsic importance than attaches to this one, and there is none with respect to which the Reformers were more thoroughly harmonious in their sentiments” (W. Cunningham).

This blessed doctrine supplies the grand Divine cordial to revive one whose soul is cast down and whose conscience is distressed by a felt sense of sin and guilt, and longs to know the way and means whereby he may obtain acceptance with God and the title unto the Heavenly inheritance. To one who is deeply convinced that he has been a life-long rebel against God, a constant transgressor of His Holy Law, and who realizes he is justly under His condemnation and wrath, no inquiry can be of such deep interest and pressing moment as that which relates to the means of restoring him to the Divine favour, remitting his sins, and fitting him to stand unabashed in the Divine presence: till this vital point has been cleared to the satisfaction of his heart, all other information concerning religion will be quite unavailing.

“Demonstrations of the existence of God will only serve to confirm and more deeply impress upon his mind the awful truth which he already believes, that there is a righteous Judge, before whom he must appear, and by whose sentence his final doom will be fixed. To explain the moral law to him, and inculcate the obligations to obey it, will be to act the part of a public accuser, when he quotes the statutes of the land in order to show that the charges which he has brought against the criminal at the bar are well founded, and, consequently, that he is worthy of punishment. The stronger the arguments are by which you evince the immortality of the soul, the more clearly do you prove that his punishment will not be temporary, and that there is another state of existence, in which he will be fully recompensed according to his desert” (J. Dick).

When God Himself becomes a living reality unto the soul, when His awful majesty, ineffable holiness, inflexible justice, and sovereign authority, are really perceived, even though most inadequately, indifference to His claims now gives place to a serious concern. When there is a due sense of the greatness of our apostasy from God, of the depravity of our nature, of the power and vileness of sin, of the spirituality and strictness of the law, and of the everlasting burnings awaiting God's enemies, the awakened soul cries out, "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:6, 7). Then it is that the poor soul cries out, "*How then can* man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 25:4). And it is in the blessed doctrine which is now to be before us that we are taught the method whereby a sinner may obtain peace with his Maker and rise to the possession of eternal life.

Again; this doctrine is of inestimable value unto the conscientious Christian who daily groans under a sense of his inward corruptions and innumerable failures to measure up to the standard which God has set before him. The Devil, who is "the accuser of our brethren" (Rev. 12:10), frequently charges the believer with hypocrisy before God, disquiets his conscience, and seeks to persuade him that his faith and piety are nought but a mask and outward show, by which he has not only imposed upon others, but also on himself. But, thank God, Satan may be overcome by "the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11): by looking away from incurably depraved self, and viewing the Surety, who has fully answered for the Christian's every failure, perfectly atoned for his every sin, and brought in an "everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24), which is placed to his account in the high court of Heaven. And thus, though groaning under his infirmities, the believer may possess a victorious confidence which rises above every fear.

This it was which brought peace and joy to the heart of the Apostle Paul: for while in one breath he cried, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24), in the next he declared, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). To which he added, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (vv. 33-35). May it please the God of all grace to so direct our pen and bless what we write unto the readers, that not a few who are now found in the gloomy dungeons of Doubting Castle, may be brought out into the glorious light and liberty of the full assurance of faith.—A.W.P.

Preaching the Law

The fairest face on earth, which was endowed with the most comely features, would soon become ugly and unsightly if one feature continued to grow while all the others remained undeveloped. No matter how well formed or beautiful the mouth, if it became ten times the size of the eyes or ears, how repulsive would it appear. *Beauty is principally a matter of proportion.* So it is with the Word of God: its beauty and blessedness are best perceived when it is presented in its true proportions. To be all the time dwelling on the love of God and be silent about His wrath, or to be constantly expounding His righteousness and say little or nothing about His mercy, is to present a caricature of the Divine perfections. So also to preach ten sermons on the Gospel of God's grace to one upon God's Law, is to lose the balance of truth, and to present the truth *disproportionately*.

It has long appeared to the writer that the greatest and most deplorable defect in modern "evangelism" is the almost total absence of the preaching of God's Law. And as this little magazine is sent to a considerable number of preachers and missionaries, the editor feels it laid upon him to write a short article thereon. Before a servant of God is warranted in setting before the unsaved the *Divine way of salvation*, he needs to make very clear wherein lies the *need of salvation*. This is the order of Scripture throughout. The Old Testament precedes the New. The ministry of John the Baptist comes before that of the Lord Jesus: and the former came "in the way of righteousness" (Matt. 21:32), calling to repentance. Romans 3:10-20 (read it!) precedes Romans 3:21-26, and so it should be in all preaching.

"By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20): then why not preach God's Law! Does not the Apostle to the Gentiles tell us, in that wondrous and blessed biographical passage of Romans 7, "I had not *known sin*, but by the law" (v. 7)! Fellow-preachers, the knowledge of God's Law is absolutely necessary in order to a true knowledge of sin. Because God's Law is *the rule of man's conduct*, of all his heart exercises and outward actions, so that he is sinful, or not, just in proportion as he conforms to the law, or does not conform thereto, it necessarily follows that he cannot possibly judge of his own character and determine whether he be a sinner or no, if he is completely ignorant of the law; and he *must* be ignorant of his own sinfulness, however great a sinner he be, just in proportion to the degree of his ignorance of the law he is under.

"*Sin is the transgression of the law*" (1 John 3:4): therefore, where there is no law, there is no sin; and he who has no idea, no apprehension or knowledge of the law, has no real idea of sin; it is impossible that he should have, for every person's notion of sin will be according to his notion of the law. If he thinks God's Law requires that which it does not, then he will judge that to be sin which in truth is not so. If he thinks the law he is under does not require what it does (for example, heart-purity), then he will look upon that to be no sin, which in truth is so; and so far as he sees not, the ground and reasonableness of the law he will be ignorant of the crime or real sinfulness in transgressing it. While he is ignorant of the excellency of the law, and the authority of its Giver, and so sees not the glory of the law, he must be blind to the turpitude of sin, and can have no true idea of it.

There is a threefold knowledge of sin and the law. First, a *speculative* knowledge. Men may have, to a considerable degree, clear and sound intellectual views with respect to the Law of God and to sin. They may perceive the reasonableness of God's Law, the obligation they are under to obey it, their great lack of conformity thereto, and the infinite evil there is in all sin. They may reason accurately about these things, and yet their hearts remain quite *unaffected* by them. They may live at the greatest ease, trouble not themselves about their disobedience, and continue sinning with a high hand. So it was with Israel of old; so it is with many today who are familiar with the letter of God's Law.

Second, there is a *convicting knowledge*. Unregenerate persons may have their consciences awakened, so as to attend to these things in some measure as solemn realities, and with particular application to themselves. They may feel themselves condemned by the law and under the curse of Him against whom they have so grievously rebelled. They may have such a sense of majesty, holiness, and power of God, the dreadfulness of His anger and their constant exposedness to be cast into Hell, as to fill them with sore distress and horror. Self-interest, the instinct of self-preservation, and the movings of self-love may cause them to be greatly concerned how they shall escape the wrath to come. Later, their convictions fade and disappear.

Third, there is a *regenerative* knowledge. Those who have been born again have a heart-realization of the superlative excellence and glory of the Divine character, by which He is infinitely distinguished from all other beings, and they feel the deep obligations they are under to love Him perfectly with all their hearts forever. They discern reasonableness, the spirituality, and extent of the law in *such* a manner and degree as produces heart approbation and love to it, and their souls exclaim, "The law is holy, just and good." Hence they perceive what *sin* is. It appears to them infinitely odious and ill-deserving, a dreadful opposition to the Divine character and Law, and they hate and abhor sin, and wish to be done with it forever.

"They who have quite wrong ideas of the Law of God will have equally wrong ideas of their own character as sinners, and, consequently, wrong ideas of the character of the Mediator and the grace revealed in the Gospel. The Gospel has such respect to the Law of God, and the latter is so much the reason and ground of the former, and so essential to the wisdom and glory of it, that it cannot be understood by him who is ignorant of the law; and, consequently, our idea and apprehension of the Gospel will be erroneous and wrong just as far as we have wrong notions of God's Law. The character of a Mediator is necessary, excellent, and glorious, only in this view and on this supposition, that the Law of God, which requires perfect persevering obedience, on pain of eternal damnation, is unchangeably right, just, excellent, and glorious, and, consequently, sin infinitely criminal and odious; for the most essential part of the character of the Mediator consists in His honouring this law, and making atonement for sin. He, therefore, who does not believe there is any such law, or does not view it in this light, and so does not see sin in its true demerit and hatefulness, cannot possibly understand the Gospel, but must be blind to the true wisdom and glory of it.

"This has been, and now is, the sad case of multitudes under the Gospel. They hope and expect to be saved by Christ; they speak much of the grace of the Gospel, and the wonderful mercy of God to sinners; but at the same time are ignorant of the Divine Law; and never were reconciled to it as holy, just, and good; so never saw sin in its true odiousness and ill-desert. Let such rise as high as they will in the admiration of Gospel grace, and, though they are affected even to raptures, they are wholly ignorant of the true grace of God, of their need of a Mediator, and of the way of salvation by Him. So important are right notions of the law. He who fails here must be in darkness, with respect to the whole system of religious truth the true Gospel will be hid from him; and to him Christ crucified will be nothing but a stumbling-block and the most perfect foolishness.

"There are many who speak out and say, 'We do not believe there is now any such law binding on men which requires perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation. This law is wholly set aside by the Gospel, and we never were under it, nor indeed would it be just in God to hold us to it. Christ—blessed be His name!—has introduced a more mild dispensation, so that we are now not under law, but under grace.' But, pray, what grace is there in abolishing and freeing you from a law which you never could be justly under, and which, therefore, ought in justice to be set aside? And what need of a Mediator to die, to deliver you from this law and introduce a more mild dispensation? Must there be so costly a sacrifice to induce the great Law-giver to give up that which He could not justly insist upon, it being in itself unreasonable? But if it is in itself reasonable, being founded in the reason and nature of things, it cannot be given up and abolished on any consideration whatsoever. Surely, such, however they may 'desire to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm' (1 Tim. 1:7). When will such horrible jargon and blasphemy be banished from the Christian world? How far are such from knowing their own character as sinners, and the true grace of the Gospel whereby the sinner is saved!

“And suffer me to add here a hearty submission to, and acquiescence and delight in the Law of God, rightly understood, and so a true hatred of sin must take place in order to any degree of true approbation of the Gospel and faith and trust in Christ. For so far are we from approving of the Law of God in our hearts, and a sense of the hatefulnes and ill-desert of sin, just so far shall we always be from being pleased with the atonement of Christ, rightly understood, in which the law is set up and honoured as most excellent and glorious, and sin is condemned in the highest possible degree, and its infinite odiousness and ill desert set in the most clear and striking light imaginable. Indeed, this approbation and sense of heart is implied in a true idea and knowledge of the law in its excellency and glory, and of sin in its true odiousness and ill desert: for the very idea of duty and excellence consists in a sense of heart, and is itself a pleasedness with that beauty and delight in it; and there can be no distinction between seeing the true hatefulnes of an object and hating it.

“Thus evident is it that the sinner who comes to Christ for salvation comes as a true penitent, and that repentance, which most essentially consists in a sense of heart of the true odiousness and ill-desert of sin, is not only implied in faith in Christ, *but is necessary in order to this faith*; and the former takes place before the latter, as there must be the knowledge and approbation of the Divine character and Law, and a sight and sense of the ill-desert of sin, before there can be any true knowledge of the Mediator and faith in Him. Thus it is only the humble, contrite, broken-hearted penitent who is revived and comforted by Christ, *as none but such ever did or ever will*, know His true character or are prepared to receive with approbation and joy the good news He proclaims. This is so plain and demonstrable that it may be reasonably concluded that many who have objected against the notion that repentance toward God is antecedent to faith in Christ, and before it, as being heretical and absurd, have done it through some misunderstanding of the matter.

“There are those who zealously contend that a sight and belief of the *grace* of God through Christ, and a view of God as reconciled to the sinner by Him, is the first and only thing that begets love to God and His Law, and repentance of sin, and that it is impossible that the sinner should be reconciled to God and the Divine Law in any other view. I leave the attentive reader to observe and reflect upon the absurdity of such a notion. It is certain to a demonstration that they who are not heartily reconciled *to God and His Law*, and do not hate sin and abhor themselves for it, do not know and are not reconciled to the grace of God through Christ. Nor can they attain to the latter if not first brought to the former, but will remain eternal enemies to both. They, therefore, who have never been reconciled to God and His Holy Law in any other way but by first seeing and believing in the grace of God through Christ, *are yet ignorant of the true grace of God, and enemies to it*. And all their love to Christ, and supposed reconciliation to God—all their repentance, religious affections, and rapturous admiration of the love and grace of God is nothing but mere enthusiastic delusion, bottomed on that selfishness which is perfect enmity against God” (Samuel Hopkins, 1800—in close fellowship with Jonathan Edwards).

Hence it appears of what *great importance it is* that the Law of God should be preached and held constantly before saved and unsaved, as this is absolutely indispensable in order to give a proper view of the Gospel. Alas, how many poor souls are being deceived through preachers studiously keeping the law out of their sight, yea, making remarks derogatory unto the Holy Law of God. Notwithstanding the high-sounding phrases which may be employed in favor of the Gospel, and no matter how much the grace of God may be magnified in words, they are, in truth, without meaning, and convey no proper idea of the true grace of God, and the real Gospel of Christ is neglected; for the Gospel is a message of glad tidings for those who are sick of sin, who desire to be conformed to the law, who are groaning under a felt anguish for their transgressions of it.

1. Make clear *the absolute and infinite authority of the Law-Giver*. This is of first importance, not only that God may be honoured, but that the sinner may the better perceive the infinite enormity and unspeakable guilt of openly defying the Most High. The law is the voice of God to His creatures; it consists not merely of good advice, but of Divine commands. It is the rule which the Almighty Jehovah has set up, and therefore it is clothed with *His* authority. Because of His excellency and greatness, He is exalted infinitely above all creatures, and it is His right to dictate to and dispose of them. Failure to submit to His authority, disregard of His righteous Law, is the crime of all crimes: it is spiritual anarchy.—A.W.P. (To be completed in the April issue)