

Volume 17—Studies in the Scriptures—No. 7**July, 1938****The Lord's Prayer—Part 5**

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven” (Matt. 6:10). The connection between this petition and the preceding ones is not difficult to trace. First must be our concern for God's glory, then our desire for His kingdom, and then an honest endeavour to serve Him. The glory of God is the grand object of our *desires*: the coming of His kingdom is the chief *means* by which it is secured: our personal obedience makes it *manifest* that His kingdom *is* come to us. When God's kingdom really comes to a soul he must necessarily be brought into obedience to its laws and ordinances, for it is worse than useless to call God our King if His commandments are disregarded by us. Broadly speaking, there are two parts to this petition: a request for the spirit of obedience and the manner in which it is to be performed.

“Thy will be done.” This may present a difficulty to a few of our readers: is not God's will always done? In one respect, Yes—in another, No. Scripture presents the will of God from two main viewpoints: His secret will and His revealed will, or His decretive and His preceptive will. The former is the rule of *His own* actions: in creation (Rev. 4:11), in providence (Dan. 4:35), and in grace (Rom. 9:15)—this is always unknown to men until revealed by prophecies of things to come or by events which transpire. The latter is the rule of *our* actions, God having made known in the Scriptures that which is pleasing in His sight. The secret or decretive will of God is always done, equally on earth as in Heaven, for none can thwart or even hinder it.

This distinction in connection with God's will is clearly drawn in, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are *revealed* belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may *do* all the words of this Law” (Deut. 29:29). The same is true of His “counsel.” “My counsel (His eternal decree) *shall* stand” (Isa. 46:10). “The Pharisees and lawyers *rejected* (margin “frustrated”) the counsel (or revealed will) of God” (Luke 7:30). On the one hand we read, “Who hath resisted His will?” (Rom. 9:19), and on the other hand, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). The revealed or preceptive will of God is stated in the Word, defining our duty, making known the path we should walk in: “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

“The will of God,” then, is a phrase which, taken by itself, may express either what God has purposed to do, or what He has commanded to be done by us. With regard to the will of God in the first sense, it is already and always done upon earth as it is in Heaven, for neither human policy nor infernal power can prevent it. The text which is now before us contains a prayer that we might be brought into complete accord with God's revealed will. We *do* the will of God when, from a regard for His authority, we regulate our hearts and lives according to His commandments. Such is our bounden duty, and should be our fervent desire and diligent endeavour. We mock God if we present this request and then do not make the conforming of ourselves to His will our main business—ponder the solemn warning in Matthew 15:8.

“Thy will be done on earth.” The one who sincerely prays this, necessarily intimates his unreserved surrender to God, and implies the renunciation of the will of Satan (2 Tim. 2:26), his own corrupt inclinations (1 Peter 4:2), and the rejecting of all things opposed to God. Nevertheless, such a soul is painfully conscious that there is still much in him that is

in conflict with God, and therefore he humbly and contritely acknowledges that he cannot do His will without Divine assistance, and earnestly desires and seeks enabling grace. Possibly the meaning and scope of this petition will best be opened up if we express it thus: O Father, let Thy will be revealed *to me*, let it be wrought *in me*, let it be performed *by me*.

From the positive side, when we pray, "Thy will be done," we beg God, first, for spiritual *wisdom* to learn His will: "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts . . . Teach me, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes" (Psa. 119:27, 33). Second, we beg God for spiritual *inclination* unto His will: "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart . . . Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies" (Psa. 119:32, 36). Third, we beg God for spiritual *strength* to perform His bidding: "Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word . . . Strengthen Thou me according unto Thy Word" (Psa. 119:25, 28). "Draw me: we will run after Thee" (Song. 1:4). "Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight" (Heb. 13:21). "Thy will be done *on earth*": because this is the place of our discipleship, where we are to practise self-denial—and because if we do not His will here, we never shall in Heaven.

"As it is in Heaven"—by the saints and the angels. This is the standard set before us on earth. *How* is God's will done in Heaven? Not sullenly and reluctantly, not pharisaically nor hypocritically, not tardily or fitfully, nor partially and fragmentally. But gladly and joyfully: both "the living creatures" (not "beasts") and the "elders" of Revelation 5:8 are pictured with "*harps*" in their hands! Yet humbly and reverently: the seraphim *veil* their faces before the Lord: Isaiah 6:2. With alacrity: "Then *flew* one of the seraphim" (Isa. 6:6). Constantly: "therefore are they before the Throne of Grace, and serve Him *day and night* in His temple" (Rev. 7:15). The angels obey God promptly, wholly, perfectly, with ineffable delight. But *we* are sinful and full of infirmities; with what propriety, then, can the obedience of celestial beings be proposed as an example for us? We raise this question not as a concession to our imperfections, but because honest souls are exercised by it.

First, *to sweeten* our subjection to the Divine will: we on earth are set no harder task than those in Heaven. O my reader, Heaven is what it is because the will of God is done by all who dwell there: and the measure in which a foretaste of its bliss may be obtained by us upon earth will largely be determined by the degree to which we perform the Divine bidding. Second, to show us the blessed *reasonableness* of our obedience to God: "Bless the LORD, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word" (Psa 103:20)—then can God require less of us? O my reader, if we are to have communion with the angels in Glory, then we must be conformed to them in grace. Third, to make known to us the standard at which we must ever aim: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing . . . That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col. 1:10; 4:12). Fourth, to teach us not only *what* to do, but *how* to do it: we are to imitate the angels in the *manner* of their obedience, though we cannot equal them in measure or degree.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven": weigh this attentively in the light of what precedes. First, "our Father which art in Heaven": then should we not do His will? We must, if we are His children—disobedience is what characterizes His enemies. Did not His own dear Son render Him perfect obedience! Second, "hallowed by Thy name":

does not a real concern for God's glory obliges us to make a conformity to His will our supreme quest? We certainly must if we desire to honour God, for nothing dishonours Him more than self-will and defiance. Third, "Thy kingdom come": should we not seek to be in full subjection to its laws and ordinances? We must if we are subjects thereof—it is alienated rebels who despise His sceptre.—A.W.P.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

127. *Conclusion: 13:24, 25.*

Everything down here comes, sooner or later, to its end. Terrible prospect for the wicked, for there awaits them naught but the blackness of darkness forever. Blessed outlook for the righteous, for then they are done with sin and suffering forever, and only everlasting glory and bliss stretches before them. How would it be with *you*, my reader, if the hand of time were now writing the *final lines* of your earthly history? Did the Apostle experience a pang of regret as he arrived at the parting salutation? did his readers? We cannot be sure, but this writer certainly feels sorry that the closing verses are now reached—and we are assured that not a few of those who have followed us throughout this series will feel much the same. For rather more than ten years we have journeyed together through this Epistle, and now we have come to the Conclusion.

It is very doubtful if the writer will ever again attempt a task of such dimensions. Be that as it may, he certainly will never be engaged with a more momentous and glorious subject. There is no book in the New Testament of greater importance, and few of equal. First, it furnishes us a sure guide to the interpretation of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit moving the Apostle to here open up its principal types. Second, it supplies us with a vivid description and explanation of the Mediator's office and work, demonstrating the worthlessness and needlessness of all other intermediaries between the soul and God. Third, it therefore places in our hands the most conclusive exposure of the errors and fallacies of the Papacy. Fourth, it makes clear to us why Judaism has passed away, and how that it can never again be restored.

The deep importance of this Epistle is intimated by a feature which is peculiar to it, namely, the absence of the writer's name. But let it be noted that he did not conceal himself, for in 13:18-24, especially, Paul made it quite clear to the Hebrews who was the penman of this Epistle: he plainly declared himself and his circumstances as one who was well known to them. The true reason why he did *not* prefix his name to this Epistle, as to his others, was this: in all his other Epistles he dealt with the churches by virtue of his apostolic authority and the revelation of the Gospel which he had personally received from Christ; but in dealing with the Hebrews, he laid his foundation in the authority of the Holy Scriptures, which they acknowledged, and resolved all his arguments and exhortations thereunto.

They who regard the body of this Epistle as concerned merely with the refutation of those arguments brought against the Gospel by the ancient Jews, do greatly err. That which the Apostle here took up is of vital moment for *each* generation. Human nature does not change, and the objections brought against the Truth by its enemies, are in substance, the same in every age. As the best means of getting rid of darkness is to let in the light, so the most effectual antidote for the poison of Satan is the pure milk of the Word. Only as we are established in the Truth are we fortified against the sophistries of error. In this Epistle the Apostle deals with the *fundamental* principles of Christianity, and no effort should be spared to arrive at a sound understanding of them. The foundations of the Faith are ever being attacked, and the ministers of Christ can perform no better service than to establish their people in the grand verities of the Faith.

The chief design of the Holy Spirit in this Epistle is to set forth the great difference between the *administration* of the Everlasting Covenant before Christ came and since His coming. The following contrasts may be observed. First, the difference between the in-

struments God used: the “Prophets”—His own Son: 1:1, 2. Second, the difference between priesthood and Priesthood: 7:11-17. Third, the difference between surety and Surety: 7:21, 22. Fourth, the difference between the law and the “Oath”: 7:28. Fifth, the difference between mediator and Mediator: 8:6; 9:15. Sixth, between promises and Promises: 8:6. Seventh, between blood and Blood: 9:12-14. Eighth, between sacrifices and the Sacrifice: 9:26. Ninth, between sprinkling and Sprinkling: 9:13, 14. Tenth, between tabernacle and Tabernacle: 9:8, 24. Eleventh, between the “shadow” and the Substance: 10:1 and cf. Col. 2:17. Twelfth, between “country” and Country: 11:9, 16. In all these contrasts the difference is between the Old and New Testament *administrations* of the Everlasting Covenant.

The outstanding contrast between the Old and New Testament regimes is that the one was but evanescent, whereas the other is abiding. Judaism was but preparatory, a temporary economy; whereas Christianity is permanent, ushering in an everlasting order of things. This is intimated in the opening sentence of the Epistle: “God hath in these *last* days spoken unto us in His Son”: *finality* has now been reached!—there is no other dispensation to follow this: cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:19. In keeping with this we may note how frequently the emphasis is laid upon the abiding and finality of what is here treated of. We read of “He became the Author of *eternal* salvation unto all them that obey Him” (5:9), of “*eternal* judgment” (6:2), that “He is able also to save them for *evermore* that come unto God by Him” (7:25), of “*eternal* redemption” (9:12), of “the *eternal* Spirit” (9:14), of an “*eternal* inheritance” (9:15), of “the *everlasting* covenant” (13:20).

“Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you” (v. 24). It was the custom of the Apostle to close his Epistle with a warm greeting: not that this was merely a courtesy or pleasantry, for in those days the love of Christians was strong and fervent, both unto the Lord Himself and to His redeemed: “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9). How radically different things were then from what they now are! Yet only so in degree, and not in essence, for wherever the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, the affections of that soul will necessarily flow unto all His people. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14), which is as true today as it was in the first century.

“Salute all that have the rule over you.” This evinced the Apostle’s good will unto the ministers and officers of the churches in Judea, as well as according honour to whom honour is due. Mutual amity between the servants of Christ is to be sedulously sought and lovingly maintained. The large-heartedness of the Apostle in this important particular shines forth again and again in the New Testament. Calvin suggested that the reason why this salutation was sent particularly unto the rulers of the churches was “as a mark of honour, that he might conciliate them, and gently lead them to assent to his doctrine”—which was so radically opposed to their earlier training. The “rulers” referred to in this verse are, of course, the same as those mentioned in 13:7, 17.

“And *all* the saints.” One lesson here inculcated is that the servants of Christ should be absolutely impartial, manifesting equal respect unto the highest and lowest of God’s dear people. This clause also condemns that detestable spirit of partiality, fostered so much by Rome. The Gospel has no secrets reserved for the initiated only, but the whole of it is the common property of *all* believers. “This Epistle, containing strong meat for the perfect, is

addressed to the whole congregation. If any part of Scripture was to be kept from the common people, we might fancy it would be this Epistle. The writings of the Apostles, as well as the Prophets, were read in the public assembly; how much more ought it now to be left to everyone to read them according his need" (Bengel).

Believers are here designated "saints" or *separated ones*, which is their common appellation in the New Testament. They are so in a fourfold respect. First, by the Father's sovereign choice, whereby before the foundation of the world, He singled them out from the mass of their fellows, to be the objects of His special favour. Second, by the Son's redemption, whereby, He purchased "a peculiar people" unto Himself, thereby distinguishing between the sheep and the goats. Third, by the Spirit's regeneration, whereby He quickens them unto newness of life, thus making them to differ from those who are left in their natural state—dead in trespasses and sins. Fourth, by their own consecration, whereby they surrender themselves unto the Lord, and dedicate themselves to His service. Their saintship is *evidenced* by their lives: devoted to the love, fear, and will of God. Such are the only proper members of a local church, and such are the only true members of the Church of God.

"They of Italy salute you." They did so through the Apostle unto the entire body of the Hebrews: knowing of his intention of sending a letter to them, they desired to be remembered to them. "They of *Italy*" if not all of them Gentiles, certainly included many among their number. A most significant detail was this. In the previous verse Paul had referred to sending "Timothy" unto them, and *his* father was a *Gentile*! But still more striking was this word: it was more than a hint that the "middle wall of partition" was already broken down. Certainly "Italy" was "*outside* the Camp" of Judaism: Jerusalem was no longer the centre of God's earthly witness!

"They of Italy salute you." This is very blessed, showing the victory of the Spirit over the flesh. "How Christianity melts down prejudices! Romans and Jews, Italians and Hebrews, were accustomed to regard each other with contempt and hatred. But in Christ Jesus there is neither Romans nor Jews, neither Italians nor Hebrews: all are one in Him. Christians of different countries should take all proper opportunities of testifying their mutual regards to each other. It is calculated to strengthen and console, and to knit them closer and closer in harmony. Proper expressions of love increase love on both sides" (John Brown).

"Grace be with you all. Amen" (13:25). The Epistle closes with the sign-manual of Paul himself. He commonly employed an amanuensis (Rom. 16:22), but *this* sentence was written by his own hand. This particular apostolic benediction was his own distinctive token. "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every Epistle, so I write: that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (2 Thess. 3:17, 18). If the reader will turn to the closing verse of each of the other thirteen Epistles of this Apostle, it will be found that the same token, substantially, is given in each one. This is the more striking for neither James, Peter, John, nor Jude employed it. Thus, this closing "grace be with you all" is conclusive evidence that *Paul* was the writer of this Epistle.

"Grace be with you all. Amen." This is the most comprehensive petition that can be presented to God on behalf of His people, either individually or collectively, for it comprises all manner of the blessings of His free favour. Divine grace comprehends and contains all things pertaining to life and godliness. By grace we are saved (Eph. 2:8), in grace

we stand (Rom. 5:2), through grace we are preserved. These words signify, Let the favour of God be *toward you*, His power be working *in* you, bringing forth the fruits of holiness. Thus, the Epistle closes with prayer! "When the people of God have been conversing together, by word or writing, it is good to part with prayer, desiring for each other the continuance of the gracious presence of God, that they may meet together in the world of glory" (Matthew Henry). "Grace be *with* you all" denoted their actual participation therein.

And now our happy task is completed. Very conscious are we of our limitations and infirmities. We can but commit our poor efforts to God, pleading the merits of Christ to countervail our demerits, and asking Him to bless that which was pleasing to Himself. Let those who have accompanied us throughout these articles join the writer in asking: do we now better understand the contents of this difficult yet blessed Epistle? Have we a deeper appreciation of that grand order of things that has superseded Judaism? Is Christ more real and precious to our souls? Are we more conscious of the sanctifying effects of the doctrine which it inculcates? Are we now paying more diligent heed to its weighty exhortations? Are our souls more deeply impressed by its solemn warnings against apostasy? May Divine grace indeed be with us all.

N.B. The articles comprising this series have been written on land and sea. They were commenced in Australia, continued as we crossed three oceans, resumed in England, considerably added to during the years we spent in the U.S.A., and completed in Scotland and England.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

79. *His Honourable Conduct.*

“Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year: and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites” (2 Sam. 21:1). Last month we sought to show that this occurrence supplies a definite illustration or example of God’s governmental ways with the nations. On this occasion He was dealing with Israel for a crime which they had committed many years previously. That crime respected their violation of a treaty which had been entered into between themselves and the Gibeonites in the days of Joshua. King Saul had ruthlessly ignored that solemn obligation, and instead of protecting the weak had brutally sought to exterminate them, thus bringing down upon his own house and upon the Nation the holy wrath of the Lord.

God does not always manifest His displeasure at once, either against individuals or nations; instead, He usually gives “space for repentance” (Rev. 2:21). But alas, so perverse is fallen human nature that, instead of improving the Divine mercy, it perverts the same: “Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:10). No, instead of “learning righteousness” man only adds iniquity to iniquity: “Because sentence against an evil work *is not executed speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11). Men regard God’s patience as indifference to their sins, thereby emboldening themselves in their wickedness: “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes” (Psa. 50:21). Yes, sooner or later, God will “reprove”—exhibiting His holiness, exercising His retributive justice. It was so here. Though Saul was now dead, yet his house was made to feel God’s avenging hand.

When David inquired the reason why God had sent this protracted famine upon the land of Israel, He made known to him the cause thereof. The king thereupon entered into a conference with those who had been wronged, and invited them to state what reparation should be made for Saul’s outrages upon their people. Their response was very striking, illustrating the fact that those from whom it is to be the least expected often evince much more magnanimity than others who have enjoyed far greater privileges. The Gibeonites made it known that they sought no pecuniary gain, being far more concerned that the Divine justice should be compensated: “Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up *unto the LORD* in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose” (2 Sam. 21:6).

Let it be duly noted, first, that the Gibeonites had for many years held their peace, neither complaining to David for the unapprised wrong Saul had done them, nor disturbing the kingdom by their protests and demands. It was not until the Lord had interposed on their behalf, and until David himself had inquired what satisfaction should be made for the grievous wrong which had been done them, that they preferred the above request. It was in no blood-thirsty and vindictive spirit they now spoke. Their request was neither unjust nor unreasonable: they asked for no lives but those of Saul’s own family: he had done the wrong, and therefore it was but right that *his house* should pay the price. To this day, the heirs may be lawfully sued for their parents’ debts. True, in the ordinary course of things, children are not to be slain for the crimes of their father (Deut. 24:16). but the case of the Gibeonites was altogether extraordinary.

Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that the Lord had definitely intervened on behalf of these injured ones, and therefore what is here before us should be considered from the *Divine* viewpoint. However shocking this incident may appear to us, or however contrary to our sense of the fitness of things, let us beware of condemning or even criticizing that which the Most High inspired. "God had made Himself an immediate party to the cause, and, no doubt, put it into the hearts of the Gibeonites to make this demand . . . Let parents take heed of sin, especially the sin of cruelty and oppression, for their children's sake, who may be smarting for it by the just hand of God, when they are in their graves. Guilt and a curse are a bad entail on a family" (Matthew Henry). A most solemn warning was furnished for all future generations in this tragic incident.

Finally, let it not be overlooked that God owned what was done on this occasion: "And after that God was entreated for the land" (2 Sam. 21:14). God's judgments are not subject to those rules which human judgments are to be regulated by, nor does He stand in need of any apology from us. Jehovah's actions are not to be measured by our petty tape lines. Where we cannot understand His ways, we must bow silently before Him, assured that He will yet fully vindicate Himself and at the finish close the mouth of every rebel who now quarrels with His providences. However, it should not be overlooked that, in this particular punishment which fell upon Saul's descendants it was by no means a case of innocent and unoffending members of his house being dealt with, for God Himself speaks of them as a "bloody house" (v. 1)—they were actuated by their father's cruel spirit and walked in his steps.

"Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul whom the LORD did choose" (v. 6). Notice the "whom *we* will hang up," which showed their consideration for the king: they were quite willing to bear the odium of the execution. As we have already pointed out, this was not for the gratification of personal revenge—"not for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel" (v. 4). "Hang them *up unto the LORD*"—as a sacrifice unto His justice, and also as a warning unto Israel to molest them no more. "In Gibeah of Saul"—as an object lesson to those who had assisted him in his persecution and slaughter of the innocent. "And the king said, I will give them" (v. 6). Obviously David had never consented to their proposal had it been wrong in the sight of God. Inasmuch as the selection of these seven men was left to David, opportunity was afforded him to spare the son of Jonathan (v. 7).

"But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barziailai the Meholathite" (v. 8). The first two were Saul's own sons, which he had by a concubine. The other five were grandsons which his daughter had borne to Adriel, but who had been brought up by their aunt. Let it be recalled that the mother of these five men had been promised to David by her father, but he treacherously gave her to Adriel, with the intention of provoking the sweet singer of Israel (1 Sam. 18:19). Herein we may perceive more clearly the workings of Divine justice. Commenting on this particular point Joseph Hall said, "It is a dangerous matter to offer injury to any of God's faithful ones: if their meekness have easily remitted it, God will not pass it over without a severe rebuke, though it may be long afterwards."

"And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites" (2 Sam. 21:9). We are well aware that in this sentimental age and when capital punishment is being more and more opposed, many will consider David did wrong in carrying out the wishes of the

Gibeonites. Some have so perversely wrested this incident that they have not hesitated to charge David with seizing the opportunity to wreak his own spite upon an old enemy. But surely it is evident to all right-minded people that David could do no other: it was not from any private animosity which he bore to the house of Saul, but that obedience to God required his compliance with the request of the Gibeonites, while his having at heart the good of the Nation left him no other alternative. "Those executions must not be complained at as cruel which are become necessary in the public welfare. Better that seven of Saul's bloody house be hanged, than that all Israel should be famished" (Matthew Henry).

"And they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest" (v. 9). "As these persons were hanged by the express appointment of God for an anathema, an accursed thing, a national atonement to Divine justice, they were left on the tree or gibbet till some tokens of the Lord's reconciliation were afforded by seasonable rains" (Thomas Scott). Yet here again we may perceive the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah, and His superiority to all restrictions. Though He had expressly forbidden magistrates to slay children in order to avenge the crimes of their parents (Deut. 24:16), nevertheless, God Himself is bound by no such limitations. He had also given command to Israel, "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he is to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; his body shall *not remain* all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, (for he that is hanged is accursed of God)" (Deut. 21:22, 23); yet here we see the Lord moving David to do exactly the contrary! Why? if not to make it plain that He Himself is *above* all Law, free to do just as He pleases.

"And were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest" (2 Sam. 21:9). Every detail here evidenced the superintending hand of the Lord. First, the *place* appointed for this execution, namely, in Saul's own city, so that the seven victims were, practically speaking, put to death on their own doorstep. Second, the *manner* of their execution, which was by hanging before the Lord, to demonstrate they were accursed in His sight. Third, the *time* of their execution, namely, "in the days of harvest." Those days were selected to make it the more manifest that they were being sacrificed for the specific purpose of appeasing God's wrath, which had for three years withheld from them harvest mercies, and to obtain His favour for the present season. Who, then, can reasonably doubt that everything was here done according to the Divine ordering?

But is there not also an important practical lesson *for us*? Surely there must be, for the natural ever adumbrates the spiritual. Nor should it be difficult to ascertain what is here figuratively set forth. While those bloody sons of Saul were spared, the mercies of God were withheld; but when they had been hanged, "God was entreated for the land" (v. 14). And is it not the same with us today individually? If we fail to deny self, and on the contrary indulge our corruptions, how can we expect the smile of the Lord to be upon us? "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jer. 5:25). Do we sufficiently realize dear reader, that the One with whom we have to do is the thrice Holy God? If we play with fire we must expect to get our fingers burned, and if we trifle with sin and trample upon the Divine precepts, we shall suffer severely.

We are well aware that this aspect of the Truth is not a very palatable one. Those who lead a life of self-pleasing wish to hear only of the grace of God. But does not the very grace of God teach us *to deny* “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12)! Grace is given not to countenance evil doing, but to counteract the workings of an evil nature. Grace is given to enable its recipient to pluck out right eyes and cut off right hands: in other words, it is a supernatural principle which produces supernatural effects. Is it doing so in you and me or are we after all our profession, strangers to it? Have we diligently sought to use the grace already imparted? If not, can we really expect more grace until we penitently confess our failures and put right with God what we know to be displeasing in His sight?

We are also well aware that this aspect of the Truth is utterly ignored by the great majority of preachers and “Bible teachers” today, who instead of pressing the holy claims of God and rebuking self-indulgence, are seeking either to amuse or soothe their hearers in their sins. It is not that we are inculcating a strange doctrine, introducing that which opposes Divine grace. No, those servants of God in the past who most extolled the grace of God also maintained the requirements of His righteousness. As a sample of what we have in mind, take these words of Matthew Henry’s on 2 Samuel 21:9, “There is no way of appeasing God’s anger but by mortifying and crucifying our lusts and corruptions. In vain do we expect mercy from God, unless we do justice upon our sins.” What have we said above which is any stronger than that? If there were no other way of placating God’s wrath than the slaying of Saul’s sons, so now our sins must be put to death if His approbation is to be enjoyed.

“Then there was a famine in the days of David, three years, year after year” (v. 1). Is that nothing more than an item of ancient history? Has it no voice for us today? Does it not accurately describe the actual experience of many a backslidden Christian? Is it not pertinent to the case of some of our readers? Has there not long been a famine *in your soul*, dear friend? Ah, there *is* indeed a most important practical application of the above incident to our own lives. If you are painfully aware that such is the case with you, are you not desirous of that famine being removed? Then take to heart what has been before us above: put matters right with God—banish from your life that which withholds from you His approval. “He that covereth his sin shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

“And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of Heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night” (2 Sam. 21:10). It is touching to behold this poor mother keeping so lengthy a vigil over the corpses of her two sons. True, she made no attempt to cut down the bodies, thereby evidencing her submission to the righteous judgment of God; yet was she not guilty of inordinate grief? As Matthew Henry says, “She indulged her grief, as mourners are apt to do, to no good purpose. When sorrow, in such cases, is in danger of excess, we should rather study how to divert and pacify it, rather than humour and gratify it. Why should we thus harden ourselves in sorrow?”

“And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa. And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son, and they

gathered the bones of them that were hanged. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son they buried in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father” (vv. 12-14).

This respectful interment of the bones of Saul and his descendants by the king, is clear proof that David had not been actuated by a spirit of spite and revenge when he had delivered them up to the Gibeonites. But what, let us ask, is the spiritual lesson for us in this detail? If those sons of Saul may justly be taken as a figure of our sins (that which withholds God’s blessings from us), and if the slaying of them adumbrates the believer’s mortification of his lusts, then surely it is no far-fetched fantasy to regard the interment of their bones as indicating we are to *bury in oblivion* those disgraceful things of the past: “Never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee” (Ezek. 16:63). Instead of holding up to the public view—under the pretence of “giving your testimony”—those things we hope are under the blood, let us draw a veil over them.

The last eight verses of our chapter give a brief summary of the events which occurred during the closing years of David’s reign. That which is most prominent in them is the further battles which took place between Israel and the Philistines, and the slaying of certain antagonistic giants. Here, too, the spiritual application is not difficult to perceive. There is *no furlough* in the fight of faith! The flesh continues to lust against the spirit till the end of our earthly pilgrimage, and therefore the work of mortification is to go on till God calls us to our rest. When the seven sons of Saul have been put to death, other foes (lusts) will seek to prevail against us, and they, too, must be resisted, and (by grace) be overcome. Let it be duly noted that, though David grew old and feeble, he did not grow indolent (2 Sam. 21:15, 22)! The mention of the “giants” at *the close* of the chapter intimates that the most powerful of our enemies are reserved for the last great conflict: yet through our “David” we shall be more than conquerors.—A.W.P.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

8. *The Messianic.*

In the second half of last month's article it was shown that the name "Israel" has a twofold application, both in the Old Testament and in the New, being given to the natural descendants of Jacob and also to all believers. Nor should this in anyway surprise or stumble us, seeing that the one whom God first denominated "Israel" was henceforth the man with the *double name*, according as he was viewed naturally or spiritually. It should also be duly noted that God's giving this name unto Jacob is *recorded twice* in Genesis: "And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (32:28); "And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name" (35:10). Is there not here something more than bare emphasis, namely, a Divine intimation to us of the *dual* application or usage of the name?

This double significance of the word "Israel" holds good of other similar terms. For example, to the "seed of Abraham": "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). The "children of Abraham" are of two kinds, physical and spiritual, those who are his by nature, and those who are connected with him by grace. "To be the children of a person in a figurative sense, is equivalent to 'resemble' him, and to be involved in his fate, good or bad. The idea is of similarity both in character and in circumstances. To be 'the children of God,' is to be like God; and also, as the Apostle states, it is to be 'heirs of God.' To be 'the children of Abraham' is to resemble Abraham, to imitate his conduct, and to share his blessedness" (John Brown). To which we may add, to be "the children of the Wicked One" (Matt. 13:38) is to be conformed to his vile image, both in character and in conduct (John 8:44), and to share his dreadful portion (Matt. 25:41).

The carnal Jews of Christ's day boasted, "Abraham is our father," to which He made answer, "if ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). Ah, the *spiritual* children of Abraham "*walk in the steps of that faith*" which he had (Rom. 4:12). Those who are his spiritual children are "*blessed with faithful Abraham*" (Gal. 3:9). The Apostle was there combating the error which the Judaisers were seeking to hoist upon the Gentiles, namely, that none but Jews, or Gentiles proselyted by circumcision, were the "children of Abraham," and that none but those could be partakers of his blessing. But so far from that being the case, all unbelieving Jews shut Heaven against themselves, while all who believed from the heart, being united to Christ—who is "*the Son of Abraham*" (Matt. 1:1)—enter into all the blessings which God covenanted unto Abraham.

The *double* significance pertaining to the expression "children" or "seed" of Abraham, was very plainly intimated at the beginning, when Jehovah said unto the patriarch, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore" (Gen. 22:17). What anointed eye can fail to see in the likening of Abraham's seed unto the "stars of Heaven" a reference to his *spiritual* children, who are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1); and in the likening of his seed unto the "sand which is upon the seashore" a reference to his *natural* descendants, who occupied the land of Palestine?

Again—the same is true of the word "Jew." "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which

is one *inwardly*; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:28, 29). What could be plainer than that? In the light of such a Scripture, is it not passing strange that there are today those—boasting loudly of their orthodoxy and bitterly condemning all who differ—who insist that the name “Jew” belongs only to the natural descendants of Jacob, and ridicule the idea that there is any such thing as spiritual Jews? When the Holy Spirit here tells us “he is a Jew, who is one inwardly,” He manifestly signifies that the true “Jew,” the antitypical “Jew” is a *regenerate* person, who enjoys the “praise” or approbation of God Himself.

Here, then, is the reply to the childish prattle of those who declare that “Israel” means *Israel*, and “Jew” means *Jew*, and that when Scripture speaks of “Jerusalem” or “Zion” nothing else is referred to than those actual places. But this is nothing more than a deceiving of ourselves by the mere *sound* of words: as well argue that “flesh” signifies nothing more than the physical body, that “water” (John 4:14) refers only to that material element, and that “death” (John 5:24) means naught but physical dissolution. There is an end to all interpretation when such a foolish attitude is adopted. Each passage calls for careful and prayerful study, and it has to be fairly ascertained *which* the Spirit has in view; whether the carnal Israel or the spiritual, the literal “seed of Abraham” or the mystical, the natural “Jew” or the regenerate, the earthly Jerusalem or the heavenly, the typical “Zion” or the antitypical. God has not written His Word so that the ordinary reader is made independent of that help which He deigns to give through His accredited *teachers*.

It may seem to some of our readers that we have wandered a considerable distance away from the subject of the Messianic Covenant. Not so: that covenant is made with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,” and it is impossible to understand those terms aright until we can determine *which* “Israel” is meant. So many, assuming that there is but one “Israel” in Scripture, namely, the Hebrew nation, have insisted that the promise of Jeremiah 31:31 is entirely future, receiving its accomplishment in “the millennium.” To make good their contention, they must show: first, that it does not and cannot refer to the mystical “Israel”; second, that it has not already been made good; third, that it will be accomplished in connection with the literal Nation in a day to come—concerning which we ask, Where is there one word in the *New Testament* which declares God will yet make a new covenant with national Israel?

What, then, does Jeremiah 31:31 signify? Has that Divine promise already received its fulfillment, or is it now in course of receiving its fulfillment, or does it yet await fulfillment? This is far more than a technical question devoid of practical interest: it raises the issue, has the Christian a personal interest therein? If the older commentators be consulted—the ablest teachers God has granted to His people since the Reformation—it will be found that they unanimously taught that Jeremiah 31:31 receives its accomplishment in this present dispensation. While we freely grant this is not conclusive proof that they were right, and while we must call no man (or set of men) “father,” yet the writer for one is today very slow in allowing that the godly Puritans were all wrong on this matter, and slower still to turn away from those luminaries which God granted in the brightest period of the Church’s history since the time of the Apostles, in order to espouse the theories of our moderns. Then let us seek to “*Prove* all things: hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

In his comments upon Jeremiah 31:31-33, Matthew Henry said, “This refers to Gospel times . . . for of Gospel times the Apostle understands it (Heb. 8:8, 9), where the whole

passage is quoted, as a summary of the Covenant of Grace made with believers in Jesus Christ.” “The first solemn promulgation of this new covenant, made, ratified and established, was on the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after the resurrection of Christ. It answered to the promulgation of the Law on mount Sinai, the same space of time after the deliverance of the people out of Egypt. From this day forward the ordinances of worship and the institutions of the new covenant became obligatory upon all” (John Owen). To which we may also add that C. H. Spurgeon throughout his sermon on Jeremiah 31:32 speaks of that covenant as the Messianic one: “In the Covenant of Grace God conveys Himself to you and becomes yours.”

But we are not dependent upon human authorities: each one may see for himself that the New Testament makes it unmistakably plain that the promises contained in Jeremiah 31:31-33 are made good in the Christian economy. In the Epistle to the Hebrews—which supplies an infallible key to the interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures—Paul quotes this very passage for the express purpose of showing that its terms provided an accurate description of Gospel blessings. The Apostle’s argument in Hebrews 8 would be entirely meaningless did not Jeremiah’s prediction supply a vivid portrayal of that order of things which Christ has established. First, he declares, “But *now* (and not in some future “millennium”!) hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He *is* (not “will be”!) the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (v. 6), and what is added is in confirmation of this statement.

Before turning to the light which the New Testament casts upon Jeremiah 31, it should be noted that at the time God announced His purpose and promise through the Prophet, the fleshly descendants of Abraham were divided into *two* hostile groups. They had separate kings and separate centres of worship; and were at enmity one with another. As such they fitly adumbrated the great division between God’s elect among the Jews and the Gentiles in their natural and dispensational state. There was between these a “middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14); yea, there was actual “enmity” between them (Eph. 2:16). But just as God announced through Ezekiel that Judah and Israel “shall become one” (37:16, 17), so His elect amongst the Jews and the Gentiles are now one in Christ (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-18); and therefore are all born again believers designated the “children” and “seed” of Abraham, and blessed with him (Gal. 3:7, 9, 29).

It is pertinent to raise the point, If the principal reference in Jeremiah’s prophecy was unto the Gospel Church of this era, wherein *Gentiles* so largely predominate, why is the covenant there said to be made with “the house of *Israel* and the house of Judah?” Several answers may be given to this question. First, to make it clear that this covenant is not made with all the fallen descendants of *Adam*, but only with God’s *chosen* people. Second, because during Old Testament times the great majority of God’s elect were taken out of the Hebrew nation. Third, to signify that the Jewish theocracy has given place to the Christian Church: “He taketh away the first (covenant) that He may establish the second” (Heb. 10:9 and cf. Matt. 21:43). Fourth, to intimate that the Old Testament saints and the New Testament form one Body, being the same Church of God in different dispensations. Fifth, because it is a common thing to call the antitype by that designation which belongs to its type.

Returning now to Hebrews 8. The grand design of the Apostle in this Epistle was to demonstrate that the Lord Christ is the Mediator and Surety of a vastly superior covenant (or economy) than that wherein the worship and service of God obtained under the old

covenant or economy of the Law. From which it necessarily followed that His priesthood was far more excellent than the Aaronic, and to this end he not only gives Scriptural proof that God had promised to make a new covenant, but he declares the very nature and properties of it in the words of the Prophet. In particular, from this Old Testament citation, the imperfections of the old covenant (the Siniatic) is evident by *its issues*: it did not effectually secure peace and fellowship between God and the people, for, being broken by them, they were cast off by Him, and this rendered all its other benefits and advantages useless. This demonstrated the need for a new and better covenant, which would infallibly secure the obedience of the people forever.

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (Heb. 8:7). The reference is to that solemn transaction which took place at Sinai. That was not the “first” covenant absolutely, but the first entered into with Israel nationally. Previously, God made a covenant with Adam (Hosea 6:6), which in some respects the Siniatic adumbrated, for it was chiefly one of *works*. So too He had made a covenant with Abraham, which shadowed out the Everlasting Covenant, inasmuch as *grace* predominated in it. The “faultiness” of the Siniatic Covenant was due to the fact that it was wholly *external*, being accompanied by no internal efficacy: it set before Israel an objective standard, but it communicated no power for them to measure up to it. It treated with *natural* Israel, and therefore the Law was impotent “through the weakness of the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). It provided sacrifices for sin, yet their value was only ceremonial and transient. Because of its inadequacy a new and better covenant was needed.

“For finding fault with them, He said, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Heb. 8:8). The opening “For” intimates that the Apostle was now confirming what he had declared in verses 6, 7. The “finding fault” may refer either to the covenant or the covenantees—“with it” or “with them.” In view of what is said in verse 9, the translation of the A. V. is to be preferred: it was against the people God complained, for their having broken His covenant. The word “Behold” announces the deep importance of what follows, calling our diligent and admiring attention to the same. The time fixed for the making of this new covenant is defined in “the days come.” In the Old Testament, the season of Christ’s appearing was called “the world to come” (Heb. 2:5) and it was a periphrasis of Him that He was—“He that should come” (Matt. 11:3). The faith of the Old Testament Church was principally exercised in the expectation of His advent.

The subject-matter of what Jeremiah specially announced was a “covenant.” “The new covenant, as collecting into one all the promises of grace given from the foundation of the world, accomplished in the actual exhibiting of Christ, and confirmed in His death, and by the sacrifice of His blood, thereby became the sole rule of new spiritual ordinances of worship suited thereunto, being the great object of the faith of the saints of the Old Testament, and is the great foundation of all our present mercies [‘Whereof the Holy Spirit also is witness *to us*: for after that He had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord’: Heb. 10:15, 16—yes, ‘is witness *to us*,’—and not to those who live in some future ‘millennium’—A.W.P.].

“There was in it a recapitulation of all promises of grace. God had not made any promise, any intimation of His love or grace unto the Church in general, nor unto any particular believer, but He brought it all into *this* covenant, so as that they should be esteemed, all and every one of them, to be given and spoken unto every individual person that hath

an interest in this covenant. Hence all the promises made unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with all the other patriarchs, and the oath of God whereby they were confirmed, are *all* of them made *unto us*, and do belong unto us, no less than they did unto them to whom they were first given, if we are made partakers of this covenant. The Apostle gives an instance of this in the singular promise made unto Joshua, which he applies unto Christians: 13:6” (John Owen).—A.W.P.

A FOURFOLD SALVATION.

Some twenty years ago we wrote a booklet entitled "A Threefold Salvation," and in 1929 (p. 64) published the same in article form in this magazine. It was based upon the instruction we had received during our spiritual infancy. Like most of that early teaching, it was defective, because inadequate. As we have continued our study of God's Word, further light has been granted us on this subject—yet, alas, how ignorant we still are—and this has enabled us to see that, in the past, we had started at the wrong point, for instead of beginning at the beginning, we commenced almost in the middle. Instead of salvation from sin being threefold, as once supposed, we now perceive it to be fourfold. How good is the Lord in granting us additional light, yet it is now our duty to walk therein, and, as Providence affords us opportunity, to give it out. May the Holy Spirit so graciously guide us that God may be glorified and His people edified.

The subject of God's "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3), as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures and made known in Christian experience, is worthy of a life's study. Anyone who supposes that there is now no longer any need for him to prayerfully search for a fuller understanding of the same, needs to ponder, "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Cor. 8:2). The fact is that the moment any of us really takes it for granted that he already knows all that there is to be known on *any* subject treated of in Holy Writ, he at once cuts himself off from any further light thereon. That which is most needed by all of us in order to a better understanding of Divine things is not a brilliant intellect, but a truly humble heart and a teachable spirit, and for *that* we should daily and fervently pray—for we possess it not by nature.

The subject of Divine salvation has, sad to say, provoked age-long controversy and bitter contentions even among professing Christians. There is comparatively little real agreement even upon this elementary yet vital truth. Some have insisted that salvation is by Divine grace, others have argued it is by human endeavour. A number have sought to defend a middle position, and while allowing that the salvation of a lost sinner must be by Divine grace, were not willing to concede that it is by *grace alone*, alleging that God's grace must be plussed by something from the creature, and very varied have been the opinions of what that "something" must be—baptism, church-membership, the performing of good works, holding out faithful to the end, etc. On the other hand, there are those who not only grant that salvation is by grace alone, but who *deny* that God uses any *means* whatever in the accomplishment of His eternal purpose to save His elect—overlooking the fact that the sacrifice of Christ is the grand "means"!

It is true that the Church of God was blessed with super-creation blessings, being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinated unto the adoption of children, and nothing could or can alter that grand fact. It is equally true that if sin had never entered the world, none had been in need of salvation from it. But sin *has* entered, and the Church fell in Adam and came under the curse and condemnation of God's Law. Consequently, the elect, equally with the reprobate, share in the capital offense of their federal head, and partake of its fearful entail: "In Adam *all* die" (1 Cor. 15:22), "By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Rom. 5:18). The result of this is that all are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts" (Eph. 4:18), so that the members of the mystical Body of Christ are "by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3), and hence they are alike in dire need of God's salvation.

Even where there is fundamental soundness in their views upon Divine salvation, yet many have such inadequate and one-sided conceptions that other aspects of this truth, equally important and essential, are often overlooked and tacitly denied. How many, for example, would be capable of giving a simple exposition of the following texts: "Who *hath* saved us" (2 Tim. 1:9). "*Work* out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12), "Now is our salvation *nearer* than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11). Now those verses do not refer to three different salvations, but to three separate aspects of one and unless we learn to distinguish sharply between them, there can be nothing but confusion and cloudiness in our thinking. Those passages present three distinct phases and stages of salvation: salvation as an accomplished fact, as a present process, and as a future prospect.

So many today ignore these distinctions, jumbling them together. Some contend for one and argue against the other two; and vice versa. Some insist they are already saved, and deny that they are now being saved. Some declare that salvation is entirely future, and deny that it is in any sense already accomplished. Both are wrong. The fact is that the great majority of professing Christians fail to see that "salvation" is one of the most comprehensive terms in all the Scriptures, including predestination, regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification. They have far too cramped an idea of the meaning and scope of the word "salvation" (as it is used in the Scriptures), narrowing its range too much, generally confining their thoughts to but a single phase. They suppose "salvation" means no more than the new birth or the forgiveness of sins. Were one to tell them that salvation is a protracted process, they would view him with suspicion; and if he affirmed that salvation is something awaiting us in the future, they would at once dub him a heretic. Yet *they* would be the ones to err.

Ask the average Christian, Are you saved, and he answers, Yes, I was saved in such and such a year; and that is as far as his thoughts on the subject go. Ask him, to what do you owe your salvation? and "the finished work of Christ" is the sum of his reply. Tell him that each of those answers is seriously defective, and he strongly resents your aspersion. As an example of the confusion which now prevails, we quote the following from a tract on Philippians 2:12, "To whom are those instructions addressed? The opening words of the Epistle tell us: 'To the saints in Christ Jesus' . . . Thus they were all believers! and could not be required to work for their salvation, for they already possessed it." Alas that so very few today perceive anything wrong in such a statement. Another "Bible teacher" tells us that "save thyself" (1 Tim. 4:16) must refer to deliverance from *physical* ills, as Timothy was already saved spiritually. True, yet it is equally true that he was then in process of being saved, and also a fact that his salvation was then future.

Let us now supplement the first three verses quoted and show there are other passages in the New Testament which definitely refer to each distinct *tense* of salvation. First, salvation as *an accomplished fact*: "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50), "by grace ye have been saved" (Greek, and so translated in the R.V.—Eph. 2:8), "according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). Second, salvation as *a present process*, in course of accomplishment, not yet completed: "Unto us which are being saved" (1 Cor. 1:18—R.V. and Bagster Interlinear); "Them that believe to the saving (not 'salvation') of the soul" (Heb. 10:39). Third, salvation as *a future prospect*: "Sent forth to minister for them who *shall be* heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14), "receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able *to save* your souls" (James 1:21), "Kept by the power of God through faith

unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). Thus, by putting together these different passages, we are clearly warranted in formulating the following statement: every genuine Christian has been saved, is now being saved, and will yet be saved—how and from what, we shall endeavour to show.

As further proof of how many-sided is the subject of God’s great salvation and how that in Scripture it is viewed from various angles, take the following: “by *grace* are ye saved” (Eph. 2:8), “saved by His (Christ’s) *life*” (i.e.) by His resurrection life (Rom. 5:9), “thy *faith* hath saved thee” (Luke 7:50), “the engrafted Word which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21), “saved by hope” (Rom. 8:24), “saved yet as by *fire*” (1 Cor. 3:15), “the like figure where unto *baptism* doth also now save us” (1 Peter 3:21). Ah, my reader, the Bible is not the lazy man’s book, nor can it be soundly expounded by those who do not devote the whole of their time, and that for years, to its prayerful study. It is not that God would bewilder us, but that He would *humble* us, drive us to our knees, make us dependent upon His Spirit. Not to the proud—who are wise in their own esteem—are its heavenly secrets opened.

In like manner it may be shown from Scripture that the *cause* of salvation is not a single one, as so many suppose—the blood of Christ. Here, too, it is necessary to distinguish between things which differ. First, the *originating* cause of salvation is the *eternal purpose of God*, or, in other words, the predestinating grace of the Father. Second, the *meritorious* cause of salvation is the mediation of Christ, this having particular respect to the legal side of things, or, in other words, His fully meeting the demands of the Law on the behalf and in the place of those He redeems. Third, the *efficient* cause of salvation is the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit which respect the experimental side of it; or, in other words, the Spirit works *in us* what Christ purchased *for us*. Thus, we owe our personal salvation equally to each Person in the Trinity, and not to one (the Son) more than to the others. Fourth, the *instrumental* cause is our faith, obedience, and perseverance: though we are not saved because of them, equally true is it that we cannot be saved (according to God’s appointment) without them.

In the opening paragraph we have stated that in our earlier effort we erred as to the starting point. In writing upon a threefold salvation we began with salvation from the penalty of sin, which is our justification. But our salvation does not begin there, as we knew well enough even then: alas that we so blindly followed our erring preceptors. Our salvation originates, of course, in the *eternal purpose of God*, in His predestinating of us to everlasting glory. As this prime aspect of our salvation is being fully covered in our present articles upon Election, there is no need for us to write thereon here.

“Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9). That has reference to God’s *decree* of election: His chosen people were *then* saved, completely, in the Divine purpose, and all that we shall now say has to do with the performing of that purpose, the accomplishing of that decree, the actualization of that salvation.

I. *Salvation from the Pleasure of Sin.*

It is here that God begins in His actual *application* of salvation unto His elect. God saves us from the pleasure or love of sin before He delivers from the penalty or punishment of sin. Necessarily so, for it would be neither an act of holiness nor of righteousness were He to grant a full pardon to one who was still a rebel against Him, loving that which

He hates. God is a God of order throughout, and nothing ever more evidences the perfection of His works than the orderliness of them. And *how* does God save His people from the pleasure of sin? The answer is by imparting to them a nature which hates evil and loves holiness. This takes place when they are born again, so that actual salvation begins with regeneration. Of course it does: where else could it commence? Fallen man can neither perceive his desperate need of salvation, nor come to Christ for it, till he has been renewed by the Holy Spirit.

“He hath made everything beautiful in His time” (Eccl. 3:11), and much of the beauty of God’s spiritual handiwork is lost upon us unless we duly observe our “time.” Has not the Spirit Himself emphasized this in the express enumeration He has given us in, “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom. 8:29, 30)? Verse 29 announces the Divine foreordination; verse 30 states the manner of its actualization. It seems passing strange that with this Divinely-defined method before them, so many preachers begin with our justification, instead of with that effectual call (from death unto life—our regeneration) which precedes it. Surely it is most obvious that regeneration must first take place in order to lay a foundation for our justification. Justification is by faith (Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1; Gal. 3:8), and the sinner must be Divinely quickened before he is capable of believing savingly.

Ah, does not the last statement made throw light upon and explain what we have said is so “passing strange”? Preachers today are so thoroughly imbued with free-willism that they have departed almost wholly from that sound evangelism which marked our forefathers. The radical difference between Arminianism and Calvinism is that the system of the former revolves around the *creature*, whereas the system of the latter has the *Creator* for the center of its orbit. The Arminian allots to *man* the *first* place, the Calvinist gives *God* that position of honour. Thus the Arminian begins his discussion of salvation with justification, for the sinner must *believe* before he can be forgiven; further back he will not go, for he is unwilling that man should be made *nothing of*. But the instructed Calvinist begins with election, descends to regeneration, and then shows that being born again (by the sovereign act of God, in which the creature has *no part*) the sinner is made capable of savingly believing the Gospel.

Saved from the pleasure or love of sin. What multitudes of people strongly resent being told that they delighted in evil! They would indignantly ask if we suppose them to be moral perverts? No indeed: a person may be thoroughly chaste and yet delight in evil. It may be that some of our own readers repudiate the charge that they have ever taken *pleasure* in sin, and would claim, on the contrary, that from earliest recollections they have detested wickedness in all its forms. Nor would we dare to call into question their sincerity; instead, we point out that it only affords another exemplification of the solemn fact that “the heart is *deceitful* above all things” (Jer. 17:9). But this is a matter that is not open to argument: the plain teaching of God’s Word deciding the point once and for all, and beyond its verdict there is no appeal. What, then, say the Scriptures?

So far from God’s Word denying that there is any delight to be found therein, it expressly speaks of “the *pleasures* of sin,” yet it immediately warns us that those pleasures are but “for a season” (Heb. 11:25), for the aftermath is painful and not pleasant; yea,

unless God intervenes in His sovereign grace, they entail eternal torment. So, too, the Word refers to those who are “*lovers of pleasure* more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). It is indeed striking to observe how often this discordant note is struck in Scripture. It mentions those who “*love vanity*” (Psa. 4:2), “him that loveth violence” (Psa. 11:5) “*thou lovest evil* more than good” (Psa. 52:3), “scorners delight in their scorning” (Prov. 1:22), “they which *delight in* the abominations” (Isa. 66:3), “their abominations were according as they loved” (Hosea 9:10), “who hate the good and love the evil” (Micah 3:2), “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). To *love* sin is far worse than to *commit* it, for a man may be suddenly tripped up and commit it through frailty.

The fact is, my reader, that we are not only born into this world with an evil nature, but with hearts that are thoroughly in love with sin. Sin is a native element. We are wedded to our lusts, and of ourselves no man is able to alter the bent of our corrupt nature any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots. But what is impossible with man is possible to God, and when He takes us in hand this is where He begins—by saving us from the pleasure or love of sin. This is the great miracle of grace, for the Almighty stoops down and picks up a loathsome leper from the dunghill, and makes him a new creature in Christ, so that the things he once loved he now hates, and the things he once hated he now loves. God commences by saving us from ourselves. He does not save us from the penalty until He has delivered us from the love of it.

And how is this miracle of grace accomplished, or rather, exactly *what does it consist of?* Negatively, not by eradicating the evil nature, nor even by refining it. Positively, by communicating a new nature, a holy nature which loathes that which is evil and delights in all that is truly good. To be more specific. First, God saves His people from the pleasure or love of sin by putting His holy awe in their hearts, for “the fear of the LORD is to *hate evil*” (Prov. 8:13), and again, “by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Prov. 16:6). Second, God saves His people from the pleasure of sin by communicating to them a new and vital principle: “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5), and where the love of God rules the heart, the love of sin is dethroned. Third, God saves His people from the love of sin by the Holy Spirit’s drawing their affections unto things above, thereby taking them off the things which formerly enthralled them.—A.W.P.

WELCOME TIDINGS.

Our object in compiling this annual feature is to evoke praise and thanksgiving on the part of those who are most deeply interested in this work, by quoting excerpts from some of the letters at hand telling of help and blessing received, under God, from these pages. This magazine is not issued as a commercial undertaking, but as a labour of love. In the technical sense of the term, it has never paid its way. Owing to the smallness of the circulation, it actually costs us 3/6 (ninety cents) to send the "Studies" to each person for a year, and were we dependent upon these who send us this amount annually, we would have been obliged to cease publishing long ago. But the Lord has graciously given this written ministry favour in the eyes of a number of His stewards, who forward gifts from 5/- and upwards, a few sending in part of their tithes; and this enables us to forward the magazine gratis to several hundreds each year: thus the majority are gainers by the generosity of the few. It is specially that these few may see their gifts are not wasted the following quotations are made.

The "Welcome Tidings" messages are written by us much earlier in the year than they are read by you. On several occasions in the past it was a real test of faith to sound this cheery note, for the meal in the barrel was real low, and it *looked* as though we might not be able to publish the July issue, let alone complete the year. It was then that we sought to carry out that word "*Hope thou in God*" (Psa. 42:5), and not once did He mock our confidence in Him. Of late years we have not been exercised along financial lines, rather is it a diminishing circulation which has most troubled us. Nor does it *look* as though there is any prospect of improvement; far otherwise. This shallow generation welcomes not anything that calls for *study*, and its flesh-pleasing devotees resent that which searches the heart or pricks the conscience. Thus we are still obliged to look unto the Lord: to prepare soil for the seed which He gives us to sow.

"Hope thou in God." What is it to "hope in God"? It is an expectation founded on faith in God, which enables the soul to wait upon Him. Though faith and hope are distinct graces, yet the latter will not be exercised when the former is inactive. This is clear from such passages as "we have access by *faith* into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in *hope* of the glory of God. . . Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in *believing*, that we may abound in *hope*, through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:2; 15:13). Faith looks upwards, but hope looks onward; faith appropriates, hope anticipates. Faith lays hold of the Divine promises, hope sustains the soul during the interval of waiting for their fulfillment.

"Hope thou in God." This is our desire in the face of a depressing outlook. With spirituality declining on every side, with genuine conversions becoming fewer, the prospects of securing new readers to take the place of old ones called Home, is less and less promising. Many of our friends have tried hard to interest others in this publication, but have been unsuccessful. Yet these discouraging features are really a challenge to "Hope thou in God": He changes not. He has again graciously sent in the necessary funds, and not a few encouraging letters, and therefore it seems clear He would have us continue plodding along, hoping in Himself.

"Once again I have the opportunity of thanking you for sending on your magazines. I cannot tell you what a help they are to me in the study of God's Word, especially those on Sanctification. My earnest prayer is that you may be enabled to continue this work. I have done my best to get my friends to have a copy, but it is very sad: I have had them

returned, and they do not want any more. One can only pray that their eyes may be opened to see the Truth." A much-tried Sister. Those who relish not the Holy Word of God and are unwilling to be probed by it are either unregenerate or in a terribly backslidden state.

"For another year I have been receiving the 'Studies,' and am thankful to be able to say I find them as profitable as ever. It would be difficult to say if one part were more helpful than another, for each article seems to meet a felt need. I may, however, say that your articles on Sanctification were very helpful, also the few papers on Experimental Preaching. I am, at times, inclined to almost envy you, that the Lord has called you apart from the strife, error and bitterness of the organized church-life of today. May He continue to bless you." Local Preacher. While it is still a great grief to be deprived of oral ministry, yet we are thankful God has brought us out from the humbuggery which now obtains so widely in the religious sphere.

"Thank you for sending me the 'Studies' for another year. I can truthfully say that I am always longing to get them, and usually read them twice before the next ones come. If only they would bring forth fruit to His glory. I am afraid I am like the lean kine which remained lean after all their eating—that is the way I feel anyway. What a blessing to have such a longsuffering Jehovah: no one else would bear with such an unfruitful creature. Many a time I feel that I have reason to praise the Lord for sending the 'Studies' to me, and I must say that I have enjoyed reading your splendid article on 'The Signs of the Times.' Modern tracts are so deceiving. This is a barren wilderness, resembling Sodom. I wonder if it will ever blossom like the rose." Reader in New Zealand. "Your 'Studies' have come to me regularly, and have been a source of great blessing. Certainly they cause one to 'stop, look, and listen,' searching the heart to see how far away from or how near to God we are walking in our daily lives. For myself I must acknowledge the need of correction often, and wonder many, many times how our loving heavenly Father can be so patient with me and so merciful to me. I do want to make my daily walk more acceptable and pleasing to Him." Friend in New Jersey.

"It is with deep gratitude to God that I pen these few lines to you: in my old age He has given me bountiful tokens of His redeeming love. Your 'Studies' are very helpful to me, as you deal with subjects out of the common, of which I had been practically ignorant. Few seem to believe in the very important work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of saints. Your magazine is a great blessing under God to me, and my constant prayer is that your work may increase in blessing." Brother in Australia. "The Lord hath in faithfulness afflicted me. I have called upon Him and He hath given me bodily loss and pain, but inward gain and peace. Praise Him! During my recent illness I fed upon the articles in the 'Studies,' and I do thank God always for you. I certainly value the 'Studies' above everything but the Bible itself. 'Vain-glory' was needed food to my soul." Sister in Colorado.

"As we were reading the 'Studies' we thought of your ministry to us as being an illustration of 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies' (Psa. 23:5). We are not able to find one in our town who would really value them. I am still praising God, although at times it seems to me I am nothing but a hypocrite, and my life so barren of fruit. I am glad He chastens me sore, and pray He will correct me as a child." Brother in Michigan. "I want to thank you for the article on 'Lying.' For over a month I had been entirely miserable. I knew it was something in me, and kept asking God to reveal it to me.

He did answer: I had written some letters which were misleading, and had also been guilty of lying in prayer. I thought it is sure that if I do these things I am not saved. One night I could not sleep, so kept asking God not to let me deceive myself. If I were not saved, to reveal it to me. Towards morning He gave me the blessed assurance I was saved, and, praise His name, forgiven. The following mail your article came! I cannot understand yet how one can be saved and do these things." A Friend in Alaska.

"No one writes to my soul as you do. You get down to where I live, and get underneath my stress of soul and Satan's assailing. I sit and meditate when I read, and have often said to my wife and others, 'I find nothing in literature like this: it is just different, and gets down to where I live with all my sins and problems, my fears and doubts, my heart-longings and joys.' I do try to preach the Word faithfully, and dare not preach anything else. Yet I find myself constantly in the midst of my messages bewailing my failures, confessing my sinfulness, telling of my groanings and longings for victory. There are times when I go from the church or even while there, just after I have preached, that my heart overflows and feels that God is pleased and has blessed. Then there are seasons when it seems as if I am all in the way of the Spirit, and God just cannot smile upon me. I am grieved that I am such a miserable, selfish, respectable hypocrite. Yet I know that I hate to grieve Him, and am ashamed that I do. I hope it will be the Lord's good pleasure to use you in furnishing us with these messages for a long while to come. I certainly do not have anything to fill the gap should they be discontinued." U.S.A. What a refreshing contrast are the heart-groanings of regenerate souls from the boastings of self-righteous Pharisees!

"I am sorry the articles on the Holy Spirit are now finished: they have been such a blessing to me. By God's grace your 'Studies' and book on 'The Sovereignty of God' have taught me more of the Word than ever I knew, and in such a way that my separation from the world's thoughts and ways have been so marked to myself that I have asked myself again and again, could I have been saved." A Brother in Canada. "The end of another year is at hand and I hope you have enough readers to encourage you to go on with this good work. I should be quite lost without it. I cannot express all that it has meant to me through the past difficult years. It has rebuked me, corrected, and encouraged, and I am indeed thankful to God for this light upon the way. I pray that His blessing may rest upon you and your dear wife during the coming year." Brother in Australia. "I have sent all the extra copies of 'Studies' to friends, with the prayer that they may become interested in them. Have also prepared four short articles on 'the Family Altar' and 'Believer's Sacrifices' based on your articles, and these are now appearing in our little paper. I know of one home where the Altar has been set up as a result of reading them. I wish it were possible to have your magazine in Spanish." Missionary in San Salvador.

"Many times while reading 'Studies' I think if only I could have had such reading these many years since I have had a hope in the mercy of God. My life and walk would have been less worldly. The heart-searchings, which are so vital to the life of a Christian, which have come to me through the writings from your pen, have, I feel, made spiritual things more real and the vanities of this world less desirable." Sister in New York. To God alone be all the glory.—A.W. and V. E. Pink.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

5. *Its Justice.*

Somewhat against our inclinations we have decided to depart again from the logical method of exposition, and instead of now proceeding with an orderly unfolding of this doctrine, we pause to deal with the principal objection which is made against the same. No sooner is the truth set forth of God's singling out certain of His creatures to be subjects of His special favours, than a general cry of protest is heard. No matter how much Scripture is quoted to the point nor how many plain passages be adduced in illustration and demonstration of it, the majority of those who profess to be Christians loudly object, alleging that such teaching slanders the Divine character, making God guilty of gross injustice. It seems, then, that this difficulty should be met, that reply should be made to such a criticism of the doctrine, ere we proceed any further with our attempt to give a systematic setting forth of it.

In such an age as ours, when the principles of democracy, socialism and communism are so widely and warmly espoused, in a day when human authority and dominion are being more and more despised, when it is the common custom to "speak evil of dignities" (Jude 8), it is scarcely surprising that so many who make no pretension of bowing to the authority of Holy Writ should rebel against the concept of God's being partial. But it is unspeakably dreadful to find the great majority of those who profess to receive the Scriptures as Divinely inspired, gnashing their teeth against its Author when informed that He has sovereignly elected a people to be His peculiar treasure, and to hear them charging Him with being a hateful Tyrant, a Monster of cruelty. Yet such blasphemies only go to show that "the carnal mind *is* enmity against God."

It is not because we have any hope of converting such rebels from the error of their ways that we feel constrained to take up the present aspect of our Subject—though it may please God in His infinite grace to use these feeble lines to the enlightening and convicting of a few of them. No, rather is it that some of God's dear people are disturbed by these ravings of His enemies, and know not how to answer in their own minds this objection, that if God makes a sovereign selection from among His creatures and predestinates them to blessings which He withholds from countless millions of their fellows, then, such partiality makes Him guilty of treating the latter unjustly. And yet the fact stares them in the face on every hand, both in creation and providence, that God distributes His mercies most *unevenly*. There is no equality in His bestowments either in physical health and strength, mental capacities, social status, or the comforts of this life. Why, then, should we be staggered when we learn that His *spiritual* blessings are distributed unevenly?

Before proceeding further it should be pointed out that the design of every false scheme and system of religion is to depict the character of God in such a way that it is agreeable to the tastes of the *carnal* heart, acceptable to depraved human nature. And *that* can only be done by a species of misrepresentation: the ignoring of those of His prerogatives and perfections which are objectionable, and the disproportionate emphasizing of those of His attributes which appeal to their selfishness—such as His love, mercy, and longsuffering. But let the character of God be faithfully presented as it is actually portrayed in the Scriptures—in the *Old* Testament as well as the *New*—and nine out of every ten church-goers will frankly state that they find it "impossible to love Him." The plain fact is, dear reader, that to the present generation the Most High of Holy Writ is "the unknown God."

It is just because people today are so ignorant of the Divine Character and so lacking in godly fear, that they are quite in the dark as to the nature and glory of Divine justice, presuming to arraign it. This is an age of blatant irreverence, wherein lumps of animate clay dare to prescribe what the Almighty ought and ought not to do. Our forefathers sowed the wind, and today their children are reaping the whirlwind. The "Divine right of kings" was scoffed at and tabooed by the sires, and now their offspring repudiate the "Divine rights of the King of kings." Unless the supposed "rights" of the creature are "respected," then our moderns have no respect for the Creator, and if His high sovereignty and absolute dominion over all be insisted upon, they hesitate not to vomit forth their condemnation of Him. And "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33)! God's own people are in danger of being infected by the poisonous gas which now fills the air of the religious world.

Not only is the miasmatic atmosphere obtained in most of the "churches" a serious menace to the Christian, but there is in each of us a serious tendency to humanize God: viewing His perfections through our own intellectual lenses instead of through the glass of Scripture, interpreting His attributes by human qualities. It was of this very thing that God complained of old when He said, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" (Psa. 50:21), which is a solemn warning for us to take to heart. What we mean is this: when we read of God's mercy or righteousness we are very apt to think of them according to the qualities of *man's* mercy and justice. But this is a serious mistake. The Almighty is not to be measured by any human standard: He is so infinitely above us that any comparison is utterly impossible, and therefore it is the height of madness for any finite creature to sit in judgment upon the ways of Jehovah.

Again—we need to be much on our guard against the folly of making invidious distinctions between the Divine perfections. For example, it is quite wrong for us to suppose that God is more glorious in His grace and mercy than He is in His power and majesty. But this mistake is often made. How many are more thankful unto God for blessing them with health than they are for His bestowing the Gospel upon them: but does it therefore follow that God's goodness in giving material things is greater than His goodness in bestowing spiritual blessings? Certainly not. Scripture often speaks of God's wisdom and power being manifested in creation, but where are we told of His grace and mercy in making the world? Inasmuch as men commonly fail to glorify God for His wisdom and power, does it thence follow that He is not to be so much adored for them? Beware of extolling one of the Divine perfections above another.

What is justice? It is treating each person equitably and fairly, giving to him his due. Divine justice is simply doing that which is right. But this raises the question, *What is due unto the creature?* what is it that God *ought* to bestow upon him? Ah, my friend, every sober-minded person will at once object to the introduction of that word "ought" in such a connection. And rightly so. The Creator is under no obligation whatever unto the works of His own hands. He alone has the right to decide whether such and such a creature should exist at all. He alone has the prerogative to determine the nature, status, and destiny of that creature: whether it shall be an animal, a man, or an angel; whether it shall be endowed with a soul and subsist forever, or be without a soul and endure only for a brief time; whether it shall be a vessel unto honour and taken into communion with Himself, or a vessel unto dishonour which is rejected by Him.

As the great Creator possessed perfect freedom to create or not create, to bring into existence whatever creatures He pleased (and a visit to the zoo will show He has created some which strike the beholder as exceedingly strange ones); and therefore He has the unquestionable right to decree concerning them as He pleases. The justice of God in election and preterition, then, is grounded upon His high sovereignty. The dependence of all creatures upon Him is entire. His proprietorship of all creatures is indisputable. His dominion over all creatures is absolute. Let these facts be established from Scripture—and their complete demonstration therefrom is a very simple matter—and where is the creature who can with the slightest propriety say unto the Lord most high. “What doest *Thou*?” Instead of the Creator being under any obligation to His creature, it is the creature who is under binding obligations to the One who gave it existence and now sustains its very life.

God has the absolute right to do as He pleases with the creatures of His own hand: “Hath not the Potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?” (Rom. 9:21) is His own assertion. Therefore He may give to one and withhold from another, bestow five talents on one and only a single talent on another, without any imputation of injustice. If He may *give* grace and glory to whom He will without such a charge, then He may also *decree to do so* without any such charge. Are men chargeable with injustice when they choose their own favorites, friends, companions, and confidants? Then obviously there is no injustice in *God’s* choosing whom He will to bestow His special favours upon, to indulge with communion with Himself now and to dwell with Him for all eternity. Is a man free to make selection of the woman which he desires for his wife? and does he in anyway *wrong* the other women whom he passes by? Then is the great God *less free* to make selection of those who constitute the Spouse of His Son? Shame, shame, upon those who would ascribe less freedom to the Creator than to the creature.

Upon a little reflection it should be evident to all right-minded people that there is no parity between human and Divine justice: human justice requires that we should give each of our fellows his due, whereas no creature is due *anything* from God, not even what He is pleased to sovereignly give him. In his most reverent discussion of the nature of God’s attributes, W. Twisse (moderator of the Westminster Assembly), pointed out that if human justice be of the same nature with Divine justice then it necessarily follows: first, that which is just in man is just with God. Second, that it must be after the same manner just: as human justice consists in subjection and obedience to God’s Law, so God Himself must be under obligation to His own Law. Third, as man is *under obligation* to be just, so God is under obligation to be just, and therefore as Saul sinned and acted unjustly in slaying the priests, so had God been unjust in doing the like.

Unless the perversity of their hearts blinded their judgment men would readily perceive that Divine *justice* must necessarily be of quite another order and character than human, yea, as different from and superior to as Divine *love* is from human. All are agreed that a man acts unjustly, that he sins, if he suffers his brother to transgress when it lies in his power to keep him from so doing. Then if Divine justice were the same in kind, though superior in degree, it would necessarily follow that God sins every time He allows one of His creatures to transgress, for most certainly He has the power to prevent it; yea, and can exercise that power without destroying the liberty of the creature: “I also *withheld thee from sinning against Me*: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her” (Gen. 20:6).

Cease, then, ye rebels from arraigning the Most High, and attempting to measure *His* justice by your petty tape lines—as well seek to fathom His wisdom or define His power, as comprehend His inscrutable justice. “Clouds and darkness are roundabout Him,” and this be it noted, is expressly said in connection with: “righteousness (justice) and judgment are the habitation of *His throne*” (Psa. 97:2).

Lest some of our readers demur at our quoting from such a high Calvinist as Mr. Twisse, we append the following from the milder James Usher. “What is the Divine justice? It is an essential property of God, whereby He is infinitely just in Himself, of Himself, for, from, and by Himself, and none other: ‘For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness’ (Psa. 11:7). What is the *rule* of His justice? Answer: His own *free will*, and nothing else: for whatsoever He willeth is just, and because He willeth it therefore it is just; not because it is just, therefore He willeth it (Eph. 1:11; Psa. 115:3).” Such men as these were conscious of their ignorance, and therefore they cried unto Heaven for instruction, and God was pleased to grant them clear vision. But the pride-inflated Pharisees of our day think they can *already* see, and therefore feel no need of Divine illumination: consequently they remain blind (John 9:40, 41).

So again that justly-renowned teacher W. Perkins: “We must not think that God doth a thing because it is good and right, but rather is the thing good and right because *God* willeth and worketh it. Examples hereof we have in the Word. God commanded Abimelech to deliver Sarah to Abraham, or else He would destroy him and all his household (Gen. 20:7). To man’s reason that might seem unjust, for why should Abimelech’s servants be punished for their master’s fault? So again Achan sinned, and all the house of Israel were penalized for it (Josh. 7). David numbered the people, and the whole nation was smitten by a plague (2 Sam. 24). All these to *man’s reason* may seem unequal, yet being the works of God we must with all reverence judge them most just and holy.” Alas, how little of this humility and reverence is manifested in the churches today! How ready is the present generation to criticize and condemn whatever of God’s ways and works suit them not!

So far from the Truth are most of those who are now looked up to as “the champions of orthodoxy,” that even they are often guilty of turning things upside down, or putting the cart in front of the horse. It is commonly assumed by them that God Himself is under Law, that He is under a moral constraint to do what He does, so that He cannot do otherwise. Others wrap this up in more sophisticated terms, insisting that it is His own *nature* which regulates all His actions. But this is merely an artful subterfuge. Is it by a necessity of His nature or by the free exercise of His sovereignty that He bestows favour upon His creatures? Let Scripture answer: “Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth” (Rom. 9:18). Why, my reader, if God’s nature obliged Him to show saving mercy to *any*, then by parity of reason it would oblige Him to show mercy to *all*, and thus bring every fallen creature to repentance, faith and obedience. But enough of this nonsense.

Let us now approach this aspect of our subject from an entirely different angle. How could there possibly be any injustice in God’s electing those whom He did, when had He *not* done so *all* had inevitably perished, angels and men alike? This is neither an invention nor an inference of ours, for Scripture itself expressly declares “*Except* the Lord of Hosts had left us a seed, *we* had been as Sodom” (Rom. 9:29). Not one of God’s rational creatures, either celestial or earthly, had ever been eternally and effectually saved apart

from the grace of Divine *election*. Though both, angels and men were created in a state of perfect holiness, yet they were mutable creatures, liable to change and fall. Yea, inasmuch as their continuance in holiness was dependent upon the exercise of their own wills, unless God was pleased to supernaturally preserve them, their fall was certain.

“Behold, He put no trust in His servants, and His *angels* He charged with *folly*” (Job 4:18). The angels were perfectly holy, yet if God gave them no other assistance than that with which He had capacitated them at their creation, then no “trust” or reliance was to be placed in them, or their standing. If they were holy today, they were liable to sin tomorrow. If God but sent them on an errand to this world, they might fall before they returned to Heaven. The “folly” which God imputes to them in the above passage is their creature *mutability*: for them to maintain their holiness unchangeably to eternity, without the danger of losing the same, was utterly beyond their *creature* endowment. Therefore, for them to be immutably preserved is a grace which issues from another and higher spring than the Covenant of Works or creation endowment, namely, that of election grace, super-creation grace.

It was meet that God should, from the beginning, make manifest the infinite gulf which divides the creature from the Creator. God alone is *immutable*, without variability or shadow of turning. Fitting was it, then, that God should *withdraw* His preserving hand from those whom He had created upright, so that it might appear that the highest creature of all (Satan, “the anointed cherub”: Ezek. 28:14) *was mutable*, and would inevitably fall into sin when left to the exercise of his own free will. Of God alone can it be predicated that He “cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13). The creature, though holy, may be tempted to sin, fall, and be irretrievably lost. The fall of Satan, then, made way for evidencing the more plainly the absolute *necessity* of electing grace—the imparting to the creature the image of God’s own immutable holiness.

Because of the mutability of the creature-state God foresaw that if all His creatures were left to the conduct of their own wills, they were in a continual hazard of falling. He therefore made an election of grace to remove all hazard from the case of His chosen ones. This we know from what is revealed of their history. Jude tells us of “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (v. 6), and the remainder of them would, sooner or later, have done so too, if left to the mutability of their own wills. So, also it proved with Adam and Eve: both of them evidenced the mutability of their wills by apostatising. Accordingly, God foreseeing all of this from the beginning, made a “reserve” (Rom. 11:4—explained in v. 5 as “election”), determining to have a remnant who should be blessed of Him and who would everlastingly bless Him in return. Election and preserving grace are never to be severed.—A.W.P.

REPROACHES IMPROVED.

In his sermon on Psalm 119:39, Thomas Manton pointed out that though reproaches are a great and grievous affliction to the saint, yet he is to discern *God's* hand in them. Reproaches come not by chance, but are a necessary part of God's disciplinary dealings with His people: sent to humble, prove, and purge them. Our enemies intend us harm by them, but we should receive good by this as by every affliction. When God suffers others to judge and misjudge us, it is to awaken us *to self-judging*. Attend to this, and we be no losers by reproaches. Many times the voice of a slanderer will do for us that which the voice of a preacher cannot do. The renowned Puritan then went on to specify some of the believer's sins which God visits with the sharp affliction of bitter reproaches and slanders. What follows is a quotation from his sermon.

1. *Pride*. There is a twofold pride: pride in mind, which is called self-conceit; and pride in affections, which is called vain-glory. Now there is no such effectual cure as reproaches for either of these. (1) To speak of the pride in mind, *self-conceit*. We are very apt to be puffed up for our doing and suffering for God—poor empty bladders are soon puffed up—and think ourselves somebody if there be but a little self-denial; as Peter said, “Master, we have left all and followed Thee” (Matt. 19:27). He was conceited over what he had left for Christ. What had he left? A net, a fish-boat; it was a great *all* indeed! We are easily puffed up if we suffer a little for God, and the Lord entrenches us in our worldly conveniences, for self-conceit may grow out of self-denial. Too often we find it so. Pride is a sin that grows out of mortification of other sins; it lives in us while we live in the body, therefore it is called “the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Some compare it to a shirt: that garment is last put off. It is the most inward and nearest to the soul, and out of the conquest of other sins there ariseth pride.

Now if we have been too self-conceited the Lord will humble us, either by permitting us to fall into such scandals as may remind us of our frailty, and what unworthy weak creatures we are in ourselves; sometimes by taking off the restraints of His grace and of His Spirit, and permitting us to fall. Austin is bold in saying it is profitable for proud men to fall sometimes into open sin, that they may know and understand themselves. He speaks it upon the occasion of Peter, when he was boasting of his own strength, “Though all men leave Thee, yet will not I.” How foully did he fall! Ay; but at other times God uses more merciful dispensations, for He doth not let His people fall into those grievous sins but upon great provocation. Usually at other times He lets loose the tongues of virulent men to lessen us in our own opinion and in the opinion of the world. Now, however innocent we be of the crimes charged upon us, yet in all these cases we must look upward and inward.

Upward—this is not without God: He is the end of causes; He could blast these tongues, and stop them at His pleasure; the Lord can “keep us from the strife of tongues” (Psa. 31:20). But now, when He permits this, His hand must be owned: took upward, “I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him” (Micah 7:9). At such a time God spits in the faces of His people, and puts us to shame; and therefore we should look upward and see His hand in it all. And look inward; there you will see such a sink of sin as deserves this and much more; and therefore a sense of our sinfulness in other things will make us more submissive to the Lord's correcting hand. If we do not look to *that* we will be drawn into reviling for reviling. Many times our graces do as much hurt as our sins. Self-conceit the Lord will mortify one way or other.

(2) For *Vain-glory*, the other sort of pride, valuing esteem too much, and our credit in the world, and pleasing ourselves in the opinion others have of us. We would usurp God's throne in the hearts of men, therefore we are so touchy. Having set a high value upon ourselves, we are troubled when others will not come up to our price. Pride is one of the oldest enemies that ever God had: it was born in Heaven in the breasts of the fallen angels, but God tumbled them out as soon as pride got into their hearts. Now, when His children harbour it, the Lord hath a quarrel with them, and therefore, for giving entertainment to pride He will lay us low: "Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor. 12:7). There is a great deal to do of what this thorn in the flesh is. Some will have it to be some trouble or sickness. Most probably so, but it takes in many afflictive evils, for in verse 10 he mentions *reproaches*. Paul was too apt to be proud. The Lord made him an eminent instrument; by his faith he had abundance of revelations. But God will prick the bladder: He does it with thorns; and he calls it his infirmity, necessity, reproach. Infirmity, by that I mean some reigning sickness. But reproach was one ingredient. Now lest we should be puffed up by vain conceit, the Lord humbles us with infirmities, necessities, reproaches.

2. Another sin for which God humbles us is *careless walking*. When we are negligent, and do not take notice of the carnality that grows upon us, and the fleshly frame and temper of heart which breaks out into our lives, the Lord suffers others to reproach: then they gather up our filth, that we may see what cause we have to take our ways to heart. Every man that would live strictly has need either of faithful friends or watchful enemies: either faithful friends to admonish him, or watchful enemies to censure him; they show us the spots in our garments that need to be washed off. Many times a friend is blinded with love, and grows as partial to us as we are to ourselves; will suffer sin upon us and not tell us of it; then the Lord sets spies to watch for our halting (Jer. 20:10), and therefore we need to go to God and pray, "Lord, lead me, in a plain path because of my enemies" (Psa. 27:11). They lie in wait and seek to take us tripping in aught they can. We can no more be without watchful enemies than without faithful friends. How ignorant would a man be of himself if others did not put him in mind sometimes of his failings! Therefore God makes use of virulent persons in the world as a rod to thrash the dust out of our garments.

3. To humble us for *our censuring*. For if we have not been so tender of others' credit, the Lord makes us see the bitterness of the affliction in our own case, by giving us the like measure that we have meted unto others (Matt. 7:1, 2): that is, we shall find others as hardly think of us as we have of them. Good thoughts and speeches of other men are the best preservative of our own good names. God will take care of them that are careful not to judge and censure. And therefore it is no great matter whether the report be true or false, but a Christian is to *examine*, Have not I drawn it upon myself by slandering others? for God usually pays us in our own coin. He that is much given to censuring seldom or never escapes great censure himself. It is said in the Psalms, "Let his own words grieve him," that is, fall upon him. How do our own words fall upon us? Why, the Lord punishes us for our censuring of others. Oh! then, humble thyself before God for the reproaches thou hast cast upon others: "Take no heed to all the words spoken against thee, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee" (Eccl. 7:21), that is, speaking evil against thee. Hard sayings and speeches of others against us may put us in mind of God's just hand, of measuring to us as we have measured to others; and therefore we should be the more patient if they wrong us; it is but in the like kind that we have wronged others. God will

humble us for our censuring, which is so natural and rife, especially with younger, weak, and more unmortified persons.

The Lord buffets by wicked men to make you better. Reproaches are like soap, that seem to defile the linen it cleans. There is nothing so bad but we may make a good use of it, and a Christian may gain some advantage by it. Or as dung which seems to stain the grass, but it makes the ground fruitful, and the grass spring up with a fresher verdure. So reproaches are a necessary help to make us more humble, heavenly, to make us walk with an holy awe. This holy revenge we should take upon our enemies, to make us more strict and watchful. The way is, not to contend for esteem, but to grow more serious, more faithful in our lives; for this is the way to muzzle the mouths of adversaries, as the mouth of a dog or wild beast is (1 Peter 2:15). Passionate returns do but increase sin, but a holy conversation will silence all; and therefore you should confute calumnies, by binding their mouths thereby. An innocent, meek, unblameable, profitable life, will certainly have its due esteem in the consciences of men, do what they can. Therefore be more strict and reproaches will do you good.

A word to those that *devise* reproaches. You hazard the repute of your own sincerity: "If a man seem to be religious, and bridle not his tongue, that man's religion is vain" (James 1:26). Such men, that are seldom at home, rarely look to the state of their *own* hearts. Alas! if they were acquainted with themselves, or their own failings, they would see themselves the worst people in the world. Paul can see himself worse than Judas—I am "the chief of sinners"—because he had a greater feeling of his own case. Now he that is much in judging others is seldom within. If a man had a catalogue of his own faults, he would not be so ready to blast others, but say, "I am the chief of sinners." Hypocrites have nothing in them but empty shows and appearances. It is a cheap zeal to let fly (and yet this is the religion of a great many) at the miscarriages and faults of others. No—you should rather study your own.

But must we in no case speak evil of others? I answer, first, be sure that it be not a downright slander. Now, it is hard to avoid that. If the evil you speak be without cause, then it is against truth; if it be for a light and slender cause, then it is against charity; if it be for things indifferent or for lesser failings, the indiscretions and weaknesses of Christians, all this is against that charity which should pass especially between the disciples of Christ: "Speak not evil one of another, brethren" (James 4:11). It is worse in Christians, always to be whispering and speaking evil one of another; you gratify the triumphs of Hell. In things doubtful, you should judge the best; in things hidden and secret, we cannot take cognizance of them—that is God's work. Besides, if there be some grievous fault, you do not know what were their temptations, how it may be alleviated by the temptation; still you must "consider yourselves lest you also be tempted" (Gal. 6:11); and you do not know whether they have repented of it.

Second, speak not *of* him, but *to* him. When men are absent it is not fit they should be judged, for then they are not able to make a defense; then it is backbiting. When you thus speak of them, you exchange a duty for a sin, admonition for reproach. It is an unquestionable duty to admonish one another, but it is an unquestionable sin to speak evil one of another. Third, if of him, it should be with tenderness and grief: "Of whom I have told you often, and now weeping," saith the Apostle (Phil. 3:18). When they are incorrigible, when they are like to pervert others, and dishonour the Gospel, or the manifest glory of God, Oh! we would but lay restraints on ourselves in this kind, and never speak of others,

but when manifestly the glory of God calls for it. Not out of idleness, and for want of other talk, that is tattle, forbidden in many places of Scripture; not out of hatred and revenge, for that is malice—there may be malice where the thing you speak is truth; not to please others, that is flattery. But if ever you speak of them (and it should be with these cautions) it must be out of zeal for the glory of God and the good of the Church. If men did consider what restraints are upon them, they would not so easily fall upon censuring, reproaching, and speaking evil of others.—A.W.P.