

Volume 17—Studies in the Scriptures—No. 9
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The Lord's Prayer—Part 7

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). Let it be duly noted that “Hallowed be Thy Name” is *not* followed by “*And Thy kingdom come,*” nor is that followed by “*And Thy will be done,*” for though intimately related those three petitions are quite distinct. But “Give us this day our daily bread” is followed by “AND forgive us,” denoting that there is a close connection between them. Thereby we are taught, first, that without pardon, all the good things of this life will benefit us nothing. A man in the condemned cell is fed and clothed, but what is the daintiest diet and the costliest apparel worth while he remains under sentence of death! “Our daily bread doth but fatten us as lambs for the slaughter if our sins be not pardoned” (Matthew Henry). Second, to inform us that our sins are so many and so grievous that we deserve not one mouthful of food. Each day the Christian is guilty of offences which forfeit even the common blessings of life, so that he should ever acknowledge, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies” (Gen. 32:10). Third, to remind us that our sins are the great obstacle to the favours we might receive from God: Isaiah 59:2, Jeremiah 5:25. Our sins choke the channel of blessing, and therefore as often as we pray, “give us,” we must add, “And forgive us.” Fourth, to encourage faith to go on from strength to strength: if we trust God’s providence to provide for our bodies, should we not trust Him for the salvation of our souls?!

“Forgive us our debts.” Our sins (Luke 11:4) are here viewed under the notion of “debts”—undischarged obligations, failure to render our dues. We owe unto God sincere and perfect worship, earnest and perpetual obedience. “We are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” (Rom. 8:12): this states the negative side—positively we are debtors to God to live unto Him. By the law of creation we were made not to *gratify* the flesh, but to glorify God: “When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was *our duty* to do” (Luke 17:10). Failure to discharge our debt of the duties of worship and obedience has entailed guilt, bringing us in debt to Divine justice. Now when we pray, “Forgive us our *debts,*” we do not ask to be discharged from the duties we owe God, but to be acquitted from our guilt, to have the punishment due us remitted.

“There was a certain Creditor which had two debtors” (Luke 7:41). Here God is set forth under the figure of “Creditor” partly in view of His being our Creator, and partly as being our Lawgiver and Judge. God has not only endowed us with talents obliging us to serve and glorify our Benefactor, but He has placed us under law so that we are condemned for our defaults, and as Judge He will yet call upon each of us to render a full account of his stewardship (Rom. 14:12). There is to be a Day of Reckoning (Luke 19:15, etc.), and those who did not repent of and bewail their debts and take refuge in Christ will be eternally punished in the conscious realization of that solemn Assize.

Not only does this metaphor of Creditor and debtors apply to our ruin, but, thank God, it holds good equally of the *remedy* or recovery. As insolvent debtors we are completely undone, and must forever lie under the righteous judgment of God, unless full compensation be made to Him. But that compensation *we* are powerless to pay Him, for morally and spiritually speaking we are undischarged bankrupts. Deliverance, then, must come from outside ourselves. Here is where the Gospel speaks relief to the sin-burdened soul: another, even the Lord Jesus, took upon Him the office of Sponsor, and rendered full sat-

isfaction to Divine justice on behalf of His people, making complete compensation to God for them. Hence, in this connection, Christ is called “the Surety of a better testament” (Heb. 7:22). As He affirmed, “I restored that which I took not away” (Psa. 69:4), and so God declares, “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom” (Job 33:24).

“And forgive us our debts.” Strange to say, some experience a difficulty here: seeing that God has already forgiven the Christian “all trespasses” (Col. 2:13), is it not needless, they ask, for him to beg God *for* forgiveness? This difficulty is self-created through failure to distinguish between the purchase of our pardon by Christ and its actual application to us. True, full atonement for all our sins was made by Him, and at the Cross our guilt was cancelled. True, all our “*old sins*” are purged at our conversion (2 Peter 1:9), nevertheless, there is a very real sense in which our present and future sins are *not* remitted until we repent and confess them to God, and therefore it is both necessary and meet that we should seek their pardon: 1 John 1:9. Even *after* David was assured “the LORD also hath put away thy sins” (2 Sam. 12:13), he begged God’s forgiveness (Psa. 51:1).

What do we ask for in this petition? First, that God will not lay to our charge the sins we daily commit: Psalm 143:2. Second, that God would accept the satisfaction for our sins and look upon us as righteous in Him. “But if we be real Christians, He has *already* done so.” True, yet He requires us to sue out our pardon, just as He said to Christ, “*Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance*” (Psa. 2:8). God is ready to forgive, but He requires us to call upon Him. Why? That His saving mercy may be acknowledged, and that our faith may be exercised. Third, for the *continuance* of pardon. Though we be justified, yet “forgive us” we must ask: as in our daily bread, though we have a goodly store on hand, yet we beg for the continuance of it. Fourth, for the *manifestation* or assurance of it: that sins may be blotted out of our conscience, as well as from God’s book of remembrance—the effects of forgiveness are peace and access to God (Rom. 5:1, 2).

Forgiveness is not demanded as a due, but requested as a mercy. “To the very end of life, the best Christian must come for forgiveness just as he did at first, not as a claimant of a right but as a supplicant of a favour” (John Brown). Nor is this in anywise inconsistent with nor a reflection upon our complete justification (Acts 13:39). It is certain that the believer, “shall not come into condemnation” (John 5:24), yet instead of that leading to the conclusion, “therefore I need not pray for the remission of my sins,” it supplies the strongest possible encouragement to present such a petition—just as the Divine assurance that a genuine Christian shall persevere to the end, instead of laying a foundation for carelessness, is a most powerful motive to watchfulness and faithfulness. This petition implies a felt sense of sin, a penitent acknowledgement thereof, a seeking of God’s mercy for Christ’s sake, the realization He can righteously pardon us. Its presentation should ever be preceded by self-examination and humiliation.

This petition is confirmed by an argument: “as we forgive our debtors.” It may be resolved thus: first, a reason from a like disposition in us: whatever good there be in us must first be in God, for He is the sum of all excellence. If, then, a kindly disposition has been planted in our hearts, the same must be found in Him. Second, from the lesser to the greater: if we who have but a drop of mercy can forgive the offences done unto us, surely God—the ocean of mercy—will forgive us. Third, from the condition of those who may expect pardon: they are such as out of a sense of God’s mercy to them are disposed to

show mercy to others, hence they are morally qualified for more, seeing they do not abuse it. They who would rightly pray to God for pardon must pardon those who wrong them. Joseph (Gen. 50:17) and Stephen (Acts 7:60) are conspicuous examples. We need to pray much for God to remove all bitterness and malice from our hearts against those who wrong us. But to forgive our debtors does not exclude our rebuking them, and, where public interests are involved, suing them: it would be my duty to hand over a burglar to a policeman, or to go to law against one who was able but who refused to pay me.—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

2. *The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:3-11.*

Last month we pointed out that Christ's public ministry had first a special application to the afflicted people of God; second, a peculiar reference to His immediate disciples, considered as His Apostles or ministers; third, to the people at large. Such is clearly the case with His Sermon on the Mount, as will be made evident (D.V.) in the course of our exposition of it. Herein Christ is seen discharging His prophetic office, speaking as never (uninspired) man ever spake. A careful study of the Sermon reveals that it has twelve divisions—the number of Divine *government*—varying considerably in length. It is the first of them which is now to engage our attention. In it our Lord makes known wherein true happiness or blessedness consists, disclosing to us a secret which is hidden from the unregenerate, who suppose that outward comforts and luxuries are absolutely indispensable to contentment of mind and felicity of life. Herein too He strikes at the root of the carnal conceit of the Jews, who vainly imagined that *external* peace and prosperity was to result from a receiving of the Gospel.

It is indeed blessed to observe how this Sermon opens. Christ began not by pronouncing maledictions on the wicked, but benedictions on His people. How like Him was this, to whom “judgment” is a “strange work”! Nevertheless, later, we also hear Him pronouncing “woe” after woe upon the enemies of God: Matthew 23. It was not to the multitude at large that the Redeemer first spoke, but to the elect, who had a special claim upon Him, as given by the Father's love to Him (John 17:9-10). Nor was it to the favoured Apostles He addressed His opening remarks, but rather to the poor of the flock, the afflicted in soul, those who were conscious of their deep need. Therein He has left an example for all His undershepherds: “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees”; “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God” (Isa. 35:3; 40:1).

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 5:3). In these words Christ began to draw a picture of those characters upon whom the Divine benediction rests. It is a composite picture, each line in it accentuating some distinct spiritual feature; and with the whole we should honestly and carefully *compare ourselves*. At what complete variance is this declaration of Christ's from the popular view among men! The idea which commonly obtains, the world over, is, Blessed are the rich for theirs is the kingdom of the world. But Christ says the flat contrary: “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven,” which is infinitely better than all the kingdoms of the earth; and herein we may see that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (1 Cor. 1). Who before Christ ever regarded the poor in spirit as the blessed or happy ones of the earth? And who, except genuine Christians, do so today? How this opening word struck the keynote of all the subsequent teaching of Him who was Himself born in a manger: not what a man does, but what he *is* in the sight of God.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” There is a vast difference between this and being hard up in our circumstances. There is no virtue (and often no disgrace) in financial poverty as such, nor does it, of itself, produce humility of heart, for anyone who has any real acquaintance with both classes, soon discovers there is just as much pride in the indigent as there is in the opulent. This poverty of spirit is a fruit that grows on no merely natural tree. It is a spiritual grace wrought by the Holy Spirit in those whom He renews. By nature we are well pleased with ourselves, and mad enough to think that we deserve something good at the hands of God. Let men but conduct themselves decently in a civil way,

keeping themselves from grosser sins, and they are rich in spirit, pride filling their hearts, and they are self-righteous. And nothing short of a miracle of grace can change the course of this stream.

Nor is real poverty of spirit to be found among the great majority of religionists of the day: very much the reverse. How often we see advertised a conference for “promoting the higher life,” but who ever heard of one for furthering the *lowly* life! Many books are printed telling us how to be “filled with the Spirit,” but where can we find one setting forth what it means to be spiritually emptied—emptied of self-confidence, self-importance, and self-righteousness? Alas, if it be true that, “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15), it is equally true that what is of great price in His sight is despised by men—by none more so than by the modern Pharisees, who now hold nearly all the positions of prominence in Christendom. Almost all of the so-called “ministry” of this generation feeds pride, instead of starving the flesh; puffs up, rather than abases; and anything which is calculated to search and strip, is frowned upon by the pulpit and is unpopular with the pew.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” And *what* is poverty of spirit? It is the opposite of that haughty, self-assertive and self-sufficient disposition which the world so much admires and praises. It is the very reverse of that independent and defiant attitude which refuses to bow to God, which determines to brave things out, which says with Pharaoh, “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” To be “poor in spirit” is to realize that I have nothing, am nothing, and can do nothing, and have need of all things. Poverty of spirit is a consciousness of my emptiness, the result of the Spirit’s work within. It issues from the painful discovery that all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. It follows the awakening that my best performances are unacceptable, yea, an abomination to the thrice Holy One. Poverty of spirit evidences itself by its bringing the individual into the dust before God, acknowledging his utter helplessness and deservingness of Hell. It corresponds to the initial awakening of the Prodigal in the far country, when he began to be “*in want*.”

God’s great salvation is free—“without money and without price.” This is a most merciful provision of Divine grace, for were God to offer salvation for sale, no sinner could secure it, seeing that he has nothing with which he could possibly purchase it. But the vast majority are insensible of this, yea, all of us are until the Holy Spirit opens our sin-blinded eyes. It is only those who have passed from death unto life that become conscious of their poverty, take the place of beggars, are glad to receive Divine charity, and begin to seek the true riches. Thus, “the *poor* have the Gospel preached to them” (Matt. 11:5): preached not only to their ears, but to their hearts!

Poverty of spirit may be termed the negative side of faith. It is that realization of my utter worthlessness which precedes the laying hold of Christ, the eating of His flesh and drinking His blood. It is the Spirit emptying the heart of self that Christ may fill it: it is a sense of need and destitution. This first Beatitude, then, is foundational, describing a fundamental trait which is found in every regenerated soul. The one who is poor in spirit is nothing in his own eyes, and feels that his proper place is in the dust before God. He may, through false teaching or worldliness, leave this place, but God knows how to bring him back; and in His faithfulness and love He will do so, for it is the place of blessing for His children. How to cultivate this God-honouring spirit is revealed in Matthew 11:29.

He who is in possession of this poverty of spirit is pronounced “blessed.” He is so because he now has a disposition the very opposite of what was his by nature, because he

has in himself the first sure evidence that a Divine work of grace has been wrought in his heart, because such a spirit causes him to look outside of himself for true enrichment, because he is an heir of the “kingdom of Heaven”—the kingdom of grace here, the kingdom of glory hereafter. Many are the gracious promises addressed to the poor in spirit. “I am poor and needy: yet the Lord thinketh upon me: Thou art my help and my deliverer” (Psa. 40:17), “The Lord heareth the poor” (Psa. 69:33), “He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy” (Psa. 72:13). “Yet setteth He the poor on high from affliction” (Psa. 107:41), “I will satisfy her poor with bread” (Psa. 132:15), “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word” (Isa. 66:2). Let such favours as these stir us up to pray earnestly for more of this poverty of spirit.

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). Mourning is hateful and irksome to poor human nature: from suffering and sadness our spirits instinctively shrink. It is natural for us to seek the society of the cheerful and joyous. The verse now before us presents an anomaly to the unregenerate, yet is it sweet music to the ears of God’s elect: if “blessed,” why do they “mourn?” If they mourn, how can they be blessed? Only the child of God has the key to this paradox, for “happy are they who sorrow” is at complete variance with the world’s logic. Men have, in all places and in all ages, deemed the prosperous and the cheery to be the happy ones, but Christ pronounces blessed, those who are poor in spirit and who mourn.

Now it is obvious that it is not every species of mourning which is here referred to. There are thousands of mourners in the world today who do not come within the scope of our text: those mourning over blighted hopes, over financial reverses, over the loss of loved ones. But alas, so far from many of *them* coming beneath this Divine benediction, they are under God’s condemnation; nor is there any promise that such shall ever be Divinely “comforted.” There are three kinds of “mourning” referred to in the Scriptures: a *natural*, such as we have just referred to above; a *sinful*, which is a disconsolate and inordinate grief, refusing to be comforted, or a hopeless remorse like that of Judas; and a *gracious* one, a “godly sorrow,” of which the Holy Spirit is the Author.

The “mourning” of our text is a spiritual one. The previous verse indicates clearly the line of thought here: “blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” Yes, “blessed are the poor,” not the poor in purse, but the poor in heart: those who realize themselves to be spiritual bankrupts in themselves, paupers before God. That felt poverty of spirit is the very opposite of the Laodiceanism which is so rife today, that self-complacency which says, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” In like manner it is *spiritual mourning* which is in view here. Further proof of this is found in the fact that Christ pronounces these mourners “blessed.” They are so because the Spirit of God has wrought a work of grace within them, and hence they have been awakened to see and feel their lost condition. They are “blessed” because God does not leave them at that point: “they shall be comforted.”

“Blessed are they that mourn.” The first reference is to that initial mourning, which ever precedes a genuine conversion, for there must be a real sense of sin before the Remedy for it will even be desired. Thousands acknowledge they are sinners, who have never *mourned over* the fact. Take the woman of Luke 7, who washed the Saviour’s feet with her tears: have you ever shed any over *your* sins? Take the Prodigal in Luke 15: before he left the far country he said, “I will go unto my Father and say unto Him, I have sinned

against Heaven and before Thee, and am not worthy to be called Thy son”—where shall we find those today with this sense of their sinnership? Take the publican of Luke 18: why did he “smite upon his breast” and say, “God be merciful to me, the sinner?” Because he felt the plague of his own heart. So of the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost: they were “pricked in their heart, and *cried out*.”

This “mourning” springs from a sense of sin, from a tender conscience, from a broken heart. It is a godly sorrow over rebellion against God and hostility to His will. In some cases it is grief over the very morality in which the heart has trusted, over the self-righteousness which has caused such complacency. This “mourning” is the agonizing realization that it was *my* sins which nailed to the Cross the Lord of Glory. When Israel shall, by faith, see Christ, “they shall mourn for Him” (Zech. 12:10). It is such tears and groans which prepare the heart to truly welcome and receive the “balm of Gilead,” the comfort of the Gospel. It is, then, a mourning over the felt destitution of our spiritual state, and over the iniquities that have separated between us and God. Such mourning always goes side by side with conscious poverty of spirit.

But this “mourning” is by no means to be confined unto the initial experience of conviction and contrition, for observe the tense of the verb: it is not “have mourned,” but “mourn”—a present and continuous experience. The Christian himself has much to mourn over. The sins which he now commits—both of omission and commission—are a sense of daily grief to him, or should be so, and *will* be, if his conscience is kept tender. An ever-deepening discovery of the depravity of his nature, the plague of his heart, the sea of corruption within—ever polluting all that he does—deeply exercises him. Consciousness of the surgings of unbelief, the swellings of pride, the coldness of his love, and his paucity of fruit, make him cry, “O wretched man that I am.” An humbling recollection of past offenses: “Wherefore remember that ye being in *time past*” (Eph. 2:11).

Yes, “Ourselves also, which have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves *groan* within ourselves” (Rom. 8:23). Does not the Christian groan under the disciplining rod of the Father: “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb. 12:11). And is he not deeply grieved by the awful dishonour which is now done to the Lord Jesus on every hand? The fact is that the closer the Christian lives to God, the more will he mourn over all that dishonours Him: with the Psalmist he will say, “Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy law” (119:53), and with Jeremiah, “My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord’s flock is carried away captive” (13:17). But blessed be God, it is written, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek. 9:4). So too there is a sympathetic mourning over the sufferings of others: “Weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12:15).

But let us return to the primary thought of our verse: “Blessed are they that mourn” has immediate reference to the convicted soul sorrowing over his sins. And here it is most important to note that Christ does not pronounce them “blessed” simply because they are mourners, but because they are such mourners as “shall be *comforted*.” There are not a few in Christendom today who glory in their grief and attempt to find comfort in their own inward wretchedness—as well seek health from our sicknesses. True comfort is not to be found in anything in self—no, not in perceiving our own vileness; but in *Christ*

alone. Distress of soul is by no means always the same thing as evangelical repentance, as is clear from the case of Cain (Gen. 4:13). But where the Spirit produces in the heart a godly sorrow for sin, He does not leave him there, but brings him to look away from sin to the Lamb of God, and then he is “comforted.” The Gospel promises no mercy except to those who forsake sin and close with Christ.

“They shall be comforted.” This gracious promise receives its fulfillment, first, in that Divine consolation which immediately follows a sound conversion (i.e., one that is preceded by conviction and contrition), namely, the removal of that conscious load of guilt which lies as an intolerable burden on the conscience. It finds its accomplishment in the Spirit’s application of the Gospel of God’s grace to the one whom He has convicted of his dire need of a Saviour. Then it is that Christ speaks the Word of power, “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28)—observe His language clearly presupposes the feeling of sin to be a “burden” as that which impels to Him for relief: it is to the *sin-sick* heart Christ gives rest. This “comfort” issues in a sense of a free and full forgiveness through the merits of the atoning blood of Christ. This Divine comfort is the peace of God which passeth all understanding—filling the heart of one who is now assured that he is “accepted in the Beloved.” First God wounds, and then heals.

Second, there is a *continual* “comforting” of the mourning saint by the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter. The one who sorrows over his departures from Christ is comforted by the assurance that, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). The one who mourns under the chastening rod of God is comforted by the promise, “afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11). The one who grieves over the awful dishonour done to his Lord in the religious world, is comforted by the fact that Satan’s time is short, and soon Christ will bruise him beneath His feet. Third, the *final* “comfort” is when we leave this world and are done with sin forever. Then shall “sorrow and sighing flee away.” To the rich man in Hell, Abraham said of the one who had begged at his gate, “now he is *comforted*” (Luke 16:25). The best wine is reserved for the last. The “comfort” of Heaven will more than compensate for all the “mourning” of earth.

From all that has been before us, learn, first, the folly of looking to the wounds which sin has made in order to find consolation: view rather the purging and healing blood of Christ. Second, see the error of attempting to measure the helpfulness of the books we read or the preaching we hear by the degree of peace and joy which it brings to our hearts. Yet how many there are who say, We have quite enough in the world, or in the home, to make us miserable, and we go to church for comfort. It is to be feared that few of them are in any condition of soul to receive comfort from the Gospel: rather do they need the Law to search and convict them. Ah, the truth is, dear friend, that very often the sermon or the article which is of most benefit, is the one which causes us to get alone with God and *weep* before Him. When we have flirted with the world or indulged the lusts of the flesh, the Holy Spirit gives us a rebuke or admonition. Third, mark then, the inseparable connection between godly sorrow and godly joy: compare Psalm 30:5; 126:5; Proverbs 14:10; Isaiah 61:3; 2 Corinthians 6:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:6, and James 2:13.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

81. *His Sacred Song.*

As pointed out last month, the main divisions of David's sacred song in 2 Samuel 22 are more or less clearly marked. In the first, (vv. 1-4), he is occupied with extolling Jehovah's perfections: this section we have already considered. In the second, (vv. 5-20), which is now to be before us, he magnifies the Lord for His delivering mercies. This section of the song is couched in highly figurative and poetic language, which indicates how deeply stirred were the emotions of its inspired composer. Its contents may be regarded in a threefold way. First, as depicting the physical dangers to which David was exposed from his human foes. Second, the deep soul distress which he experienced from his spiritual enemies. Third, the fearful sufferings through which Christ passed while acting as the Substitute of His people, and the awe-inspiring deliverance which God wrought for His servant. We will endeavour to consider our passage from each of these viewpoints.

"When the waves (pangs) of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid, the sorrows (cords) of Hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented (anticipated) me" (2 Sam. 22:5, 6). Thus opens this second division: that which it so vividly portrayed is the large number and ferocity of his enemies, and the desperate danger to which David was exposed by them. First, he employed the figure of an angry sea, whose raging waves menaced him from every side, until his frail craft was in immediate prospect of being swamped by them. Next, he likened his lot to one who was marooned on some piece of low-lying ground, and the floods rapidly rising higher and higher, till his destruction seemed certain. The multitude of the wicked pressed him sorely on every side. Then he resembled his plight to one who had already been taken captive and bound, so that the very cords of death seemed to be upon him. Finally, he pictures his case as a bird that had been caught in the fowler's snare, unable to fly away.

The above references were to the attempts made by Saul, Abner, and Absalom to capture and slay David. So fierce were their attacks, so powerful the forces they employed against him, so determined and relentless were his foes, that David here acknowledged they, "made me afraid." "The most sea-worthy bark is sometimes hard put to it when the storm flood is abroad. The most courageous man, who as a rule hopes for the best, may sometimes fear the worst" (C. H. Spurgeon). Strong as his faith generally was, yet on one occasion unbelief prevailed to such an extent that David said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" (1 Sam. 27:1). When terrors from without awaken fears within, our case is indeed a miserable one: yet so it was with Moses when he fled from Egypt, with Elijah when he ran away from Jezebel, with Peter when he denied his Lord.

But these lamentations of David are also to be construed *spiritually*: they are to be regarded as those harrowing exercises of soul through which he passed in his later years: Psalms 32 and 51 cast light upon them. "The sorrows (cords) of Hell compassed me about; the snares of death anticipated me": such was the anguish of his soul under the lashings of a guilty conscience. "The temptations of Satan and the consciousness of his sins filled him with fears of wrath and dreadful apprehensions of future consequences. He felt like a malefactor bound for execution, whose fetters prevent him from attempting an escape, for whose body the grave hath certainly opened her mouth, and who is horribly alarmed lest the pit of Hell should swallow up his soul" (Thomas Scott). Fearful beyond words is the suffering through which many a backslider has to pass ere he is restored to

fellowship with God—one who has experienced it will not deem the language of these verses any too strong.

But there is something deeper here than the trials David encountered either from without or within: in their ultimate sense these verses articulate the groanings of the Man of Sorrows as He took upon Him the obligations and suffered in the stead of His people. As we pointed out last month, two of the verses of this Song are quoted in the New Testament as being the very words of Christ Himself: “In Him will I trust” (v. 3) is found in Hebrews 2:13, and, “I will give thanks unto Thee, O LORD, among the heathen (Gentiles), and I will sing praises unto Thy name” (v. 50), is found in Romans 15:9. “The Messiah our Saviour is evidently, over and beyond David or any other believer, the main and chief subject of this Song; and while studying it we have grown more and more sure that every line has its deeper and profounder fulfillment in Him” (C.H. Spurgeon). Let this be kept before us as we pass from section to section, and from verse to verse.

“When the waves (pangs) of death compassed Me, the floods of ungodly men made Me afraid; the sorrows (cords) of Hell compassed Me about; the snares of death anticipated Me.” Here was the Spirit of Christ speaking prophetically through the Psalmist, expressing the fierce conflict through which the Redeemer passed. Behold Him in Gethsemane, in the judgment-halls of Herod and Pilate, and then behold Him on the Cross itself, suffering horrible torments of body and anguish of soul, when He was delivered into the hands of wicked men, encountered the fierce assaults of Satan, and endured the wrath of God against Him for our sins. It was then that He was surrounded by the insulting priests and people. His “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38) was but an echo of these words of David’s song.

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and He did hear my voice out of His temple, and my cry did enter into His ears” (2 Sam. 22:7). Here we behold God’s suffering servant making earnest supplication to Heaven. The one so sorely pressed by his enemies that the eye of sense could perceive not a single avenue of escape, yea, when death itself immediately threatened him, seeks relief from above, and so it should be with us: “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray” (James 5:13). Ah, it is then he is most likely to really pray: cold and formal petitions do not suit one who is in deep trouble—alas that so often nothing short of painful trial will force fervent supplications from us. An old writer expressed it, “Prayer is not eloquence, but earnestness; not the definition of earnestness, but the feeling of it; it is the cry of faith in the ear of mercy”: yet either pangs of body or of soul are usually needed before we will cry out in reality.

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and He did hear my voice out of His temple, and my cry did enter into His ears” (2 Sam. 22:7). So many neglect prayer when they are quiet and at ease, but as the Lord declares, “In their affliction they will seek Me early” (Hosea 5:15). Yet it is well if we *do* seek unto God in our affliction, instead of sulking in rebellion, which is to forsake our own mercy. The Lord is a very present help in trouble, and it is our holy privilege to prove this for ourselves. The Hebrew word for “cried” here is a very expressive one, signifying such a cry as issues from one in a violent tempest of emotion, in the extremity of grief and anxiety: in fact Alexander Maclaren renders it “shriek.” David was all but sinking and could only give vent to an agonized call for help.

“Prayer is that postern gate which is left open even when the city is straitly besieged by the enemy: it is that way upward from the pit of despair to which the spiritual miner

flies at once, when the floods from beneath break forth upon him. Observe that he ‘calls.’ and then ‘cries’; prayer grows in vehemence as it proceeds. Note also that he first invokes his God under the name of Jehovah, and then advances to a more familiar name, ‘my God’; thus faith increases by exercise, and He whom we at first viewed as Lord is soon seen to be our God in covenant. It is never an ill time to pray; no distress should prevent us from using the Divine remedy of supplication” (C. H. Spurgeon).

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God.” The fulfillment of these prophetic words in the case of our suffering Redeemer is well known to all who are acquainted with the four Gospels. Blessed indeed is it to behold that One who was supremely the Man after God’s own heart, betaking Himself to prayer while His enemies were thirsting for His blood. The deeper His distress, the more earnestly did He call upon God, both in Gethsemane and at Calvary, and as Hebrews 5:7 tells us, “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.” Let us not hesitate, then, to follow the example which He has left us, and no matter how hard we are pressed, how desperate be our situation, nor how acute our grief, let us unburden ourselves to God.

“And He did hear my voice out of His temple, and my cry did enter into His ears.” This is in explanation of all that follows: the gracious interpositions of the Lord on David’s behalf and the wondrous deliverances He wrought for him, were *in answer to prayer*. God’s lending a willing ear to the cry of His distressed child is recorded for our encouragement. It is indeed deplorable that we are often so prayerless until pressure of circumstances force supplication out of us—yet it is blessed to be assured that God does not then (as well He might) turn a deaf ear unto our calls; nay, such calls have the greater prevalency, because of their sincerity and because they make a more powerful appeal unto the Divine pity. Let the fearing and despondent believer read through the 107th Psalm and mark how frequently it is recorded that the redeemed, “cry unto the LORD in their trouble,” and how that in each instance we are told, “He delivered them.” Then do you cry unto Him, and be of good courage.

“Then the earth shook and trembled: the foundations of Heaven moved and shook, because He was wroth” (2 Sam. 22:8). David’s prayer was answered in a most effectual manner by the providential interpositions which Jehovah made on his behalf. In a most singular and extraordinary way the Lord appeared for his relief, fighting for him against his enemies. Here again David adorned his poem with lively images as he records God’s gracious intervention. The mighty power of God was now exercised for him: such language being employed as to intimate that nothing can resist or impede Him when He acts for His own. God was now showing Himself to be strong on behalf of His oppressed but supplicating servant. See here, dear reader, the response of Heaven to the cry of faith. “Then the earth shook and trembled”: let these words be pondered in the light of, “And at midnight Paul and Silas *prayed*. . . and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were *shaken*, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s bands were loosed” (Acts 16:25, 26)!

Again we would remind the reader that a greater than David is to be kept before us as we pass from verse to verse of this Psalm. “Then the earth shook and trembled: the foundations of Heaven moved and shook, because He was wroth” (2 Sam. 22:8). Who can fail to be reminded of the supernatural phenomena which attended the death and resurrection

of David's Son and Lord? He, too, had called upon Jehovah in His deep distress, "And was heard" (Heb. 5:7). Unmistakable was Heaven's response: "from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour . . . Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened" (Matt. 27:45, 50-52). Yes, the earth literally "shook and trembled"! As another has rightly said, "Tremendous was the scene! Never before and never since was such a battle fought, or such a victory gained, whether we look at the contending powers or the consequences resulting. Heaven on the one side, and Hell on the other: such were the contending powers. And as to the consequences resulting, who shall recount them?"

"There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down, and darkness was under His feet" (2 Sam. 22:9, 10). These expressions are borrowed from the awe-inspiring phenomena which attended the appearing Jehovah upon mount Sinai: compare Exodus 19:16-18. It was Jehovah the Avenger appearing to vindicate His servant and vanquish his enemies. David considered that in his case the Lord God manifested the same Divine perfections which He had displayed of old at the giving of the Law. We cannot do better here than quote from Matthew Henry's comments on the spiritual significance of the vivid imagery which was here employed by the Psalmist.

"These lofty metaphors are used, first, to set forth the glory of God, which was manifested in his deliverance. His wisdom and power, His goodness and faithfulness, His justice and holiness, and His sovereign dominion over all the creatures and all the counsels of men, which appeared in favour of David, were as clear and bright a discovery of God's glory to an eye of faith, as those would have been to an eye of sense. Second, to set forth God's displeasure against David's enemies. God so espoused his cause, that He showed Himself an Enemy to all David's enemies; His anger is set forth by a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth. Who knows the power and terror of His wrath?! Third, to set forth the vast confusion which David's enemies were put into and the consternation that seized them—as if the earth had trembled and the foundations of the world had been discovered. Who can stand before God, when He is angry? Fourth, to show how ready God was to help David: He 'rode upon a Cherub, and did fly' (v. 11). God hastened to his succour, and came to him with seasonable relief."

"And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; and He was seen upon the winds of the wind" (v. 11). Though the Lord "*wait* that He may be gracious" (Isa. 30:18), and sometimes sorely tries faith and patience, yet when His appointed time comes, He acts *swiftly*. "And He made darkness pavilions round about Him, dark waters and thick clouds of the skies" (2 Sam. 22:12)—just as that pillar of fire which gave light to Israel was "a cloud and darkness" to the Egyptians (Exo. 14:20), so were the providential dealings of the Lord unto the enemies of David. The One who is pleased to reveal Himself unto His own, conceals Himself from the wicked, and hence the fearful portion of those who shall be everlastingly banished from the presence of the Lord is represented as "the blackness of darkness forever."

"Through the brightness before Him were coals of fire kindled. The LORD thundered from Heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice. And He sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them, And the channels of the sea appeared, the

foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of His nostrils" (2 Sam. 22:13-16). All of this is an amplification of "because He was wroth" (v. 8). Nothing so arouses Jehovah's indignation as injuries done to His people: he who attacks them, touches the apple of His eye. True, God is not subject to those passions which govern His creatures, yet because He hates sin with a perfect hatred and sorely punishes it, He is often represented under such poetic imagery as is suited to human understanding. God is a God to be feared, as those who now trifle with Him shall yet discover. How shall puny men be able to face it out with the Almighty, when the very mountains tremble at His presence?! Satan-deluded souls may now defy Him, but their false confidence will not support or shelter them in the dread day of His wrath.

"He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters; He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those that hated me: for they were too strong for me" (2 Sam. 22:17, 18). Here is the happy issue to David's prayer and the Lord's response. Observe, first, that David gives God the glory by unreservedly ascribing his deliverance unto Him. He looked far above his own skill in slinging the stone which downed Goliath and his cleverness in eluding Saul: "*He sent . . . He took me, He drew me . . . He delivered me*" gives all the honour unto Him to whom it was truly due. Note, second, the particular reason mentioned by David as to why the Lord had intervened on his behalf: "*for they were too strong for me*"—it was his confessed weakness and the strength of his foes that made such a powerful appeal to God's pity: compare the effectual plea of Jehoshaphat: "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us" (2 Chron. 20:12). Finally, while the "strong enemy" of verse 18 is an allusion to either Goliath or Saul, yet David's deliverance from them but prefigured *Christ's* victory over death and Satan, and here He ascribed that victory unto His God.—A.W.P.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

7. *The Messianic.*

We continue our consideration of the *contents* of the Christian covenant. The substance thereof, is, broadly speaking, Divine *promises* which pledged the sanctification of God's people and their effectual preservation in a state and course of holiness to their final salvation. Those promises are summarized in Hebrews 8:10-12, and are four in number. First is the declaration that the Lord would write His laws in the hearts of those for whom Christ died, which signifies such a change being wrought in them that the Divine statutes are cordially received in their affections. Second is the assurance that the Lord will be the *God* of His people, giving Himself to them in all His perfections and relationships, so that the supply of their every need is absolutely guaranteed: "They shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The LORD is my God" (Zech. 13:9). He is the God of His people in a spiritual and everlasting sense, through the meritorious mediation of Christ.

"And they shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all *shall* know Me, from the least to the greatest" (Heb. 8:11). This is the third promise, and like the two preceding it, points a marked and blessed contrast from that which obtained under the *regime* of the old covenant, and that in connection with the knowledge of God. During the Mosaic dispensation, God granted many revelations of Himself, discovering various aspects of His character, and these were augmented by frequent descriptions of His perfections and dealings through the prophets, all of which placed the Jews in a condition of privilege immeasurably superior to the rest of the nations. Nevertheless, there were difficulties connected with those Divine discoveries which even the most spiritual of Israel could not remove, while the great majority of them knew not God in the real sense of the word. The truth about God was apprehended but dimly and feebly by most, and by the great mass of them it was not rightly apprehended at all.

So far as the Nation at large was concerned, the revelation God granted them of Himself was wholly external, and for the most part given through symbols and shadows. Many of them trusted in the letter of the Scriptures, and rested in human teaching—often partial and imperfect at the best. They had no idea of their need of anything higher. Complaints of their ignorance are common throughout the Old Testament: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth *not* know" (Isa. 1:3); "They know not the way of the LORD nor the judgment of their God . . . They proceed from evil to evil, and they know not Me, saith the LORD" (Jer. 5:4; 9:3). Ignorance of God, notwithstanding all their advantages, was their sin and their ruin. Ultimately, their teachers became divided into schools and sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc., until the last of their Prophets declared, "The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this: the master and the scholar out of the tabernacles of Jacob" (Mal. 2:12).

"For all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest" (Heb. 8:11), that is, all who belong to the true Israel of God. God has now given not only a fuller, yea, a perfect revelation of Himself—in the Person of His incarnate Son (John 1:18; Heb. 1:2), but the Holy Spirit is given to guide us into all Truth; and it is at this point the vast superiority of the new covenant again appears. Those for whom Christ is the Mediator receive something more than an external revelation from God, namely, an internal: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our *hearts*, to give the light of

the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). They have something far better than human teachers to explain the Law to them, even the Holy Spirit to effectually apply it unto their consciences and wills. It was to this Christ referred when He said, "They shall all be taught of God" (John 6:45): "taught" so that they know Him truly and savingly.

It is to this individual, inward, and saving knowledge of God that the Apostle referred: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye shall know all things . . . the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1 John 2:20, 27). That "unction" operates on their souls with an ever-quickenning power. Nor is this some special blessing reserved for a select few of the redeemed: all interested in the Covenant are given a sanctifying knowledge of God. It is far more than a correct intellectual conception of God which was promised, namely, such a transforming revelation of Him that they will fear, love, and serve Him. It is an *obedient* knowledge of God which is here in view. It was the absence of that kind of "knowledge" in Israel of old that God complained: "The LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no *truth*, nor *mercy*, nor knowledge of God" (Hosea 4:1). The external method of teaching under the old economy was ineffectual, for the Spirit taught not the Nation inwardly as He does the Church.

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12). This promise embraces in its blessed arms the pardon of all their sins, the forgiveness of all their iniquities, and declares that these shall be so completely blotted out that their very remembrance, so to speak, shall be removed from the mind of God. Once more we would ask the reader to pay careful attention to *the order* of these promises, for it is almost universally disregarded, nay, contradicted, in modern preaching. Three times over in this verse occurs the pronoun "their," emphasizing the particularity of those persons whose sins alone are pardoned, namely, those who have been regenerated, reconciled, and given a sanctifying knowledge of God. God forgives none save those who are in covenant relation with Him.

Nothing could be more plain than what has been just pointed out, for the coherence of our passage is unmistakable. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness": to *whose* unrighteousness? Why, to those with whom God makes this new covenant, namely, the members of the spiritual house of Israel (v. 10). And of what does this covenant consist? First, God declares, "I will put My laws into their minds and write them in their hearts" which is accomplished at their regeneration, and that lays a necessary foundation for what follows. Second, God affirms, "and I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people," which denotes a mutual reconciliation, after a mutual alienation. Third, He promises, "All shall know Me, from the least to the greatest," which signifies their sanctification, for it is *such* a knowledge that produces love, trust, submission. Finally, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness" etc., which at once disposes of the figment of a general atonement and universal forgiveness: as the Mediator of the covenant (Heb. 8:6) Christ acts only for the covenantees.

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (v. 12). Once again we may perceive how greatly the new covenant excels the old. Under the Levitical economy there was forgiveness, but with limitations, and with a degree of obscurity resting upon it which testified to the defectiveness of the

existing order of things. For certain sins no atonement was provided; though on sincere repentance, such sins were forgiven, as the case of David shows. At no point was the imperfections of the Mosaic economy more evident than in this vital matter of remission: as the Epistle of Hebrews reminds us: “but in those sacrifices there *is a remembrance* again made of sins every year” (10:3). Thus were the Jews impressively taught that they had to do with “the shadow” of good things to come, which could not make the comers thereunto perfect as pertaining to the conscience (10:1). In blessed contrast therefrom, the forgiveness bestowed under the new covenant is free, full, perfect and everlasting.

“For I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness.” The word which is here rendered “merciful” is propitiuous, emphasizing the fact that it is not absolute mercy without any satisfaction having been made to justice, but rather grace exercised on the ground of propitiation: Romans 3:24, 25; 5:21. Christ died to render God propitiuous toward sinners (Heb. 2:17), and in and through Him alone is God merciful toward the sins of His people—so long as Christ is rejected is the sinner under the curse. Therein the *glory* of the covenant shines forth, for the unsearchable wisdom of God is displayed and the perfect harmony of His attributes evidenced. No finite intelligence had ever found a solution to the problem: how can justice be inexorably enforced and yet mercy shown to the guilty? How can sinners be freely pardoned without the claims of righteousness being flouted? Christ is the solution, for He is “the Surety” of the covenant (Heb. 7:22).

It is to be duly noted that no less than three terms are used in verse 12 to describe the fearful evils of which the sinner is guilty, thus emphasizing his obnoxiousness to the holy God, and magnifying the amazing grace which saves him. First, “unrighteousness”: as God is the supreme Lord and Governor of all, as He is our Benefactor and Rewarder, and as all His laws are just and good, the first notion of righteousness in us is the rendering to God that which is His due, namely, universal obedience to all His commands—hence, *unrighteousness* signifies a *wrong* done unto God. Second, “sin” is a missing of the mark, an erring from that end at which it is ever our duty to aim, namely, the glory of God. Third, “iniquity” has the force of lawlessness, a setting up of my will against that of the Almighty’s, a determination to please myself and go my own way. How marvellous, then, is the propitiuous favour of God toward those who are guilty of such multiplied enormities. How great and how grand the contrast between the covenants: under the Siniatic a *regime* of justice was supreme; under the Christian economy, grace reigns through righteousness.

Such, then, are the particulars of the remarkable prophecy made through Jeremiah, anticipating, in fact, *giving* a grand description of the Gospel. They disclose beyond the possibility of mistake the *spiritual character* of this covenant. The Messianic Covenant, unlike the Siniatic, effectually accomplished the eternal salvation of all who are interested in it. The blessings conferred upon them, as here enumerated, are the “things which accompany salvation” (Heb. 6:9), yea, they are the constituent elements of salvation itself. It therefore has respect to the antitypical Israel, the spiritual seed, and to them alone. The mere possession of external privileges, however valuable they may be in themselves, and the correct observance of religious worship, however consistently maintained, avails nothing in proof of being within the bounds of this covenant. Nothing can afford sure evidence that this covenant has been made *with us*, save a living faith uniting the soul to Christ, and producing conformity to Him in this life.

What has been last said ought never to be overlooked, for it is one main feature distinguishing this covenant from the Siniatic. The new covenant actually does for those who are in it what the old one failed to do for the Jewish people. To them God gave a revelation, but it came to them in letter only; to the New Testament saints His revelation comes in power also (1 Cor. 4:20; 1 Thess. 1:5). To them God gave the Law as written upon tables of stone; to the New Testament saints God also gives the Law, but writes it upon their hearts. Consequently, they chafed at the Law, whereas we (after the inward man) delight in it (Rom. 7:22). Hence, too, they walked not in God's statutes, but continually transgressed them; whereas of His New Testament people it is written, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17). That which makes all the difference is that the Holy Spirit is given to indwell and energize the latter, which He was not in those who were in the Siniatic Covenant as such—we say "as such," for there was ever a godly remnant who *were* indwelt by the Spirit on the ground of the Everlasting Covenant.

Again, we may observe that this covenant is a display of rich and unmerited *grace*: such are all its arrangements and provisions. The very circumstances under which the Christian covenant was formally introduced furnishes clear proof of this: succeeding, as it did, an economy set aside on account of its unprofitableness—an economy inherently weak for spiritual ends, and perverted by the people who enjoyed its privileges. The abuse of the Siniatic Covenant deserved not higher favours, but merited summary judgment—yet it was among the Jews that God's Son tabernacled and performed His works of mercy. The application of the blessings of the Messianic Covenant does, in every instance, also bear witness to those blessings no man can lay claim—if conferred at all, they come as free gifts of undeserved grace. Its blessings are the bestowment of sovereign goodness. They who are brought within the covenant are the objects of God's electing love. To grace alone they owe all they become, the service they are enabled to perform, and all the blessedness they shall enjoy in Heaven hereafter.

The *stability* and *perpetuity* of the new covenant are plainly involved in the statement made by Jeremiah (31:31-35). The very nature of its blessings is a proof of this. They effectually secured the great end which God has in view in His dealings with men, namely, the formation of a holy people, for His everlasting praise. This end once attained, there is no room for any improvement. But that could not be said of the Siniatic Covenant: as it regarded this result it failed, and that almost continuously throughout the long history of the Jews. But so far from being unexpected, that failure was distinctly foreseen. From the first, the Levitical economy partook of the nature of a preparation for something better. Its perceptible unprofitableness for those higher ends should have taught the people that it could not have been intended to be permanent. Ultimately, they were plainly informed (Jer. 31) that their economy was to be superseded by another covenant, the blessings of which, in their very nature, securing what the existing arrangement had never attained unto. Here, too, its surpassing excellency appears. Other points of difference between the two covenants must be left for next month.—A.W.P.

A FOURFOLD SALVATION.

3. *Salvation from the Power of Sin.*

This is a present and protracted process, and is as yet incomplete. It is the most difficult part of our subject, and upon it the greatest confusion of thought prevails, especially among young Christians. Many there are who, having learned that the Lord Jesus is the Saviour of sinners, have jumped to the erroneous conclusion that if they but exercise faith in Him, surrender to His Lordship, commit their souls into His keeping, He will remove their corrupt nature and destroy their evil propensities. But after they have really trusted in Him, they discover that evil is still present with them, that their hearts are still deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and that no matter how they strive to resist temptation, pray for overcoming grace and use the means of God's appointing, they seem to grow worse and worse instead of better, until they seriously doubt if they are saved at all. They are now *being sanctified!*

Even when a person has been regenerated and justified, the flesh or corrupt nature remains within him, and ceaselessly harasses him. Yet this ought not to perplex him. To the saints at Rome, Paul said, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (6:12), which would be entirely meaningless had sin been eradicated from them. Writing to the Corinthian saints he said, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Obviously such an exhortation is needless if sin has been purged from our beings. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6)—what need have Christians for such a word as this—except pride still lurks and works within them? But all room for controversy on this point is excluded if we bow to that inspired declaration, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

The old carnal nature remains in the believer: he is still a *sinner*, though a *saved* one. What, then, is the young Christian to do? Is he powerless? Must he resort to stoicism, and make up his mind that there is nothing but a life of defeat before him? Certainly not! The first thing for him to do is to learn thoroughly the humiliating truth that in *himself* he is "without strength." It was here that Israel failed: when Moses made known to them the Law, they boastfully declared, "all that the LORD hath said we will do and be obedient" (Exo. 24:7). Ah! how little did they realize that "in the flesh there dwelleth no good thing." It was here, too, that Peter failed: he was self-confident and boasted that, "though all men be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee" (Matt. 26:33, 35)—how little he knew his own heart! This complacent spirit lurks within each of us. While we cherish the belief we can "do better next time," it is evident that we still have confidence in our own powers. Not until we heed the Saviour's word, "without Me ye can do *nothing*," do we take the first step toward victory. Only when we are weak (in ourselves) are we strong.

The believer still has the carnal nature within him, and he has no strength in himself to check its evil propensities, nor to overcome its sinful solicitations. But the believer in Christ also has another nature within him, which is received at the new birth: "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). The believer, then, has two natures within him: one which is sinful, the other spiritual. These two natures being totally different in character, are antagonistic to each other. To this antagonism, or conflict, the Apostle referred when he said, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal.

5:17). Now *which* of these two natures is to regulate the believer's life? It is manifest that both cannot, for they are contrary to each other. It is equally evident that the stronger of the two will exert the more controlling power. It is also clear that in the young Christian the carnal nature is the stronger, because he was born with it, and hence it has many years head start over the spiritual nature—which he did not receive until he was born again.

Further, it is unnecessary to argue at length that the only way by which we can strengthen and develop the new nature is by *feeding* it. In every realm, growth is dependent upon food, suitable food, daily food. The nourishment which God has provided for our spiritual nature is found in His own Word, for "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). It is to this that Peter has reference when he says, "As newborn babes desire the sincere (pure) milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). In proportion as we feed upon the heavenly Manna, such will be our spiritual growth. Of course, there are other things beside food needful to growth: we must breathe, and live in a pure atmosphere. This, translated into spiritual terms, signifies *prayer*. It is when we approach the Throne of Grace and meet our Lord face to face that our spiritual lungs are filled with the ozone of Heaven. *Exercise* is another essential to growth, and this finds its accomplishment in walking with the Lord. If, then, we heed these primary laws of spiritual health, the new nature will flourish.

But not only must the new nature be fed. It is equally necessary for our spiritual well-being that the old nature should be starved. This is what the Apostle had in mind when he said, "Make not provision for the flesh, unto the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). To starve the old nature, to make not provision for the flesh, means that we abstain from everything that would stimulate our carnality—that we avoid, as we would a plague all that is calculated to prove injurious to our spiritual welfare. Not only must we deny ourselves the "pleasures of sin," shun such things as the saloon, theatre, dance, card table, etc., but we must separate ourselves from worldly companions, cease to read worldly literature, abstain from everything upon which we cannot ask God's blessing. Our affections are to be set upon things *above*, and not upon things on the earth (Col. 3:2). Does this seem a high standard and sound impracticable? Holiness in all things is that at which we are to aim, and failure so to do explains the *leanness* of so many Christians. Let the young believer realize that whatever does not help his spiritual life *hinders* it.

Here then, in brief, is the answer to our question, What is the young Christian to do in order for deliverance from indwelling sin? It is true that we are still in this world, but we are not "of" it (John 17:14). It is true that we are forced to associate with godless people, but this is ordained of God in order that we may "let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. 5:16). There is a wide difference between associating with sinners as we go about our daily tasks, and making them our intimate companions and friends. Only as we feed upon the Word can we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Only as we starve the old nature can we expect deliverance from its power and pollution. Then let us earnestly heed that exhortation, "put ye off concerning the former conversation (behaviour) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24).

Above, we have dealt only with the *human* side of the problem as to how to obtain deliverance from the dominion of sin. Necessarily there is a *Divine* side, too. It is only by God's grace that we are enabled to use the means which He has provided for us, as it is only by the power of His Spirit who dwells within us that we can "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). These two aspects (the Divine and human) are brought together in a number of Scriptures. We are bid to, "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," but the Apostle immediately added, "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). Thus, we are to work out that which God has wrought within us—in other words, if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (Gal. 5:16). It has now been shown that salvation from the power of sin is a *process* which goes on throughout the believer's life. It is to this Solomon referred when he said, "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth *more and more* unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

As our salvation from the pleasure of sin is the consequence of our regeneration, and as salvation from the penalty of sin respects our justification, so salvation from the power of sin has to do with the practical side of our *sanctification*. The word "sanctification" signifies "separation"—separation from sin. We need hardly say that the word "holiness" is strictly synonymous with "sanctification," being an alternative rendering of the same Greek word. As the practical side of sanctification has to do with our separation from sin, we are told, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). That practical sanctification or holiness is a process, a progressive experience, is clear from this: "Follow . . . holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). The fact that we are exhorted to "follow" holiness clearly intimates that we have not yet attained unto the Divine standard which God requires of us. This is further seen in the passage just quoted above: "perfecting holiness" or completing it.

We must now enter into a little fuller detail upon *the Divine side* of our salvation from the power and pollution of sin. When a sinner truly receives Christ as his Lord and Saviour, God does not then and there take him to Heaven: on the contrary, he is likely to be left down here for many years and this world is a place of *danger*, for it lies in the Wicked one (1 John 5:19) and all pertaining to it is opposed to the Father (1 John 2:16). Therefore the believer needs daily salvation from this hostile system. Accordingly we read that Christ, "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father" (Gal. 1:4). Not only is the sinner not taken to Heaven when he first savingly believes, but, as we have seen, the evil nature is not taken out of him—nevertheless God does not leave him completely under its dominion, but graciously delivers him from its regal power. He uses a great variety of means in accomplishing this.

First, *by granting us a clearer view of our inward depravity* so that we are made to abhor ourselves. By nature we are thoroughly in love with ourselves, but as the Divine work of grace is carried forward in our souls we come to loathe ourselves; and that, my reader, is a very distressing experience—one which is conveniently shelved by most of our modern preachers. The concept which many young Christians form from preachers is that the experience of a genuine believer is a smooth, peaceful, and joyous one; but he soon discovers that this is not verified in his personal experience, but rather is it com-

pletely false. And this staggers him—supposing the preacher to know more about such matters than himself, he is now filled with disturbing doubts about his very salvation, and the Devil promptly tells him he is only a hypocrite, and never was saved at all.

Only those who have actually passed through or are passing through this painful experience have any real conception thereof. There is as much difference between an actual acquaintance with it and the mere reading a description of the same as there is between personally visiting a country and simply studying a map of it. But how are we to account for one who has been saved from the pleasure and penalty of sin now being made increasingly conscious not only of its polluting presence but of its tyrannizing power? How can we explain the fact that the Christian now finds himself growing worse and worse, and the more closely he endeavours to walk with God, the more he finds the flesh bringing forth its horrible works in ways it had not done previously? The answer is because of increased light from God, by which he now discovers filth of which he was previously unaware: the sun shining into a neglected room does not create the dust and cobwebs, but simply reveals them.

Thus it is with the Christian. The more the light of the Spirit is turned upon him inwardly, the more he discovers the horrible plague of his heart (1 Kings 8:38), and the more he realizes what a wretched failure he is. The fact is, dear discouraged soul, that the more you are growing *out* of love with yourself, the more you are being saved from the power of sin. Wherein lies its fearful potency? Why, in its power to *deceive* us. It *lies* to us. It did so to Adam and Eve. It gives us false estimates of values so that we mistake the tinsel for real gold. To be saved from the power of sin is to have our eyes opened so that we see things in God's light—it is to know the *truth* about things all around us, and the truth about ourselves. Satan has blinded the minds of them that believe not, but the Holy Spirit has shined in our hearts, “unto the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

But further—sin not only deceives, it *puffs up*, causing its infatuated victims to think highly of themselves. As 1 Timothy 3:6 tells us, to be “lifted up with pride” is to “fall into the condemnation of the devil.” Ah, it was insane egotism which caused Lucifer to say, “I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:13, 14). Is there any wonder, then, that those in whom he works are filled with pride and complacency! Sin ever produces self-love and self-righteousness: the most abandoned of characters will tell you, “I know that I am weak, yet I have a good heart.” But when God takes us in hand, it is the very opposite: the workings of the Spirit subdue our pride. How? By giving increasing discoveries of self and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, so that each one cries with Job, “Behold! I am vile” (40:4). Such an one is being saved from the power of sin—its power to deceive and to inflate.

Second, *by sore chastenings*. This is another means which God uses in delivering His people from sin's dominion. “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure: but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness” (Heb. 12:9, 10). Those chastenings assume varied forms: sometimes they are external, sometimes internal, but whatever be their nature they are painful to flesh and blood. Sometimes these Divine

chastisements are of long duration, and then the soul is apt to ask, “why standest Thou afar off, O LORD? Why dost Thou hide Thyself in times of trouble?” (Psa. 10:1), for it seems as though God has deserted us. Earnest prayer is made for a mitigation of suffering but no relief is granted; grace is earnestly sought for, meekly bowing to the rod, but unbelief, impatience, rebellion seem to wax stronger and stronger—and the soul is hard put to believe in God’s love—but as Hebrews 12:11 tells us, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

This life is a schooling and chastenings are one of the chief methods God employs in the training of His children. Sometimes they are sent for the *correcting* of our faults, and therefore we must pray, “Cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24). Let us steadily bear in mind that it is the “rod” and *not the sword* which is smiting us, held in the hand of our loving Father and not the avenging Judge. Sometimes they are sent for the *prevention* of sin, as Paul was given a thorn in the flesh, “lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations” given him. Sometimes they are sent for our spiritual *education*, that by them we may be brought to a deeper experimental acquaintance with God: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes” (Psa. 119:71). Sometimes they are sent for the testing and strengthening of our *graces*: “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope,” (Rom. 5:3, 4); “count it all joy when ye fall into varied trials: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:2, 3).

Chastening is God’s *sin-purging medicine*, sent to wither our fleshly aspirations, to detach our hearts from carnal objects, to deliver us from our idols, to wean us more thoroughly from the world. God has bidden us, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . . come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:14, 17). We are slow to respond, and therefore does He take measures to *drive us out*. He has bidden us “love not the world,” and if we disobey we must not be surprised if He causes some of our worldly friends to hate and persecute us. God has bidden us, “mortify ye therefore your members which are upon the earth” (Col. 3:5): if we refuse to comply with this unpleasant task, then we may expect God Himself to use the pruning knife upon us. God has bidden us, “cease ye from man” (Isa. 2:22), and if we will trust our fellows, we are made to suffer for it.

“Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him” (Heb. 12:5). This is a salutary warning. So far from despising it, we should be grateful for the same—that God cares so much and takes such trouble with us, and that His bitter medicine produces such healthful effects. “In their affliction they will seek Me early” (Hosea 5:15): while everything is running smoothly for us, we are apt to be self-sufficient; but when trouble comes, we promptly turn unto the Lord. Own, then, with the Psalmist, “In faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me” (119:75). Not only do God’s chastisements, when sanctified to us, subdue the workings of pride and wean us more from the world, but they make the Divine promises more precious to the heart—such an one as this takes on a new meaning: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee . . . when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned” (Isa. 43:2). Moreover, they break down selfishness and make us more sympathetic to our fellow-sufferers:

“Who comfortest us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble” (2 Cor. 1:4).—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

6. *Its Nature.*

It has been well said that, "The reason why anyone believes in Election is that he finds it in the Bible. No man could ever imagine such a doctrine—for it is, in itself, contrary to the thinking and the wishes of the human heart. Everyone, at first, opposes the doctrine, and it is only after many struggles, under the working of the Spirit of God, that we are made to receive it. A perfect acquiescence in this doctrine—an absolute lying still, in adoring wonder, at the footstool of God's sovereignty, is the last attainment of the sanctified soul in this life, as it is the beginning of Heaven. The reason why anyone believes in Election is just this, and *only* this, that *God* has made it known. Had the Bible been a counterfeit it never could have contained the doctrine of election, for men are too averse to such a thought to give it expression, much more to give it prominence" (G. S. Bishop).

Thus far, in our exposition of this blessed truth, we have shown that the *source* of election is the will of God, for nothing exists or can exist apart from that. Next, we have seen, that the *Grand Original* of election is the man Christ Jesus, who was ordained unto union with the second Person in the Godhead. Then, in order to clear the way for a more detailed examination of this truth as it bears upon us, we demonstrated the *verity* and then the *justice* of it, seeking to remove from the minds of Christian readers the defiling and disturbing effects of the principal objection which is made against Divine election by its enemies. And now we shall endeavour to point out the principal elements which enter into election.

First, it is *an act by God*. True it is that there comes a day when each of the elect chooses God for his absolute Lord and supreme Good, but this is the effect and in no sense the cause of the former. Our choosing of Him is in time—His choosing of us was *before* time began; and certain it is that unless He had first chosen us, we would never choose Him at all. God, who is a sovereign Being, does whatsoever He pleases both in Heaven and in earth, having an absolute right to do as He wills with His own creatures, and therefore did He choose a certain number of human beings to be His people, His children, His peculiar treasure. Having done this, it is called "election of God" (1 Thess. 1:4), for He is the efficient cause of it; and the persons chosen are denominated "God's own elect" (Luke 18:7; Rom. 8:33).

This choice of God's is an *absolute* one, being entirely gratuitous, depending on nothing whatever outside of Himself. God elected the ones He did simply because He chose to do so—from no good, merit, or attraction in the creature, and from no foreseen merit or attraction *to be* in the creature. God is absolutely self-sufficient, and therefore He never goes outside of Himself to find a reason for anything that He does. He cannot be swayed by the works of His own hand. No, He is the One who sways them, as He alone is the One who gave them existence. "In Him we live, and are moved, (Greek) and have our being." It was, then, simply out of the spontaneous goodness of His own volition that God singled out from the mass of those He purposed to create a people who should show forth His praises for all eternity, to the glory of His sovereign grace forever and ever.

This choice of God's is an *unchangeable* one. Necessarily so, for it is not founded upon anything in the creature, or grounded upon anything outside of Himself. It is before everything, even before His "foreknowledge." God does not decree because He foreknows, but He foreknows because He has infallibly and irrevocably decreed it—otherwise He would merely guess it. But since He foreknows it, then He does not

guess—it is certain; and if certain, then He must have fixed it. Election being the act of God, it is *forever*, for whatever He does in a way of special grace, is irreversible and unalterable. Men may choose some to be their favourites and friends for a while, and then change their minds and choose others in their room. But God does not act such a part: He is of one mind, and none can turn Him: His purpose according to election stands firm, sure, unalterable (Rom. 9:11; 2 Tim. 2:19).

Second, God's act of election is *made in Christ*: "according as He hath chosen us in Him" (Eph. 1:4). Election does not find men in Christ, but *puts* them there. It gives them a being in Christ and union to Him, which is the foundation of their manifestative being in Him at conversion. In the infinite mind of God, He willed to love a company of Adam's posterity with an immutable love, and out of the love wherewith He loves them, He chose them in Christ. By this act in His infinite mind, God gave them being and blessedness in Christ from everlasting. Though, while all fell in Adam, yet all did not fall alike. The non-elect fell so as to be damned, they being left to perish in their sins, because they had no relation to Christ—He was not related to them as the Mediator of union with God.

The non-elect had their all in Adam, their natural head. But the elect had all spiritual blessing bestowed upon them in Christ, their grace and glory Head (Eph. 1:3). They could not lose these, because they were secured for them in Christ. God had chosen them as His own: He their God, they His people; He their Father, they His children. He gave them to Christ to be His brethren, His companions, His bride, His partners in all His communicable grace and glory. On the foresight of their fall in Adam, and what would be the effects thereof, the Father proposed to raise them up from the ruins of the Fall, upon the consideration of His Son's undertaking to perform all righteousness for them, and as their Surety, bear all their sins in His own body on the tree, making His soul an offering for sin. To carry all of this into execution, the beloved Son became incarnate.

It was to this that the Lord Jesus referred in His high priestly prayer, when He said to the Father, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me" (John 17:6). He was alluding to the whole election of grace. They were the objects of the Father's delight: His jewels, His portion; and in Christ's eyes they were what the Father beheld them to be. How highly, then, did the Father esteem the Mediator, or He would never have bestowed His elect on Him and committed them all to His care and management! And how highly did Christ value this love-gift of the Father's, or He would not have undertaken their salvation at such tremendous cost to Himself! Now the giving of the elect to Christ was a different act, a distinct act from that of their election. The elect were first the Father's by election, who singled out the persons; and then He bestowed them upon Christ as His love-gift: "Thine they were (by election) and Thou gavest them Me"—in the same way that grace is said to be given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9).

Third, this act of God was irrespective of and *anterior to any foresight of the entrance of sin*. We have somewhat anticipated this branch of our subject, yet as it is one upon which very few today are clear, and one we deem of considerable importance, we propose to give it separate consideration. The particular point which we are now to ponder is as to whether His people were viewed by God, in His act of election, as fallen or un-fallen; as in the corrupt mass through their defection in Adam, or in the pure mass of creature-hood, as to be created. Those who took the former view are known as Sublapsar-

ians; those who took the latter as Supralapsarians, and in the past this question was debated considerably between high and low Calvinists. This writer unhesitatingly (after prolonged study) takes the Supralapsarian position, though he is well aware that few indeed will be ready to follow him.

Sin having drawn a veil over the greatest of all the Divine mysteries of grace—that of the Divine incarnation alone excepted—renders our present task the more difficult. It is much easier for us to apprehend our misery, and our redemption from it—by the incarnation, obedience and sacrifice of the Son of God; than it is for us to conceive of the *original* glory, excellency, purity and dignity of the Church of Christ, as the eternal object of God's thoughts, counsels and purpose. Nevertheless, if we adhere closely to the Holy Scriptures, it is evident (to the writer, at least) that God's people had a super-creation and spiritual union with Christ before ever they had a creature and natural union with Adam; that they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3). before they fell in Adam and became subject to all the evils of the curse. First we will summarize the reasons given by John Gill in support of this.

God's decree of election is to be divided into *two* parts or degrees, namely, His purpose concerning the end and His purpose concerning the means. The first part has to do with the purpose of God in Himself, in which He determined to have an elect people and that for His own glory. The second part has to do with the actual *execution* of the first, by fixing upon the means whereby the end shall be accomplished. These two parts in the Divine decree are neither to be severed nor confounded, but considered distinctly. God's purpose concerning the end means that He ordained a certain people to be the recipients of His special favour, for the glorifying of His sovereign goodness and grace. His purpose concerning the means signifies that He determined to create that people, permit them to fall, and to recover them out of it by Christ's redemption and the Spirit's sanctification. These are not to be regarded as separate decrees, but as component parts and degrees of one purpose. There is an *order* in the Divine counsels as real and definite as Genesis 1 shows as there was in connection with creation.

As the purpose of the *end* is first in view (in the order of nature) before the determination of the *means*, therefore what is first in intention is last in execution. Now as the glory of God is the last in execution, it necessarily follows that it was first in intention. Wherefore men must be considered in the Divine purpose concerning the end as neither yet created nor fallen, since both their creation and the permission of sin belong to God's counsel concerning the *means*. Is it not obvious that if God first decreed to create men and suffer them to fall, and then out of the fallen mass choose some to grace and glory, that He purposed to create men *without* any end in view? And is not that charging God with what a wise man would never do, for when man determines to do a thing he proposes an end (say the building of an house) and then fixes on ways and means to bring about that end. Can it be thought for a moment that the Omniscient One should act otherwise?

The above distinction between the Divine purpose concerning the end and God's appointing of means to secure that end, is clearly borne out by Scripture. For example, "For it became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10). Here is first the decree concerning the *end*: God ordained His many sons "unto glory"; in His purpose of the *means* God ordained that the Captain of their salvation should be made perfect "through sufferings." In like manner was it in connection with

Christ Himself. "The LORD said unto My Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand" (Psa. 110:1). God decreed that the Mediator should have this high honour conferred upon Him, yet in order thereto it was ordained that, "He shall drink of the brook in the way" (v. 7): God, then, decreed that the Redeemer should drink of the fullness of those pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore (Psa. 16:11), but before that He must drain the bitter cup of anguish. So it is with His people: Canaan is their destined portion, but the wilderness is appointed as that through which they shall pass on their way thereto.

God's foreordination of His people unto holiness and glory anterior to His foreview of their Fall in Adam, comports far better with the instances given of Jacob and Esau in Romans 9:11 than does the Sublapsarian view that His decree contemplated them as sinful creatures. There we read, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." The Apostle is showing that the preference was given to Jacob independent of all of merit, because it was made before the children were born. If it be kept in mind that what God does in time is only a making manifest of what He secretly decreed in eternity, the point we are here pressing will be the more conclusive. God's acts both of election and preterition—choosing and passing by—were entirely *irrespective* of any foreseen "good or evil." Note, too, how this compound expression, "the *purpose* of God according to *election*," supports the contention of there being *two* parts to God's decree.

It should also be pointed out that God's foreordination of His people unto everlasting bliss before He contemplated them as sinful creatures, agrees far better than does the Sublapsarian idea, with the *unformed* clay of the Potter: "Hath not the Potter power (the right) over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9:21). Upon this Beza (co-pastor with Calvin of the church at Geneva) remarked that, "if the Apostle had considered mankind as corrupted, he would *not* have said that some vessels were made unto honour and some unto dishonour, but rather that seeing all the vessels were fit for dishonour, some were *left in* that dishonour, and others *translated from* dishonour to honour."

But leaving inferences and deductions, let us turn now to something more express and definite. In Ephesians 1:11 we are told, "Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," or, to state it another way, the spiritual blessings which God bestows upon His people are divided into *two* distinct classes, according as He contemplated them first in an unfallen state and then in a fallen. The first and highest Class of blessings are enumerated in verses 4-6, and have to do with God's decree concerning the *end*; the second and subordinate class of blessings are described and have to do with God's decree concerning the *means* which He has appointed for the accomplishment of that end.

These two parts in the mystery of God's will towards His people from everlasting are clearly marked by the change of tense which is used: the past tense of, "He *hath* chosen us" (v. 4), "*having predestinated* us unto the adoption of children" (v. 5), and "*hath made* us accepted in the Beloved" (v. 6), becomes the present tense in verse 7: "in whom we *have* redemption through His blood." The benefits spoken of in verses 4-6 are such as in no way depended upon a consideration of the Fall, but follow from our being chosen in Christ, being given upon grounds higher and distinct from that of His being our Redeemer. God's choice of us in Christ our Head, that we should be "holy" signifies not that

imperfect holiness which we have in this life, but a perfect and immutable one such as even the unfallen angels had not by nature; and our predestination to adoption denotes an immediate communion with God Himself—blessings which had been ours had sin never entered.

As Thomas Goodwin pointed out in his unrivalled exposition of Ephesians 1, “The first source of blessings—perfect holiness, adoption, etc.,—were ordained us *without* consideration of the Fall, though not *before* the consideration of the Fall; for all the things which God decrees are at once in His mind—they were all, both one another, ordained to our persons. But God in the decrees about these first sort of blessings viewed us as *creatures* which He could and would make so and so glorious . . . But the second sort of blessings were ordained us merely upon consideration of the Fall, and to our persons considered as *sinner*s and unbelievers. The first sort were to the ‘praise of God’s grace,’ taking grace for the freeness of love; whereas the latter sort are to ‘the praise of the glory of His grace,’ taking grace for free mercy.”

The first and higher blessings are to have their full accomplishment in Heaven, being suited to that state into which we shall then be installed, and as in God’s primary intention, they are before the other and are said to have been, “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), so they are to be realized *after* this world is ended—the “adoption” to which we are predestinated (Eph. 1:5) we still await (Rom. 8:23). Whereas the second blessings are bestowed upon us in this lower world, for it is here and now we receive “forgiveness of sins” through the blood of Christ. Again—the first blessings are founded solely upon our relation to the *Person* of Christ, as is evident from “chosen in Him . . . accepted in the Beloved”; but the second sort are grounded upon His *work*, redemption issuing from Christ’s sacrifice. Thus the latter blessings are but the removing of those obstacles which by reason of sin stand in our way of that intended Glory.

Again—this distinction of blessings which we receive in Christ as creatures, and through Christ as sinners, is confirmed by the *twofold office* which He sustains toward us. This is clearly expressed in, “for the husband is the head of his wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church, and He is the Saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). Notice carefully the *order* of those titles: Christ is first an Head and Husband to us, which lays the foundation of that relation to God of being His adopted children—as by marriage with His Son. Second, He is our “Saviour,” which necessarily respects sin. With Ephesians 5:23 should be compared Colossians 1:18-20, where the same order is set forth: in verses 18 and 19 we learn of what Christ is absolutely ordained to and His church with Him, by which He is the Founder of that state we shall enter after the resurrection: and then in verse 20 we see Him as Redeemer and Reconciler: first the “Head” of His Church, and then its “Saviour!” From this twofold relation of Christ to the elect arises a *double glory* which He is ordained unto: the one intrinsic, due to Him as the Son of God dwelling in human nature and being therein the Head of a glorious Church (see John 17:5); and the other more extrinsic, as acquired by His work of redemption and purchased with the agony of His soul (see Phil. 2:8-10)!—A.W.P.

SAMSON'S RIDDLE.

“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness” (Judg. 14:14). It does, at first sight, seem strange, after an announcement from Heaven of his birth, after the coming of an angel to give directions as to his rearing, after being told that the Lord blessed him, and that, “the Spirit of the Lord moved him,” and that he was a true believer, to find that it was muscular power that was Samson’s great endowment, and that his passions were so unsubdued. But great strength was just what was needed then, “for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel”; and even Samson’s strong passions were overruled for the discomfiture of the enemies of his country.

When one thinks of how great, in the view of God, was His scheme of redemption, and of how important to the Church the revelation of it was, we cannot wonder if there should be frequent promises given of Messiah and predictions of His incarnation, death, and kingdom—many typical objects and rites to represent Him, not a few whose lives were emblematical of that of the promised One, and even epochs of history so arranged as to furnish an allegory of the “better things to come.” Anyone who is duly impressed with the greatness of redemption, and who thinks at all according to the mind of God regarding it, cannot wonder if things and men and epochs manifold should be shadowing forth in past ages the fulfillment of the promise of the Redeemer. God could not have been silent regarding Him who, as His only begotten Son, was the object of His infinite love, and who, as Messiah, was the gift of His love to the Church. And He was not silent; for He spoke regarding Him to the Old Testament Church through promises, prophecies, typical rites, and typical men, and through the dealings of His providence with a nation, as well as with individuals.

One of the typical men was Samson. He was well fitted to represent the Messiah as the “Saviour” whom “God raised unto Israel.” Samson’s name means “distinguished” or “strong,” and we may well apply it to him with both these meanings. The Lord made him distinguished, and He made him strong, and He did both that He might exhibit through him His Messiah to His people. In course of his going down for a wife to Timnath, “a young lion roared against him.” “The Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him,” and “he rent him as he would have rent a kid.” Returning “after a time, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion; and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.” He himself having partaken of the honey first, gave some of it also to his parents, but how he had procured it he kept as a secret. This secret furnished him with a riddle at the marriage-feast. As no one could taste the sweet meat but those to whom he gave it, so none could solve the riddle to whom he did not unfold its meaning. So far he most fitly typifies Him who came down from Heaven “to seek and to save” the objects of His love, and who encountered “him that had the power of death,” and by death destroyed him, thus securing to His Church both meat and sweetness, for which none shall partake except such as receive these from Him, and the mode of obtaining which none can understand except such as are His disciples. Looking at this riddle as no longer Samson’s, but Christ’s, let us consider—

(1) This riddle presents to us *the mystery of the Cross*. “God raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.” He was “manifested to destroy the works of the Devil,” and to procure redemption for a people who were both prisoners and slaves. These two designs could only be accomplished together, and only *by death*. As no meat could come out of the eater unless the eater had been slain, so there could be no redemption to Israel unless Christ, by

His death, had destroyed “him that had the power of death.” But the meat was not produced by “the eater,” though it came out of him. The lion was dead, and could not be an “eater,” and only in his dead carcass could the honey be stored by the “swarm of bees” whose work it was to gather it. All that is “meat” and “sweetness” as the result of the “death of death in the death of Christ” is due to the grace of God, which found in Him who died and rose again a place in which the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant might be stored, and a way by which the Holy Spirit might come forth to dispense them.

Let it be no difficulty to your mind to think of a living Samson while looking on the dead lion. Samson only risked his life, while Christ actually laid His down. Yet do not think that you have in this what utterly unfits the one for being an emblem of the other. The actual death of Christ *only secured redemption by destroying* “him that had the power of death.” But I see a living High Priest beside the slain sacrifice, who can present Himself as “the Lamb that was slain” before God. And I have before me Him who was dead, alive again, and “alive forevermore,” to dispense to the objects of His love the blessings of the covenant which He sealed by His blood. What was awaiting in his encounter with the Lion to complete Samson’s representation of Christ in His actual dying “for the ungodly,” was made up by the mode in which he willingly sacrificed his life at the last that enemies of Israel might perish through his death.

Think of all the “meat” and “sweetness” secured by the death of Christ to redeemed Israel—the infinite fullness of God’s covenant grace brought nigh by the Gospel in which Christ crucified is preached. What a honeycomb that is which is near us in the Gospel, each one of the “exceeding great and precious promises” a cell full—fraught with the rich grace of God! All this is brought near to you, and may be claimed by you if you reach Christ crucified in faith, and take your stand as a sinner on His precious blood. But you require a living Christ to secure to you any benefit from His death. Samson’s parents tasted the honey only when their son gave it to them. And what he procured by risking his life he gave ungrudgingly. Is not Christ’s love worthy of more trust than Samson’s? Count it no hardship that you must owe to the gracious power of the living, the enjoyment of what was secured by the atonement of the slain Lamb.

To partake of the grace of the blood-sealed covenant would secure to you both “meat” and “sweetness”: both what would strengthen and what would gladden you. Entering through the death of Christ amidst the riches of the grace of God, you would attain to a child’s confidence towards the grace of God: and you would be no coward in the conflict to which the soldiers of Jesus Christ are called. As a child, as a servant, and as a soldier, you need both “meat” and “sweetness,” and “the eater” and “the strong” would yield both to you, if through “the blood” you reached the grace “of the Everlasting Covenant.”

(2) This riddle may be viewed as referring to *the blessed results of affliction to the Lord’s children*. These encounter “eaters” and are called to combat with “the strong.” This is their frequent experience as they bear the various trials of providence, as they endure persecution from the world, as they are engaged in conflict with the strong corruption of their old hearts, and as they are assaulted by the power of “the wicked one.” All these are painfully felt to be “eaters” and “strong.”

But all these trials have in them *no destroying power*. The entire removal of the curse has made the children of God indestructible. The death of Christ effected the removal of the curse from them when that death was, in the day of their justification, placed to their account by God. Trouble is no longer armed with the curse to them. It may smite them so

as to pain them, but it cannot smite them so as to slay them. I could easily conceive a very nervous person trembling at the sight of a dead lion. It could do him no harm, for it was utterly dead, and it was utterly unreasonable to be afraid because near it. Just as little reason has the child of God to be afraid of all the troubles which he may have to encounter; but how often does he tremble when he comes near to them. Friend, you will never get rid of that cowardice but at the Cross of Christ, on which the curse was utterly exhausted in the death of your Surety. As you appropriate Him, and redemption through His blood, all troubles will appear as thoroughly powerless to harm you as was the carcass of the slain lion in the vineyard of Timnath.

The afflictions of the righteous are not only powerless to harm, *but they are made profitable*. Thus they cannot be without the grace of God. If there were no honey in the carcass of the lion, there could not come "meat" and "sweetness" out of it. But through the death of Christ grace comes to the believer in his time of trial, and it is because of this that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." Because of this, instead of being scared by tribulation on account of the pain it causes, he glories in it on account of the good fruit it produces. It yields to him "meat" and "sweetness" to which, without affliction, he would have been an utter stranger.

(3) The riddle points to *the death of the saints*. How often, when looking forward to it, does it seem to be an "eater" ready to devour, and a "strong" one before whom all shall be laid low? An "eater," verily, is death if armed with sin as its "sting"; and "strong" is the "eater," for its power shall bring all the Christless down into the depths of an eternal Hell. Ah, friend, if you are away from the Cross of Christ you have no right to be aught else than afraid before it. But if you, with the eye of faith, see death deprived of its sting by the death of the Cross, and can grasp Him who "died and rose again" with the hand of faith, then you may expect to taste ineffable sweetness in the result of your dying. For what does death yield to the believer?

1. *An end to all the troubles of this life*. These often were felt to be downing floods, as they went down into them, and seemed to be a sea without a further shore. To their eyes there seemed to be a haze on the horizon, towards which their gaze was directed, which made it impossible for them to discern aught but sea. They often feared that the time would never come, in which to them there shall be "no more sea." But passing through death the believer passes beyond the reach of all the trials of this life. Nothing does he carry with him that can disturb, and none to trouble him shall either accompany or follow him.

2. In death there shall be *a final end of all sin*. It is not by his own death that sin shall be annihilated in the soul of the believer, but in his dying, the Lord's sanctifying power shall pass through all his being, consuming into utter extinction all sin, till the soul, perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, shall pass into a region in which there shall be no temptation, and where God, in the unchangeableness of His love, in the glory of His holiness, and in the omnipotence of His power, shall compass him to preserve him in the beauty of His own likeness, and in the bliss of His own fellowship for evermore. You need not shrink, believer, from parting with the body of dust that is on you, for you shall, at the same moment, part with the body of death that is *in* you. O what shall it be to emerge out of the wearying and wearied body with an *understanding* in which there shall no more be darkness, a *will* that never shall for a moment, or in the least degree, decline from the of God, a *conscience* which shall be for evermore under the full sunshine of

God's manifested favour, a *memory* that shall recall aught that it shall not be joy to remember, and a *heart* in which perfect love to God shall sway every spring of action, and whose every desire shall be filled with the expressed love and with the outshining glory of Jehovah! Let the living body become a carcass if this sweetness is to follow the dying.

3. To pass through death *is to enjoy all the sweetness of the* home-rest, of the temple-worship, and of the palace-glory of Heaven. What home-rest it shall be to be near to the Man Christ Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, the good Shepherd who graciously tended His flock throughout all the wilderness way, and to have nothing within or near that can mar the joy of this fellowship! How perfected love will then go forth, fervently and adoringly, in a service in which there can be no shortcoming, as it is attracted by the glory that shall shine on it forever from "the throne of God and of the Lamb"! And what eternal wonder shall fill thy soul, believer, as thou find thyself at home amidst the glory of the Father's house—a palace adapted to the presence of Jehovah on His eternal throne.

Application 1. Let all remember that death has to be encountered, either as it meets those who are in the Lord, or as armed with the sting of sin, and clothed with all the terrors of the curse. If you are not in Christ, death will be as the living lion roaring for his prey to you. How fearful a meeting that of a weak, guilty, filthy sinner with an accursed death, whose work is utter destruction, and through an experience of which the Christless pass "into everlasting punishment." Right before you is such a death if you are without true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not more surely did the roaring lion meet Samson than what is unspeakably more awful shall be met by you, if you still continue to move as you have been moving in the past, for, "he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Application 2. Look through Samson's conflict with the lion to Christ's conflict with death. Like Samson, He is all alone. It was well for Samson's friends that he was all alone when the "young lion roared against him," for it was his being alone which secured benefit to them. He went before them, and he went aside from them, and won the victory all alone; and therefore he went before them and with them, and carried to them the fruits of his triumph. Thus acts Christ in relation to His friends. All alone as their Substitute, He met and "destroyed him that had the power of death," that "out of the slain eater might come meat" to them, and out of the conquered "strong" might come "sweetness" to them. He has left only a slain lion to look at when in faith you forecast the death that awaits you in Him; and because of His having triumphed over "the strong man," there are both "meat" and "sweetness" to be found, as well as rest before you. But you will attain to this only as He is with you, and as He, by His Spirit, applies to you the word of His grace. His parents needed the presence of a living Samson, as well as the triumph of a Samson who had risked his life. You need the power of a living Christ to apply to you what the slain Christ secured for you. O is He not "all in all"?

Application 3. Do not expect to know the mystery of the Cross without the teaching of the Spirit of Christ. None could solve his riddle but Samson himself. None can open your understanding to understand the doctrine of the Cross but the Holy One, who has the unction which enables one to "know all things." Let your cry be to Him for the opening of your eyes. Beware of a Delilah's deceit, but learn a lesson of importunity from her, as she persistently urged Samson to disclose to her his secret. Christ has no reason for hiding the truth from any who desire to know it; and surely He has encouraged you to ask the saving knowledge of the truth when He says, "Turn ye at My reproof; I will pour out My Spirit

on you, I will make known My words unto you.”—John Kennedy, preached about 1880. He was one of the spiritual giants of the Highlands of Scotland, in whose pulpit C. H. Spurgeon preached.