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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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

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THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST

For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5). Some unregenerate men, who deny the God-head of Christ, imagine they find something in this verse which supports their system of infidelity, but this only serves to make the more evident the fearful blindness of their minds. As well might they reason from Galatians 1:1 (where we read, “Paul, an apostle, *not of men*, neither by man, but *by Jesus Christ*”), that the Lord Jesus is not Man, as to infer from 1 Timothy 2:5 that He is not God. As we shall show in what follows, none could possibly heal the breach between God and men save one who partook of each of their natures.

“For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5). “In that great difference between God and men, occasioned by our sin and apostasy from Him, which of itself could issue in nothing but the utter ruin of the whole race of mankind, there was none in heaven or earth, in their original nature and operations, who was meet or able to make up a peace between them. Yet this must be done by a mediator, or cease forever. This mediator could not be God Himself absolutely considered, for ‘a mediator is not of one, but God is one’ (Gal 3:20). And as for creatures, there was none in heaven or earth, there was none meet to undertake this office. ‘For if one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?’ (1Sa 2:25)” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

In view of this state of things, the eternal Son, out of love for His Father and that people which had been given to Him, volunteered to enter the office and serve as Mediator. It is to this that Philippians 2:7 refers, where we are told that He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” The

susception (taking upon Him) of our nature for the discharge of the mediatorial office therein, was an act of infinite condescension, wherein He is exceedingly glorious in the eyes of His saints. To quote again from the eminent Puritan:

“Such is the transcendent excellency of the divine nature, it is said of God that, ‘He dwelleth on High, and *humbleth himself to behold* the things that are in heaven and in the earth’ (Psa 113:5-6). All His respect unto creatures, the most glorious, is an act of infinite condescension. And it is so on two accounts. First, because of the infinite distance there is between His being, and that of the creature. Hence, ‘All nations before him are as a drop of a bucket.’ Second, because of His infinite self-sufficiency unto all the acts and ends of His own eternal blessedness. What we have a desire unto, is that it may add to our satisfaction, for no creature is self-sufficient unto its own blessedness. God alone wants nothing, and stands in need of nothing, see Job 35:6-8. God hath infinite perfections in Himself.

“How glorious, then, is the Son of God in His susception of the office of mediator! For if such be the perfection of the divine nature, and its distance is so absolutely infinite from the whole of creation, and if such be His self-sufficiency unto His own eternal blessedness, so that nothing can be taken from Him, nothing added unto Him, so that every regard to Him unto any of His creatures, is an act of self-condescension from the prerogative of His being and state; what heart can conceive, what tongue can express the glory of that condescension in the Son of God, whereby He took our nature upon Him, took it to be His own, in order to a discharge of the office of Mediator in our behalf!” Nothing but love, love unfathomable, to His Father and to His people, could have moved Him thereunto.

When we speak of Christ as Mediator, we always think of Him as God and man in one person, and that His two natures, though infinitely distinct, are not to be separated. As God, without a human nature united to His divine person, He would be too high to sustain the character or to perform the work of a servant, and, as such, to yield to the law that obedience which was incumbent upon Him as Mediator. So, on the other hand, to be man, or merely a creature, would be too low, and altogether inconsistent with that infinite value and dignity which must be put upon the work He was to perform. Therefore, none but God incarnate, possessing two natures, was qualified to act as Mediator. Let us amplify this important consideration with a few details.

First, it was necessary that the Mediator should be a divine person. “It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that He might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God and the power of death, give worth and efficacy to His sufferings, obedience, and intercession, and to satisfy God’s justice, procure His favour, purchase a peculiar people, give His Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation” (Westminster Catechism, 1643). None but God can give eternal life, and, therefore, none but a divine person could be a real Saviour of those who were dead in sins (Joh 10:27-28). Again, “For man to glory in any one as his Saviour, and give him the honour of the new creation, to resign himself to His pleasure, and become His property, and say to Him, ‘Thou are *Lord* of my soul,’ is an honour to which no mere creature can have the least claim. ‘*In JEHOVAH shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory*’ (Isa 45:25) (Hermann Witsius, 1636-1708).

Second, it was necessary that the Mediator should be a human person. “It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that He might advance our nature, perform obedience to the

law, suffer, and make intercession for us in our nature, having a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace” (Westminster Catechism). The law of God requires the love of our neighbour, but none is our neighbour but who is of the same blood with us. Therefore, before our *Surety* could satisfy the law for us, He must become man. So, too, He needed to take on Him our nature in order to our being united to Him in one body, and He made members “of his flesh and of his bones” (Eph 5:30).

Third, it was necessary that the Mediator should be God and man in one person. “It was requisite that the Mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should Himself be both God and man, and this in one person; that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us, as the works of the whole person” (Westminster Catechism). Had He been God only, He could not have died. Had He been man only, He could not have merited for and bestowed the Holy Spirit upon all His people. Had He not been the God-man, our redemption would have been brought about by two persons! Therefore, did the eternal Word become flesh (Joh 1:14)—for ever be His name adored.

Now, inasmuch as the Mediator is God and man in one person, it follows that various things may be truly stated concerning, or applied to Him, which are infinitely opposite to each other, namely, that He has all power and wisdom as it concerns His Deity, and yet, that He is weak and finite as respects His humanity. In one nature, He is equal with the Father, and so receives nothing from Him, nor is under any obligation to yield obedience. In His other nature, He is inferior to the Father, and so receives all things from Him. Here then is what makes it manifest that there is *no* contradiction between John 10:30 and John 14:28. As the second person of the Trinity, He could say, “I and *my* Father are one.” As the God-man Mediator, “My Father is greater than I.” Such verses as Matthew 11:27; 28:18; John 17:5; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Ephesians 1:22-23; Revelation 1:1, etc., all speak of Him as “the Mediator!”

In seeking to make practical application of this blessed theme, we cannot do better than quote the following words. “Think of it, my brother, I entreat you, upon every occasion when drawing nigh to the throne of grace, through that channel by which alone you can approach the throne—through the mediation of Jesus—and in that recollection, may the Lord strengthen your hands and heart. That almighty Friend we now have in heaven, in whose hands all our high interests are placed, though once ‘Man of sorrows,’ was, and is, no less, at the same time, one with the Father, ‘over all God blessed forever,’ (Rom 9:5)” (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827). May the Lord be pleased to add His blessing to this meditation.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

49. *Sanctification (10:15-18)*

The verses which are now to be before us bring to a close the principal argument which the apostle was setting before the Hebrews. That which follows, partakes more of the nature

of a series of exhortations, drawn from the thesis which had previously been established. The immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, seen in the glorious person of our great High Priest and the perfect efficacy of His sacrifice, had been fully demonstrated. "Here we are come unto a full end of the dogmatical part of this epistle, a portion of Scripture filled with heavenly and glorious mysteries, the light of the church of the Gentiles, the glory of the people Israel, the foundation and bulwark of faith evangelical" (John Owen). Immediately afterward, that eminent expositor added, (words which most suitably express the writer's own sentiments) the following.

"I do therefore here, with all humility, and sense of my own weakness and utter inability for so great a work, thankfully own the guidance and assistance which hath been given to me in the interpretation of it, so far as it is, or may be of use unto the church, as a mere effect of sovereign and undeserved grace. From that alone it is, that having many and many a time been at an utter loss as to the mind of the Holy Spirit, and finding no relief in the worthy labours of others, He hath graciously answered my poor, weak supplications, in supplies of the light and evidence of truth."

The relation of our present passage to what has been before us in the last article is this— In Hebrews 10:11-14, the perfection of Christ's sacrifice is declared, first, comparatively in verses 11-14, and then, singly in verse 14. While in Hebrews 10:15-17, a further proof or confirmation of this is given from the Old Testament Scriptures. So efficacious was the mediatorial work of Christ that, "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Said the Puritan, Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), "That one offering was of such infinite value that it perfectly purchased the taking away of sin, both in the guilt, filth, and power, and was a sufficient price for all the grace believers should need for their perfect sanctification to the end of the world. There was the satisfaction of His blood for the removal of our guilt, and a treasure of merit for the supply of our grace" (Vol. 5, p. 231).

There is a further link between our preceding portion and the present one. In Hebrews 10:14, the apostle had declared, "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Now, he describes those marks by which the "sanctified" are to be *identified*. Unto those who really value their souls and are deeply concerned about their eternal destiny, this is a vitally important consideration. How may I know that I am one of that favoured company for whom the incarnate Son of God offered Himself a sacrifice for sin? What clear and conclusive evidence do I possess that I am among the "sanctified"? Answer to these weighty questions is furnished in the verses which we are now to ponder. May each reader join with the writer in begging God to grant him an honest heart and a discerning eye to see whether or no they describe what has been actually made good in his own experience.

"Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb 10:15-18). There are two parts to the assertion made in verse 14, first, "them that are sanctified." Second, such are "perfected forever." In the proof text which the apostle here gives, both of these are found, though in the inverse order. The "sanctified" are they in whose hearts God puts His laws. Those who are "perfected forever" are they whose sins God remembers no more.

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us” (Heb 10:15). “The foundation of the whole preceding discourse of the apostle, concerning the glory of the priesthood of Christ, and the efficacy of His sacrifice, was laid in the description of the new covenant, whereof He was the Mediator, which was confirmed and ratified by His sacrifice, as the old covenant was by the blood of bulls and goats (Heb 8:10-13). Having now abundantly proved and demonstrated what he designed concerning them both, His priesthood and His sacrifice, he gives us a confirmation of the whole, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, in the description of that covenant which he had given before. And because the crisis to which he had brought his argument and disputation was that the Lord Christ, by reasons of the dignity of His person and office, with the everlasting efficacy of His sacrifice, was to offer Himself but once, which virtually includes all that he had before taught and declared, including in it an immediate demonstration of the insufficiency of all those sacrifices which were often repeated, and, consequently, their removal out of the church. He returns unto those words of the Holy Spirit for the proof of this particular also” (John Owen).

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us” (Heb 10:15). Three questions are suggested by these words. First, *unto what* is the Holy Spirit a “witness”? Second, what is the “also” to be connected with—*who else* has witnessed to the same thing? Third, *how* does the Holy Spirit “witness”? Let us, then, seek answers to these queries.

Unto what is it that the Holy Spirit is here said to be a “witness”? If we go back no farther than the preceding verse, the answer would be, unto the fact that the one satisfaction which has been made by the Redeemer secures the eternal perfection of all who are sanctified. What follows in Hebrews 10:16-18 bears this out. Nevertheless, we are persuaded that it is necessary to look farther afield if we are to obtain the deeper and fuller answer. The satisfaction made by the Redeemer was the fulfilling of the divine “will,” the performing of that which had been stipulated in the Everlasting Covenant, and it is of *that* the whole context is speaking. The Holy Spirit was present when that wondrous compact was made between the Father and the Mediator, and, through Jeremiah, He made known a part of its glorious promises. The proof of this will become clearer as we advance.

Second, “Whereof the Holy Spirit *also* is a witness to us” looks back to Hebrews 10:9. There we have the testimony of the Son unto the eternal decree which God had made, and which He had come to execute. Here (in Hebrews 10:17-18), that of the Spirit to what the Father had promised the Mediator He would do unto His covenant people. Thus, we may here behold the three persons of the Godhead concurring. Yet, there is such a fullness to the words of Scripture that we do not think what has just been pointed out exhausts the scope of this word “also.” The leading thought of the context (and of the epistle) is the sufficiency, finality, and efficacy of the one sacrifice of Christ. *That* was “witnessed” to when the Mediator “*sat down on the right hand of God*” (Heb 10:12). And the Holy Spirit is *also* a witness to us of the same blessed fact by means of His work of sanctification in the hearts and minds of those for whom Christ died.

As to *how* the Spirit witnesses to us, the first method is by means of the written Word, specifically, by what He gave out by the prophet Jeremiah. The apostle had argued the *sufficiency* of Christ’s sacrifice from its singularity (Heb 10:12), in contrast from the many sacrifices of Judaism (Heb 10:11), and the *finality* of it from the fact that He was now “*sat down,*” indicating that His work of oblation was finished. To this the Hebrews might object

that what the apostle had pointed out were but plausible reasonings, to which they could not acquiesce unless they were confirmed by the clear testimony of Scripture, and therefore, did he now quote once more from the memorable prophecy of Jeremiah 31, which clearly established the conclusions he had drawn. *How* the terms of that prophecy ratified his deductions will appear in the sequel.

“Whereof the Holy Spirit is also a witness *to us*.” The last two words need to be carefully observed in these days, when there are so many who (under the guise of “rightly dividing the Word”) would rob the children of God of a part of their needed bread—let the reader be much on his guard against such men. What the prophet Jeremiah gave out was for the people of God in *his* day. True, and hundreds of years later, the apostle did not hesitate to say that what Jeremiah wrote was equally “to us.” Note particularly, not only “for” us, but “to us”! The whole of God’s Word, from beginning to end, was written for the good of His people until the end of the world.

But further, the Holy Spirit is not only a Witness unto us of the Everlasting Covenant and of the efficacy of Christ’s offering through the written Word objectively, but also by His application of that Word to us subjectively. As said the apostle unto the Corinthians, “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables *of the heart*” (2Cor 3:3). A cause is known by its effects, a tree by its fruits. So the value and virtue of Christ’s sacrifice are witnessed to us by the Spirit through the powerful workings of His grace on our hearts. Every grace implanted by the Spirit in the Christian’s soul was purchased by the obedience and blood of Christ, and are living evidences of the worth of them.

“For after that he had said before” (Heb 10:15). The particular proof-text from Jeremiah, which the apostle was about to quote, is prefaced by these words of his own, as also is the clause “saith the LORD” in the next verse, the apostle’s language. If it be asked, “*What* was it that was said ‘before’?” the answer is, “This is the covenant that I will make with them.” If it be inquired, “What is that which is said ‘*after*’?” even this, “I will put my laws into their hearts,” etc. The particular point to be observed is that these divine mercies, of God’s putting His laws into our hearts and forgiving our sins, are the immediate fruits of Christ’s sacrifice, but more remotely, are the fulfillment of God’s covenant-promises unto the Mediator.

The Everlasting Covenant which God made with Christ is *the ground* of all the good which He does to His people. Proof of this statement is supplied in many a Scripture, which is little pondered in these days. For example, in Exodus 6:5, we find JEHOVAH saying to Moses, “I have remembered my covenant,” which is rendered as the reason for His bringing of Israel out of Egypt. Again, in Psalm 105:8, we are told, “He hath remembered his covenant forever.” So in Ezekiel 16:60, God declares, “Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.” While in Luke 1, we read in the prophecy of Zacharias, “Blessed by the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hated us; to perform the mercy to our fathers, and *to remember his holy covenant*” (Luk 1:68-72).

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord” (Heb 10:16). The reference is to the “new covenant” of Jeremiah 31:31, so called, not because it was new *made*, for with respect to its original constitution, it was made with the elect in Christ their Head from all eternity (Ti 1:2). Nor as newly *revealed*, for it was made known in measure to the Old Testament saints. But it is so referred to in distinction from the former *administration* of it, which had waxen old and vanished away. It is also called “new” because of the “new heart,” “new spirit,” “new song” which it bestows, and because of new ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s supper, which have displaced the old ones of circumcision and the passover supper. Further, it may suitably be designated as “new” because its vigour and efficacy are perpetual. It will never be antiquated or give place to another.

“I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them” (Heb 10:16). And who are the favoured ones in whom God works thus? Those whom He eternally set apart (Eph 1:4), those whom He gave to the Mediator (Joh 17:6), those for whom Christ died, “whom he did predestinate, those he also called” (Rom 8:30). These, and these only, are the ones with whom God deals so graciously. Others may, through religious instruction or personal effort, acquire a theoretical acquaintance with the laws of God, but only His elect have a vital knowledge of Him.

“I will put my laws into their hearts” (Heb 10:16). As we deem this expression of tremendous importance, we will endeavor to explain it according to the measure of light which God has granted us thereon. First, it will aid us to an understanding thereof if we consider the case of Adam. When he left the Creator’s hands, the law of God was in his heart, or, in other words, he was endowed with all sorts of holy properties, instincts, and inclinations unto whatsoever God did command, and an antipathy against all He forbade. That was the “law” of the nature of his heart. The laws of God in Adam were Adam’s original *nature*, or constitution of his spirit and soul, as it is the law of nature in beasts to love their young, and of birds to build their nests.

“When God created man at first, He gave him not an outward law written in letters or delivered in words, but an inward law put into his heart, and concreted with him, and wrought in the frame in his soul. And the whole substance of this law of God, the mass of it, was not merely dictates or beams of light in his understanding, directing what to do, but also real, lively, and spiritual dispositions, and inclinations in his will and affections, carrying him on to what was so directed, as to pray, love God, and fear Him, to seek His glory in a spiritual and holy manner. They were inward abilities suited to every duty” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680). The external command of Genesis 2:17 was designed as the *test* of his responsibility. What God had graciously placed within him was the equipment for the discharging of his responsibility.

Should it be inquired, “Where is the Scripture which teaches that God placed His laws in the heart of unfallen Adam?” it is sufficient to reply that Psalm 40:8 presents *Christ* as saying, “Thy law is within my heart,” and Romans 5:14 declares that Adam was “*the figure* of him that was to come.” But more, just as we may discover what grain the earth bears by the stubble which is found in the field, so we may ascertain what was in unfallen man by the ruins of what is yet to be seen in fallen and corrupt humanity. Romans 2:14 says the Gentiles “do *by nature* the things contained in the law.” Their very conscience tells them that

immorality and murder are crimes. Thus, as an evidence that the law of God was originally the very "nature" of Adam, we have the shadow of it in the hearts of all men.

Alas, Adam did not continue as God created him. He fell, and the consequence was that his heart was corrupted, his very "nature" vitiated, so that the things he once loved, he now hated, and what he should have hated, he now served. Thus it is with all of his fallen descendants. Being "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph 4:18), their carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7). Instead of that holy "nature" or spiritual propensities and properties, man is now indwelt and dominated by *sin*. Hence, Romans 7:23 teaches us that sin is a "law" in our members, namely, "the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). And thus it is that, in Jeremiah 17:1 (as the opposite of Hebrews 10:16), sin and corruption in the heart is said to be "*written* with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond."

Now, in regeneration and sanctification, the "image" of God, after which Adam was originally created, is again stamped upon the soul. See Colossians 3:10. The laws of God are written on the Christian's heart, so that it becomes his very "nature" to serve, obey, please, honour, and glorify God. Because the law of God is renewed again in the soul, it is termed the "law of the mind" (Rom 7:23), for the mind is now regulated by the authority of God and turns as instinctively to Him as does the sunflower to the sun, and as the needle answers to the loadstone. Thus, the renewed heart "*delights* in the law of God" (Rom 7:22), and "serves the law of God" (Rom 7:25), it being its very "nature" so to do.

This wondrous change, which takes place in each of those for whom Christ died, is here attributed directly and absolutely to God, "*I will* put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds *will I* write them" (Heb 10:16). This is much more than a bare offer being made unto men, far beyond an ineffectual invitation which is to be received. It is an invincible and miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, which thoroughly transforms the favoured subjects of it. Only He, who first made man, can remake him. None but the Almighty can repair the awful damage which the Fall wrought, counteract the dreadful power of sin, deliver the heart from the lusts of the flesh, the thralldom of the world, the bondage of Satan, and re-write upon it His holy law, so that He will be loved supremely and served sincerely and gladly.

"I will put my laws into their hearts" (Heb 10:16). This is in contrast from those who were under the old, or Siniatic, covenant. There, the "ten words" were engraven upon tables of stone, not only to intimate, thereby, their fixed and permanent authority, but also to figure forth the *hardness* of the hearts of the unregenerate people to whom they were given. But under the new covenant—that is, the *administration* of the Everlasting Covenant and the *application* of its grace to God's elect in this Gospel dispensation—God gives efficacy to His holy law in the souls of His people. First, by subduing and largely removing the enmity of the natural heart against Him and His law, which subduing is figuratively spoken of as a circumcising of the heart (Deu 30:6), and a "taking away the stony heart" (Eze 36:26). Second, by implanting the principle of obedience to His law, which is figuratively referred to as the giving of "an heart of flesh" and the "writing of his laws upon the heart."

Observe very particularly, dear reader, that God here says *not*, "I will put my promises," but, "my *laws* in their hearts" (Heb 10:16). He will not relinquish His claims. Unreserved subjection to His will is what His justice requires and what His power secures. The grand triumph of grace is that "enmity" against the law (Rom 8:7) is displaced by "love" for the

law (Psa 119:97). This is it which explains that word in Psalm 19:7, “The *law* of the LORD is perfect *converting* the soul.” It will probably surprise most of our readers (alas that it should do so) to be told that the Gospel never yet “converted” anybody. No, it is the law which the Spirit uses to convict of rebellion against God, and not until the soul penitently repudiates and forsakes his rebellion, is it ready for the message of peace which the Gospel brings.

The careful reader will notice there is a slight difference between the wording of Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16. In the former, it is, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts,” but in the passage now before us, the two clauses are reversed. One reason for this is as follows—Hebrews 8:10 gives the divine *order of operation*. The mind is first informed, and then, the heart is reformed. Moreover, in Hebrews 8:10, it is a question of *knowing God*, and for that, the understanding must be enlightened before the affections can be drawn out to Him—none will love an unknown God. The Spirit begins by conveying to the regenerate an efficacious knowledge of the authority and excellency of God’s laws, giving them a powerful realization both of their binding force and spirituality, and then, He communicates a love for them, so that their hearts are heartily inclined toward them.

When the apostle defines the seat of the corruption of our nature, he places it in the “mind” and “heart.” “Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their *mind*; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of *their heart*.” Therefore does the divine work of sanctification, or the renovating of our natures, consist of the rectifying both of the mind and heart, and this, by furnishing them with the principles of faith, love, and adherence to God. Thus, *the grace* of the new covenant (purchased for His people by Christ) is as extensive to repair our “nature” as sin is (in its residence and power) to deprave us. God desireth truth “in the inward parts” (Psa 51:6)—not that outward conformity to His law may be dispensed with, for that is required too, but unless it proceed from an inward love for His law, the external actions cannot be accepted by Him.

“From these things, we may easily discern the nature of that grace which is contained in this first branch of the first promise of the covenant. And this is the effectual operation of His Spirit, in the renovation and saving illumination of our minds, whereby they are habitually made conformable unto the whole law of God, that is, the rule and the law of our obedience in the new covenant, and enabled unto all acts and duties that are required of us. And this is the first grace promised and communicated unto us by virtue of this covenant, as it was necessary that so it should be. For, 1. The mind is the principal seat of all spiritual obedience. 2. The proper and peculiar actings of the mind in discerning, knowing, judging, must go before the actings of the will and affections, much more before all outward practices. 3. The depravation of the mind is such by blindness, darkness, vanity, and enmity, that nothing can inflame our souls, or make an entrance towards the reparation of our natures, but an internal, spiritual, saving operation of grace upon the mind” (John Owen).

In Hebrews 10:16, the heart is mentioned before the mind because the Spirit is here giving the divine standard for us to measure ourselves by. It is the test whereby we may ascertain whether or no we are among the “sanctified,” who have been perfected forever by the one offering of Christ. An intellectual knowledge of God’s laws is no proof of regeneration, but a genuine heart-acquaintance with them is. The questions I need to honestly

face are such as these: Is there within me that which answers to the Law without me? That is, is it actually and truly my desire and determination to be regulated and controlled by the revealed will of God? Is it the deepest longing of my soul, and the chief business of my life, to please and serve God? Is it the great burden of my prayers that He will work in me “both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure” (Phi 2:13)? Is my deepest grief occasioned by my failure to be altogether holy in my wishes and words and ways? Experimentally, the more we love God, the more shall we discern the excellency of His law.

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 10:17). Notice again the *order* of our passage. What is found here comes *after* verse 16, and not before. In the order of grace, justification (of which forgiveness is the negative side) precedes sanctification, but in the believer’s apprehension, it is otherwise. I can only ascertain God’s justifying of me by making sure I have within the fruits of His sanctifying me. I must study the effects to discover the cause. In like manner, God elects before He calls, or regenerates, but I have to make my *calling* “sure” in order to obtain evidence of my election. See 2 Peter 1:10. There are many who give no sign of God’s law being written in their hearts, who, nevertheless, claim to have had their sins forgiven by Him. But such are sadly deceived. Scripture entitles none to regard themselves as divinely pardoned save those who have been saved from self-will and self-pleasing.

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 10:17). These words must not be understood to signify that the sins of God’s people have vanished from His *essential* mind, but rather that they will never be recalled by Him as He exercises His office as *Judge*. Our Substitute, having already discharged our liabilities and Justice having been fully satisfied, payment cannot be demanded twice over. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). This is the negative side of the believer’s justification, that his sins are *not* reckoned to his account. The positive aspect is that the perfect law-righteousness of Christ *is* imputed to him.

“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 10:18). Here the apostle draws the irrefutable conclusion from the premises he had so fully established. Before pondering it, let us give a brief summary of these wonderful verses. First, the Everlasting Covenant is the foundation of all God’s gracious dealings with His elect. Second, that eternal compact between the Father and the Mediator is now being administered under the “new covenant.” Third, the design of this covenant is not to set apart a people unto external holiness only, but to so sanctify them that they should be holy in heart and life. Fourth, this sanctification of the elect is effected by the communication of effectual grace unto them for their conversion and obedience, which is here (under a figure) spoken of as God’s putting His laws into their hearts and writing them in their minds. Fifth, this practical sanctification is God’s *continuation* of that work of grace which He begins in us at regeneration—our glorification is the *completing* of the same, for then, the last remains of sin will be removed from us, and we shall be perfectly conformed to the image of His Son.

“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” These words give the apostle’s application of the Scripture quoted from Jeremiah, which was made for the express purpose of demonstrating the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice. The conclusion is irresistible. The one offering of Christ has secured that the grace of the Everlasting Covenant *shall be* communicated unto all of those for whom He died, both in the sanctifying and

justifying of their persons. Since, then, their sins are all gone from before the face of God, *no* further sacrifice is needed.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

1. David as a Youth

The life of David marked an important epoch in the unfolding of God's purpose and plan of redemption. Here a little and there a little, God made known the grand goal toward which all His dealings tended. At sundry times and in divers manners, God spake in times past. In various ways, and by different means, was the way prepared for the coming of Christ. The work of redemption, with respect to its chief design, is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world by successive acts and dispensations in different ages, but all forming part of one great whole, and all leading to the one appointed and glorious climax.

“God wrought many lesser salvations and deliverances for His church and people before Christ came. Those salvations were all but so many images and forerunners of the great salvation Christ was to work out when He should come. The church, during that space of time, enjoyed the light of divine revelation, or God's Word. They had, in a degree, the light of the Gospel. But all those revelations were only so many forerunners and earnest of the great light which He should bring, who came to be “the Light of the world” (Joh 8:12). That whole space of time was, as it were, the time of night, wherein the church of God was not indeed wholly without light, but it was like the light of the moon and stars, that we have in the night—a dim light in comparison with the light of the sun. The church, all that time, was a minor. See Galatians 4:1-3 (Jonathan Edwards, (1703-1758).

We shall not here attempt to summarize the divine promises and pledges which were given during the earlier ages of human history, nor the shadows and symbols which God then employed as the prefigurations of that which was to come. To do so would require us to review the whole of the Pentateuch. Most of our readers are more or less familiar with the early history of the Israelitish nation, and of what that history typically anticipated. Yet, comparatively few are aware of the marked advance that was made in the unfolding of God's counsels of grace in the days of David. A wonderful flood of light was then shed from heaven on things which were yet to come, and many new privileges were then vouchsafed unto the Old Testament Church.

In the preceding ages, it had been made known that the Son of God was to become incarnate, for none but a divine person could bruise the Serpent's head (cf. Jude 1:9), and He was to do so by becoming the woman's “Seed” (Gen 3:15). To Abraham, God had made known that the Redeemer should (according to the flesh) descend from him. In the days of Moses and Aaron, much had been typically intimated concerning the Redeemer's priestly office and ministry. But now, it pleased God to announce that particular person in all the tribes of Israel from which Christ was to proceed, namely, David. Out of all the thousands of Abraham's descendants, a most honourable mark of distinction was placed upon the son of

Jesse by anointing him to be king over His people. This was a notable step toward advancing the work of redemption. David was not only the ancestor of Christ, but in some respects, the most eminent personal type of Him in all the Old Testament.

“God’s beginning of the kingdom of His church, in the house of David, was, as it were, a new establishing of the kingdom of Christ. The beginning of it in a state of such visibility as it thenceforward continued in. It was, as it were, God’s planting the root, whence that branch of righteousness was afterwards to spring up, that was to be the everlasting King of His church. And therefore, this everlasting King is called the *branch from the stem of Jesse*. ‘And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots’ (Isa 11:1). ‘Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper’ (Jer 23:5). So Christ, in the New Testament, is called ‘*the root and offspring of David*’, (Rev 22:16) (*Work of Redemption* by Jonathan Edwards, 1757).

It is deserving of our closest attention, and calls for our deepest admiration, that each advance which was made in the unfolding of the counsels of divine grace occurred at those times when human reason would have least expected them. The first announcement of the divine incarnation was given, not while Adam and Eve remained in a state of innocency, but after they had rebelled against their Maker. The first open manifestation and adumbration of the Everlasting Covenant was made after all flesh had corrupted its way on earth, and the flood had almost decimated the human race. The first announcement, of the particular people from which the Messiah would spring, was published after the general revolt of men at the tower of Babel. While the wondrous revelation, found in the last four books of the Pentateuch, was made, not in the days of Joseph, but after the whole nation of Israel had apostatized (see Heb 10:5-9).

The principle to which attention has been directed in the above paragraph received further exemplification in God’s call of David. One has but to read through the book of Judges to discover the terrible deterioration which succeeded the death of Joshua. For upwards of five centuries, a general state of lawlessness prevailed. “In those days there was no king in Israel: *every* man did that which was right in his *own* eyes” (Jdg 21:25). Following this was Israel’s demand for a king, and that, that they might “be *like* all the nations” (1Sa 8:20). Therefore did JEHOVAH declare, “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath” (Hos 13:11). He too was an apostate, and his history ends by his consulting a witch (1Sa 28), and perishing on the battlefield (1Sa 31).

Such is the dark background upon which the ineffable glory of God’s sovereign grace now shone forth. Such is the historical setting of the life of him we are about to consider. The more carefully this be pondered, the more shall we appreciate the marvelous interposition of divine mercy at a time when the prospects of Israel seemed well nigh hopeless. But man’s extremity is always God’s opportunity. Even at that dark hour, God had ready the instrument of deliverance, “a man after his own heart” (1Sa 13:14). But who he was, and where he was located, none but JEHOVAH knew. Even Samuel the prophet had to be given a special divine revelation in order to identify him. And this brings us to that portion of Scripture which introduces to us, David as a youth.

“And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to

Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons (1Sa 16:1). This is the sequel to what is recorded in 1 Samuel 16:10-12. Saul had despised JEHOVAH, and now he was rejected by Him (1Sa 15:23). True, he continued to occupy the throne for some little time, nevertheless, Saul was no longer owned of God. An important principle is here illustrated, which only the truly Spirit-taught can appreciate. A person, an institution, a corporate company is often rejected by God secretly, a while before this solemn fact is evidenced outwardly. Judaism was abandoned by the Lord immediately before the cross (Mat 23:38), yet the temple stood until A.D. 70!

God had provided Him a king among the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite, and, as Micah 5:2 informs us, Bethlehem Ephratah was "little among the thousands of Judah." Ah, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are" (1Co 1:27-28). And why? "That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1Co 1:29). God is jealous of His own honour, and therefore is He pleased to select the most unlikely and unpromising instruments to execute His pleasure (as the unlettered fishermen of Galilee to be the first heralds of the Cross), that it may the more plainly appear the power is His alone.

The principle which we have just named received further illustration in the particular son of Jesse which was the one chosen of God. When Jesse and his sons stood before Samuel, it is said of the prophet that "He looked on Eliab and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him." (1Sa 16:6). But the prophet was mistaken. And what was wrong with Eliab? The next verse tells us, "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1Sa 16:7). Ah, my reader, this is solemn and searching. It is at your *heart* the Holy One looks! What does He see in you?—a heart that has been purified by faith (Act 15:9), a heart that loves Him supremely (Deu 6:5), or a heart that is still "desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9)?

One by one, the seven sons of Jesse passed in review before the prophet's eye, but the "man after God's own heart" was not among their number. The sons of Jesse had been called to the sacrifice (1Sa 16:5), and, apparently, the youngest was deemed too insignificant by his father to be noticed on this occasion. But, "The counsel of the LORD that *shall* stand" (Pro 19:21), so inquiry and then request is made that the despised one should be sent for. "And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he" (1Sa 16:12). Most blessed is it to compare these words with what is said of our Lord in Song of Solomon 5:10, 16, "my beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousands...His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely."

The principle of divine election is designed for the humbling of man's proud heart. Very striking and solemn is it to see that, all through, God ignored that in which the flesh glories. Isaac, and not Ishmael (Abraham's first born), was the one selected by God. Jacob, and not Esau, was the object of His eternal love. The Israelites, and not the Egyptians, the Babylonians, or the Greeks, was the nation chosen to shadow forth this blessed truth of God's sovereign foreordination. So here, the eldest sons of Jesse were all "rejected" by

JEHOVAH, and David, the youngest, was the one of God's appointing. It should be observed too that David was the *eighth* son, and all through Scripture that numeral is connected with *a new beginning*. Suitable then (and ordained by divine providence) was it that he should be the one to mark a fresh and outstanding epoch in the history of the favoured nation.

The elect of God are *made manifest* in time by the miracle of regeneration being wrought within them. This it is which has always *distinguished* the children of God from the children of the devil. Divine calling, or the new birth, is what *identifies* the high favourites of heaven. Thus, it is written, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called" (Rom 8:30)—called out of darkness into His marvelous light (1Pe 2:9). This miracle of regeneration, which is the birth-mark of God's elect, consists of a complete *change of heart*, a renewing of it, so that God becomes the supreme object of its delight, the pleasing of Him its predominant desire and purpose, and love for His people its characteristic note. God's *chosen* are transformed into the *choice* ones of the earth, for the members of Christ's mystical body are predestinated to be "conformed to the image" of their glorious Head, and thus do they, in their measure, in this life, "show forth" His praises.

Beautiful is it to trace the fruits or effects of regeneration which were visible in David at an early age. At the time Samuel was sent to anoint him king, he was but a youth, but even then, he evidenced, most unmistakably, the transforming power of divine grace. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, *behold*, he *keepeth the sheep*" (1Sa 16:11). Thus, the first sight we are given of David in God's Word presents him as one who had a heart (a shepherd's care) for those who symbolized the people of God. "Just as before, when the strength of God's people were being wasted under Pharaoh, Moses, their deliverer, was hidden as a shepherd in a wilderness. So, when Israel was again found in circumstances of deeper, though less ostensible, peril, we again find the hope of Israel concealed in the unknown shepherd of an humble flock" (*David* by Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

An incident is recorded of the shepherd-life of David that plainly denoted his character and forecast his future. Speaking to Saul, ere he went forth to meet Goliath, he said, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him" (1Sa 17:34-35). Observe two things. First, the loss of one poor lamb was the occasion of David's daring. How many a shepherd would have considered *that* a thing far too trifling to warrant the endangering of his own life! Ah, it was love to that lamb and faithfulness to his charge which moved him to act. Second, but how could a youth triumph over a lion and a bear? Through faith in the living God! He trusted in JEHOVAH, and prevailed. Genuine faith in God is ever an infallible mark of His elect (Ti 1:1).

There is at least one other passage which sheds light on the spiritual condition of David at this early stage of his life, though only they who are accustomed to weigh each word separately are likely to perceive it. "LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions: How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty

God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it *at Ephratah*: we found it in the fields of the wood” (Psa 132:1-6). A careful reading of the whole Psalm reveals to us the interests of the youthful David’s heart. There, amid the pastures of Bethlehem Ephratah, he was deeply concerned for *JEHOVAH’S* glory.

In closing, let us note how conspicuous was the *shepherd* character of David in his early days. Anticipating for a moment that which belongs to a later consideration, let us thoughtfully observe how that, after David had rendered a useful service to king Saul, it is recorded that, “David went and returned from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem” (1Sa 17:15). From the attractions (or distractions) of the court, he returned *to the fold*—the influences of an exalted position had not spoiled him for humble service! Is there not a word here for the pastor’s heart? The evangelistic field, or the Bible-conference platform, may furnish tempting allurements, but your duty is to the “sheep” over the which the good Shepherd has placed you. Take heed to the ministry you have received of the Lord, that you fulfill it.

Fellow-servant of God, your sphere may be an humble and inconspicuous one. The flock to which God has called you to minister may be a small one. But, faithfulness to your trust is what is required of you. There may be an Eliab ready to taunt you, and speak contemptuously of “those *few* sheep in the wilderness” (1Sa 17:28), as there was for David to encounter, but regard not their sneers. It is written, “His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mat 25:21).

As David was faithful to his trust in the humble sphere in which God first placed him, so he was rewarded by being called to fill a more important position, in which, there too, he honourably equitted himself. “He chose David also for his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob, his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to *the integrity of his heart*; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hand” (Psa 78:70-72).

THE CLAIMS OF GOD

Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed” (1Sa 12:24-25). These words were uttered by God’s servant to Israel at an important crisis in their national history. Dissatisfied with the divine theocracy, they wished to be like the heathen and have a human king to be their head and leader. The Lord suffered them to have their wish gratified, but pressed upon them the wickedness of it. Then, His servant faithfully presented to them the certain issues of two courses of conduct—if they feared and served the Lord, He would prosper them. If they rebelled against Him, His hand would smite them (1Sa 12:14-15; 24-25).

In our text, we find Samuel setting before Israel the requirements of God from them. They were to fear and serve Him. In it, he reminds them of the wondrous mercies which had been shown them, and the obligation which these imposed. He bids them consider the great things which God had done for them. In 1 Samuel 12:7, he called upon them to “stand still” while he reasoned with them before the Lord of His “benefits” (margin) unto them. God had brought them out of the house of bondage (1Sa 12:8). He had made them to dwell in the favoured land of Canaan. When they had departed from Him and He sorely chastened them, then, they cried unto Him, confessed their sin, and He graciously delivered them from their enemies (1Sa 12:9-11). What then ought to be their response? Fear and serve Him.

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning” (Rom 15:4). The temporal deliverances, which JEHOVAH wrought of old for Israel, shadowed forth the spiritual deliverances which Christ has secured for His people, and which the Holy Spirit applies to them experimentally. Their emancipation from Egypt figured our redemption from the bondage of sin, “Redeemed from...your vain conversation” or “manner of living” (1Pe 1:18). Christ died not only to save His people from Hell, but also to “deliver us from this *present* evil world” (Gal 1:4). Such inestimable blessings carry with them immense obligations. The claims of God upon His people are infinitely greater than those He has upon the wicked. And naught but divine grace can enable us to answer our obligations and meet His claims. What these are we shall now consider.

1. “*Fear the Lord.*” Of the unregenerate, it is said, “There is *no* fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:18). They have no respect for His authority, no concern for His glory, no love for His law. But concerning the righteous, we are told, “Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him” (Ecc 8:12). And why? Because “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Pro 8:13), and “By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Pro 16:6). Thus, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Pro 9:10), for without it, man is a consummate fool, on a lower level than the beasts which perish, for “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib” (Isa 1:3), but the wicked own not the voice of their Maker.

To “fear the Lord” is for the heart to be deeply impressed by His awful majesty, His immeasurable power, His ineffable holiness. It is to stand in reverent awe of Him. If the seraphim veil their faces in His presence (Isa 6:2), how much more ought worms of the earth bow in the dust before Him! To fear the Lord is to tremble at the very thought of knowingly opposing Him. It is to have the utmost respect for every revelation of His imperial will. When the father of Isaac obeyed the divine command to lay his beloved son on the altar of sacrifice, the Lord said, “Now I know that thou *fearest* God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Gen 22:12). And this godly fear which is required from *us* (compare Act 9:31; 2Co 7:1; 1Pe 1:17) is not to be spasmodic and occasional, but as Proverbs 23:17 says, “Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.” Then, what cause have we to cry daily, “Unite my heart *to* fear thy name” (Psa 86:11).

Observe well the opening word of our text, “*Only* fear the LORD.” If the fear of the Lord is truly upon our hearts, *everything* else will (so to speak) take care of itself. If the fear of the Lord be upon us, pride will be abased, self-will and self-seeking will be subdued, and the evil whisperings of Satan will have no power over us. If the fear of the Lord be upon us, we shall be delivered from the fear of man, as we shall be quite indifferent whether or not we

please him. If the fear of the Lord be upon us, doubtings and questionings of our salvation will be at an end, "In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge" (Pro 14:26). "The secret of the LORD is with them that *fear him*; and he will show *them* his covenant" (Psa 25:14).

2. "And *serve him*." Yes, *Him*, not self, not sin, not our fellows. God is the only one who has any real claims upon us, for He is our Creator, our Owner, our Lord. Him, we are commanded, under pain of everlasting woe, to *serve*. Not simply believe in Him, pray to Him, but be in complete subjection to Him. His will is to be our law, His commands the regulator of our ways. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him *only* shalt thou serve" (Mat 4:10). We cannot "serve" two masters, as Christ affirmed, "For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other" (Mat 6:24). Note well that this call to "serve" the Lord comes *after* "fear" Him. We cannot truly serve Him unless His fear be upon us. Any so-called service which flows not from a reverent awe of God is only the restless energy of the flesh putting itself into action.

"Serve Him *in truth*." What is meant by this? At least three things. First, the Lord is to be served in *sincerity*, not in pretence. A form of godliness, no matter how precise and punctilious, is of no avail in His sight if the power of it be lacking. Second, the Lord requires to be served in *reality*, not in mere lip profession. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but *in deed and in truth*" (1Jo 3:18). Nothing is more vain than an empty formality. Third, in a *scriptural* way. "Thy word is truth" (Joh 17:17). To serve the Lord "in truth" is the opposite of following the fashions of the day, or the inclinations of our hearts. It is an obedient walk regulated by the divine precepts.

"With all your heart." Ah, it is at the heart that God looks, and not merely at the outward appearance, as does man. His great requirement is, "My son, give me thine heart" (Pro 23:26). We do not find Him until we search for Him with all our heart (Jer 29:13). He bids us, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart" (Pro 3:5). He commands us to love Him with all the heart (Mat 22:37). So He demands that we shall "serve him with a perfect heart" (1Ch 28:9). Of Rehoboam, it is said, "And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD" (2Ch 12:14). To serve the Lord with all the heart means with undivided affections. It is the opposite of a "double heart" (1Ch 12:33). Of old, God complained against Israel, "Their heart is divided" (Hos 10:2). God requires the *throne* of our hearts that He may reign over us, that we may be out and out for Him, with no reserve, nothing kept back. "Whoever he be of you that forsaketh not *all* that he hath, he can not be my disciple" (Luk 14:33).

3. "For consider how great things he hath done for you." This is the motive. We are to fear and serve Him in truth with all our hearts, not that we may gain the reputation of being very spiritual people, not in order to escape the everlasting burnings, but because of what the Lord "has done" for us. Let the realization of that be the mainspring of action. Let the remembrance *of that* move you to fear and serve Him wholeheartedly. That is the only motive which God will accept. A daily life lived to please Him out of gratitude for what He has done for you. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom 12:1). God's claims upon us are founded upon what He has done for us. Our obligations are measured by the blessings which we have received from Him.

“Consider what great things He hath done for *You*.” You, an insignificant worm of the earth (Isa 41:14), a mere “grasshopper” (Isa 40:22). You, a vile sinner, with “*no good*” in you by nature (Rom 7:18). You, who merit nothing at His hands but untempered judgment. Yet, instead of casting you into Hell years ago, *what* has He done for you? Preserved your worthless life these many years, showered His daily blessings upon you, and supplied your every need. And, if truly saved, has delivered you from the wrath to come, given you a place in His family nearer to Himself than that which the holy angels will occupy, and made you an heir of everlasting glory. Oh, that our hearts may be so melted by the realization of His amazing grace, that the love of Christ shall “constrain” us to fear and serve Him in truth with all our hearts.

“For *consider* what great things He hath done for you.” Turn them over and over in your mind, dwell on them frequently. As the man of the world is constantly scheming how to make money, or how to have “a good time”—his whole heart being wrapped up in such things—so do you make it your chief business to be occupied with the wonders of God. “*Set your affection on things above.*” Many a person on the beach shivers and is miserable while he is only paddling in the waters. Not till he plunges right in does he really enjoy himself. So it is in connection with the things of God. So long as they have a subordinate and secondary place in our thoughts and lives, we do not really “delight” ourselves in the Lord. “Give thyself *wholly* to them” (1Ti 4:15) is a word which each Christian needs to lay to heart.

If you be a real Christian, *what* are the “great things” which the Lord has done for you? Set His heart upon you, loved you from all eternity (Jer 31:3), and written your name in the Lamb’s book of life (Luk 10:20). Spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up to the cross, to atone for your sins (Rom 8:32). Sent the Holy Spirit into your heart to regenerate and raise you up into newness of life (Gal 4:6). Given you an unfailing Lamp unto your feet and Light unto your path (Psa 119:105), to direct your steps through this dark world (2Pe 1:19). Granted you, even now, access to His throne of grace, that there you may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:16). Blest you with His abiding Presence (as He did Daniel in the lions’ den), promising never to leave nor forsake you (Heb 13:5). Assured you that, in a soon-coming day, you shall be done with sin forever (Heb 9:28), be made like Christ (1Jo 3:2), and spend eternity with Him (1Th 4:17), beholding His glory.

Ah, my brethren and sisters, the things mentioned above are indeed “great.” Then, surely we *ought* to “consider” them day and night. We should consider them *prayerfully*, begging God to make them more real and precious to our hearts, that we may so “consider” them as to be transformed by them (2Co 3:18), that they may order all the details of our lives to His glory. The more they *are* so “considered,” the easier and the more blessed will it be *to* “fear and serve him in truth.” Then shall we find that *all* Wisdom’s ways are “pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17). For “*His* commandments are not grievous” (1Jo 5:3). They are so to the unregenerate, but not to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

But what if we do not fear and serve the Lord in truth with all our hearts? That will prove that our profession is vain, that we are yet in our sins. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1Jo 2:4). Make no mistake on this point, my reader. All around us are those who “profess that they know God, but in works they deny him,” and such are said to be “*abominable*” (Ti 1:16). And what shall be their end? This, “But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be *consumed*” (1Sa 12:25). “If

they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb 12:25).

May the Lord deign to add His blessing and to Him shall be all the praise.

UNREWARDED LABOUR

1 Corinthians 3:15

There are few verses in the New Testament which have been more misunderstood and misapplied (fatally so, in many cases, we fear), than the above. In circles where "dispensational truth" has been made prominent, the popular concept which obtains is that this passage teaches there is a class of Christians who have completely forfeited their "reward," yet, who will enter heaven. That these have no "good works" to their credit, but are, nevertheless, truly saved. This evil doctrine has been widely propagated the last two generations, and few indeed have been the voices raised in protest. It has been advocated by so many "Bible teachers" with a reputation for orthodoxy, and has met with such a general acceptance, that for any one now to challenge it, is to court the being branded as a heretic. Notwithstanding, the servant of God must not fear the frowns of men, but proclaim that which he is assured makes most for the glory of God and the good of His people.

To affirm that 1 Corinthians 3:15 signifies there is a class of God's children whose works shall all be burned up, is to fly in the face of the Analogy of Faith. To insist this passage means that the lives of some who have been regenerated, who are indwelt by the Spirit, and led of Him (Rom 8:14), are, nevertheless, destitute of all good works, is to blaspheme the One who performed a miracle of grace in the hearts of His own, and comes perilously nigh to committing the unpardonable sin against Him who makes the bodies of His people His temples. We are far from saying that those who have advanced this dangerous delusion were *conscious* of the dreadful implications thereof, nevertheless, *that* was the vile motive of the great Enemy, who is the real author of it. And it behooves the watchmen on Zion's walls to sound the alarm and expose the designs of our foe.

Not only is the popular interpretation of 1 Corinthians 3:15 highly insulting to each person of the Godhead, but it is flatly contradicted by a number of plain passages in Holy Writ. Ephesians 2:10 declares that those who are saved by grace through faith are "His workmanship created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that *we should* [not 'ought to'] walk in them." What could be plainer than that? Those who are *not* walking in "good works" have never been born again. In Philippians 1:6, the Christian is assured that, "He which hath begun a good work in you *will finish* it." Whom God justifies, He sanctifies. Where He turns a heart toward Himself, He directs its possessor into the paths of righteousness. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith *without* works is dead" (Jam 2:20). Verily, there is nothing new under the sun. Even in James' days, there were men who imagined that they possessed a saving faith but who were *without* those works of obedience which are its inseparable and necessary evidence.

Is it not evident then, that 1 Corinthians 3:15 does not signify what is commonly supposed? God's holy Word does not contradict itself. It does not affirm in one passage that without holiness "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14), and in another that a man may live an unholy life and yet be taken to heaven. Christ did not insist that, "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 5:20), and then move His servant Paul to announce that some, whose daily conduct fell far below that of the Pharisees, were, nevertheless, saved. No, the teaching of Scripture is uniform and harmonious, and if we are unable to see the consistency of one passage with another, the fault lies in us—prejudice or carnality is at work. We may know for certain that if our interpretation of any verse clashes with the plain meaning of another, it is erroneous. O how much we need to "*prove* all things, hold fast that which is good" (1Th 5:21).

If, then, 1 Corinthians 3:15 does *not* teach what so many have sought to bring out of it, what is its real signification? The answer is not far to obtain, if due attention be paid to its context. Yet, let it be pointed out that, care must be taken in order to be sure we go back far enough so as to ascertain the scope of the whole passage. It is at *this* point so many expositors have erred. It is almost impossible to understand the subject which is here under discussion, if we begin only at verse 11—which is the prevailing habit these days. If we are to perceive aright the force of verses 11 to 15, attention must be paid to verses 1 to 10, so as to discover *what* is the subject which the apostle is here treating of.

At the beginning of this third chapter, the apostle returns to his charge of schisms and contentions among the Corinthians (1Co 1:11), which was the principal occasion of his writing this epistle. He reproveth them for their divisions (sad manifestation of their carnality!), which were about their ministers, and points out that there was nothing in them in which to glory. Some of them were calling themselves by the name of Paul, for which reason (and for none other) he thanked God he had baptized so few of them (1Co 1:14-16). Others were exalting Apollos as the head of their party, which shows how fleshly they were (1Co 3:4). In view of this, the apostle faithfully and humbly reminded them that both himself and Apollos were "*but* ministers (servants) by whom ye believed" (1Co 3:5). He had merely "planted," and Apollos had simply "watered," but God was the One who gave the "increase" (1Co 3:6). Then the conclusion is drawn—"Neither is he that planteth *any thing*, neither he that watereth" unless God deigned to employ them and bless their labours (1Co 3:7). What madness was it, then, to glory in the mere instrument!

Thus, it is clear, beyond a doubt, that the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 3 treat of *the official ministry* of the public servants of God. The *same* theme is continued in the verses which immediately follow. This is clear from, "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one" (1Co 3:8). Though there is diversity in the nature of the work of God's servants (one evangelistic, one teaching, etc.), yet their commission is from the same Master, their motive, to glorify the same God, their aim, the good of souls. Thus, as fellow-labourers, it was sinful folly to array them one against another. It is unfortunate that the next words of verse 8 have been translated, "and every man shall receive his own reward." Literally, the Greek signifies, "but *each* [of Christ's appointed *servants*] his own reward shall receive"—and so the word "man" should be "one" throughout the whole passage. As Christ has distributed different

gifts to His ministers, and allotted unto them a diversity of ministry, so they are rewarded accordingly.

“For God’s *we* are—fellow workers; God’s husbandry, God’s building *ye* are” (1Co 3:9, Bagster Interlinear). True ministers of the Gospel are labourers (not loiterers) in the Lord’s vineyard, *fellow*-labourers, whether evangelists, pastors, or teachers. God’s “husbandry” are the elect. He it is who breaks up the fallow ground of their hearts, casts in the seed of grace, makes the ground good, and causes it to bring forth fruit. “God’s building,” too—believers in a church-state are the house in which God dwells (1Co 3:16). Note carefully that, this second metaphor or figure, is carried forward into verse 12, and helps to interpret that verse.

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every *one* take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (1Co 3:10). In the opening clause, the apostle ascribes to the grace of God all his ministerial gifts and the success granted. In what follows, he reminds the Corinthians that he was the one who had first preached the Gospel to them, being the initial instrument of their conversion. The “foundation,” which *he* had *ministerially* laid, was what he had taught them concerning the person and work of Christ (1Co 2:2). The “another,” who built thereon, was Apollos. Upon the final words of the verse, Charles Hodge (1797-1878) rightly said, “In the whole context, he is speaking of ministers, and therefore, this clause must be considered as a warning to them. They are to take heed *how*, i.e., with what materials, they carried on the building of this spiritual temple.”

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1Co 3:11). Here again, there is nothing whatever in the Greek to justify the word “man.” It is “any *one*,” that is, any “builder,” or servant of God—any one who edifies. There is no other “foundation” to ministerially lay, than the person and work of Jesus Christ. Observe particularly how that in Ephesians 2:20, the New Testament saints are said to be “built upon *the foundation* of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner,” that is, are doctrinally built upon the *ministry* of the apostles and prophets.

I Corinthians 3:12—again, the proper rendering is “any one.” In the light of the context, this must refer to the preaching of those who present Christ as the only basis of the sinner’s hope. In Scripture, “gold” is an emblem of the divine glory, “silver” speaks of redemption, and “precious stones” are the scintillators of light. Those doctrines which magnify the character of God, which exemplify and amplify the redemption of Christ, and which are (under the Spirit) channels of illumination to the hearer, is what is here in view. Such doctrines are of intrinsic worth and importance, are pure and precious to the regenerated, and are durable and lasting in their effects. Contrariwise, “wood, hay, stubble,” point to empty and useless ministry which edifies not.

1 Cor 3:13—The doctrine or ministry of each preacher will, sooner or later, be made manifest, both to himself and his hearers. It needs no great length of time for a discerning mind to discover whether or not the blessing of God rests upon the preacher’s labours, whether sinners are really being turned from Satan to God, and from sin to holiness. Whether saints are becoming more unworldly, more self-denying, more Christ-like. True, there is much seeming goodness, which is “as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (Hos 6:4), but “the fire shall try every one’s work.” There is nothing in the passage which requires us to project this into the distant future—that blunts its *present* searching point. The

“day and the fire” most probably has reference to a day of testing and tribulation, being parallel with Matthew 24:21. Faith must be tested (in *this* life). Grace must be put to the proof. Even a mild storm of persecution is usually enough to divide the sheep from the goats, and serves to identify the truly regenerated. See 1 Corinthians 11:19.

1 Corinthians 3:14—If any minister’s doctrine will bear the test of daylight (Holy Writ), and abide the trial of opposition, if it has been truly built upon the one foundation of the person and offices of Christ, that is, if it be consistent therewith, he shall “receive a reward” now, by seeing the sheep of his flock growing in grace and walking in the truth (Phi 4:1; 3Jo 1:4), and also in the future, when Christ Himself shall command His faithful servants (Mat 25:21).

1 Corinthians 3:15—If any minister’s preaching fail to stand the test of Scripture and the providential trials of God, then shall its worthlessness be manifested to those with spiritual discernment, and be repudiated by Christ. The reference here is to the figure of the “wood, hay, stubble,” which must *not* be understood of fundamental error, for it is built *upon* the “foundation” of Jesus Christ (verse 12). It is the *materials* the preacher uses. It is the stooping unto “enticing words of man’s wisdom” (oratorical effect), relying upon anecdotes or jokes to move the emotions, instead of the sword of the Spirit, largely supplanting the “foolishness of preaching” by the esthetic charms of music, and resorting to worldly methods to attract a crowd, etc., which are here in view. “He shall suffer loss.” All his fleshly labours will produce *no* fruit for eternity! Because he was himself a regenerated man, fundamentally sound on the person of Christ, he shall be “saved,” yet “so as by fire,” i.e., with difficulty (1Pe 4:17, Jude 1:23).

To sum up, 1 Corinthians 3:5-15 does *not* treat of the rank and file of God’s people, but of His official and public servants. The “works” referred to have nothing to do with the details of our walk, but respect materials and methods used by saved ministers of the Gospel. This passage no more teaches that it is possible for a man to go to heaven, than it holds out any hope that a “Modernist,” who teaches fundamental error, is a regenerated man. That the popular interpretation of the passage is so widely accepted only goes to show the *low* state of spirituality which now prevails. To give people the impression that, no matter how spiritually fruitless their lives may be, yet, if they are “resting on the finished work of Christ,” they are sure of heaven, is a lie of the devil, and only eternity will show how many have been fatally deceived by it. Make no mistake, my reader, without holiness “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). The only satisfactory evidence that you *are* truly resting in Christ, is a daily walk which is pleasing to Him.

THE NARROW WAY

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mat 7:13-14). The second

half of Matthew 7 forms the *applicatory* part of that most important discourse of our Lord's, known as "the Sermon on the Mount." One leading design of that Sermon was to show the spiritual nature and wide extent of that obedience which characterizes the true subjects of Christ's kingdom, and which obedience is absolutely necessary for the enjoyment of that ultimate state of blessedness which divine grace has provided for them. As the Prophet of God, Christ made known that the righteousness which obtains in *His* kingdom greatly exceeds the "righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees."

Now, the Jews imagined that they *were* all of them the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom—that by virtue of their descent from Abraham, they were the rightful heirs of it—that the "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (that system of religious and moral duty taught by them) met all the requirements of God's law. But this delusion the Lord Jesus here exposed. Fleshly descent from Abraham could not give title unto a spiritual kingdom. That which was merely natural was no qualification for the supernatural realm. Only they were accounted the true children of Abraham who had his faith (Rom 4:16), who did his works (Joh 8:39), and who were united to Christ (Gal 3:29).

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord delineated the inward state of these who belonged to His spiritual kingdom (Mat 5:4-11), described the outward conduct by which they might be identified (Mat 5:13-16), expounded the personal righteousness which God's justice demanded (Mat 5:17-28), and defined that utter repudiation of sin which He required from His people (Mat 5:29-30). So high are the demands of the thrice holy One, so uncompromising are the requirements of His ineffable character, that none can dwell with Him eternally who do not, in time, loathe, resist, and turn from all that is repulsive to His pure eye. Nothing short of the complete denying of self, the abandoning of the dearest idol, the forsaking of the most cherished sinful course—figuratively represented under the cutting off of a right hand and the plucking out of a right eye—is what He claims from every one who would have communion with Himself.

Such plain and pointed declarations of Christ must have seemed "hard sayings" to the multitudes who listened to Him. Such piercing and flesh-withering demands would probably cause many of His Jewish hearers to think within themselves, "Who then can be saved? This is indeed a strait gate and a narrow way." Anticipating their secret objections, the Lord plainly declared that the gate unto salvation *is* "strait" and the way which leadeth unto life *is* "narrow." Yet, He went on to point out, it is your wisdom, your interest, your duty *to* enter that "gate" and walk that "way." He acknowledged and faithfully warned them that there was a "wide gate" soliciting their entrance, and a "broad road" inviting them to walk therein, but *that* gate leads to perdition, *that* road ends in Hell.

The "strait gate" is the only gate to "life," the "narrow way" is the *only* one which conducts to heaven. Few indeed find it. Few have the least inclination for it. But that very fact ought only to provide an additional incentive to *my* giving all diligence to enter therein. In the verses which are now to be before us, Christ defined and described the *Way of Salvation*, though we (sorrowfully) admit that modern evangelists (?) rarely expound it. What we shall now endeavor to set forth is very different from what most have been taught, but you reject it at your peril. We repeat, that in the passage we are about to consider, He who was the Truth incarnate made known the *only* way of escaping perdition and securing heaven, namely, by entering the "strait gate" and treading the "narrow way."

I. The Strait Gate

The Greek word for “strait” signifies restrained or “narrow” and is so rendered in the Revised Version. Now a “gate” serves two purposes—it lets in and it shuts out. All who enter this narrow gate gain admittance to that “way” which “leadeth unto life.” But all who enter not by this narrow gate are eternally barred from God’s presence. The second use of this gate is solemnly illustrated at the close of the parable of the virgins. There, our Lord pictures the foolish ones as being *without* the necessary “oil” (the work of the Spirit in the heart), and while they went to buy it, the Bridegroom came, and “the door was *shut*” (Mat 25:10). And though they then besought Him to open it to them, He answered, “I know you not.”

1. What is denoted by this figure of the “narrow gate”? We believe the reference is to the searching and solemn *teaching* of Him who is Truth incarnate. It is only as the heart bows to the righteousness of God’s claims and demands upon us, as set forth by His Son, that any soul can enter that path which alone leads to Him. While the heart is rebellious against Him, there can be no approach to Him, for “can two walk together *except* they be agreed”? It is true, blessedly and gloriously true, that Christ Himself is “the Door” (Joh 10:9), and He is so in a threefold way, according to the three principal functions of His mediatorial office. He is “the Door” into God’s presence as the Prophet, the Priest, and the King.

Now, it is only as Christ is truly received as God’s authoritative Prophet, only as His holy teachings are really accepted by a contrite heart, that any one is prepared to savingly welcome Him as Priest. Christ is the “way” and “the truth” *before* He is the “life” (Joh 14:6), as He is “*first* King of righteousness, and *after that*, also King of peace” (Heb 7:2). In other words, His cleansing blood is only available for those who are willing to throw down the weapons of their warfare against God, and surrender themselves to His holy rule. The wicked must forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, if he is to be pardoned by God (Isa 55:7). And this is only another way of saying that Christ must be received as Prophet, before He is embraced as Priest.

2. Why is this gate a “narrow” one? For at least three reasons. First, because of *sin*. “The wicked shall be turned into Hell, all the nations that forget God” (Psa 9:17)—the gate of heaven is far too narrow to admit such characters. The New Testament plainly affirms the same fact, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them” (Eph 5:5-7). Second, because of *the Law*. There are two principal errors about the Law, and I know not which is the more dangerous and disastrous. That one can *earn* heaven by obeying it. That one may enter heaven *without* that personal and practical godliness which the Law requires. “Follow peace with all, and holiness, *without which* no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Where there is not this personal conformity to the will of God, the strong hand of the Law will close the door of heaven. Third, because none can take *the world* along with him. This gate is far too “narrow” to admit those who love the world.

3. What is meant by “entering” this narrow gate? First, the acceptance of those teachings of truth, of duty, of happiness, which were unfolded by Christ. The honest and actual receiving into the heart of His holy, searching, flesh-withering instructions. Such acceptance is here figuratively represented as a person, with great difficulty, forcing his way through a circumscribed entrance. I say, “with great difficulty,” for Christ’s precepts and commandments are, to the last degree, unpalatable to an unrenewed heart, and cannot be willingly and gladly received without a rigid denial of self and relinquishment of sinful pleasures, pursuits, and interests. Christ has plainly warned us that it is impossible for a man to serve two masters. Self must be repudiated and Christ received as “the Lord” (Col 2:6), or He will not save us.

What is meant by “entering” this narrow gate? Second, a deliberate abandoning of the broad road, or the flesh-pleasing mode of life. Until this has been done, there is no salvation possible for any sinner. Christ Himself taught this plainly in Luke 15—the “prodigal” *must leave* the “far country” *before* he could journey to the Father’s house! The same pointed truth is taught again in James 4:8-10, “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

Ah, my friend, to really and actually *enter* this “narrow gate” is no easy matter. For that reason, the Lord bade the people, “*Labour* not for the meat which perisheth, but *for* that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (Joh 6:27). Those words do not picture salvation as a thing of simple and easy attainment. Ponder also Christ’s emphatic exhortation in Luke 13:24, “*Strive to enter* in at the strait gate.” That He should utter *such* a word clearly implies the great idleness and sloth which characterizes nominal professors, as it also intimates there are formidable difficulties and obstacles to be overcome. Let it be carefully noted that the Greek word for “strive” (viz., “agonizomai”) in Luke 13:24 is the same one that is used in 1 Corinthians 9:25, “And every one that *striveth* for the mastery is temperate in all things.” And it is also rendered, “labouring fervently” in Colossians 4:12, and “fight” in 1 Timothy 6:12!

And *how* are we to “strive” so as to “enter” the narrow gate? The general answer is, “lawfully” (2Ti 2:5). But to particularize, we are to strive by prayer and supplication, diligently seeking deliverance from those things which would bar our entrance. We are to earnestly cry to Christ for help from those foes which are seeking to overcome us. We are to come constantly to the Throne of Grace, that we may there find grace to help us repudiate and turn away with loathing from everything which is abhorred by God, even though it involves our cutting off of a right hand and plucking out of a right eye, and grace to help us *do* those things which He has commanded. We must be “temperate in all things,” especially those things which the flesh craves and the world loves.

But *why* is such “striving” necessary? First, because Satan is striving to destroy thy soul. “Be sober, be *vigilant*; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8), therefore, must be *resisted* “steadfast in the faith.” Second, because natural appetites are striving to destroy thee, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1Pe 2:11). Third, because the whole world is arrayed against thee, and if it cannot burn, it will

seek to turn thee by alluring promises, Delilah-like guiles, fatal enticements. Unless you overcome the world, the world will overcome you to the eternal destruction of thy soul.

From what has been before us, we may plainly discover why it is that the vast majority of our fellow-men and women, yea, and of professing Christians also, *will fail to reach heaven*. It is because they prefer sin to holiness, indulging the lusts of the flesh to walking according to the Scriptures, self to Christ, the world to God. It is as the Lord Jesus declared, "Men loved darkness *rather than* light, because their deeds were evil" (Joh 3:19). Men refuse to deny self, abandon their idols, and submit to Christ *as Lord*, and without this, none can take the first step toward heaven!

II. The Narrow Way

Just as entering the "narrow gate" signifies the heart's acceptance of Christ's holy teaching, so to walk along the "narrow way" means for the heart and life to be *constantly regulated* thereby. Walking along the narrow way denotes a *steady perseverance* in faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus, overcoming all opposition, and rejecting every temptation to forsake the path of fidelity to Him. It is called the "narrow way" because all self-pleasing and self-seeking is *shut out*. In Genesis 18:19, it is called "the way"; in 1 Samuel 12:23, "the good and right way"; in Psalms 25:9, "his way"; in Proverbs 4:11, "the way of life"; in Isaiah 35:8, "the way of holiness"; in Jeremiah 6:16, "the good way"; in 2 Peter 2:2, "the way of truth"; and in 2 Peter 2:15, "the right way."

The narrow way *must* be followed, no matter how much it may militate against my worldly interests. It is right here that the testing point is reached. It is much easier (unto the natural man) and far pleasanter to indulge the flesh and follow our worldly propensities. The broad road, where the flesh *is* allowed "liberty"—under the pretense of the Christian's *not* "being under the law"—is easy, smooth, and attractive, but it ends in "destruction"! Though the "narrow way" leads to life, only FEW tread it. Multitudes make a profession and claim to be saved, but their lives give no evidence that they are "strangers and pilgrims" here, with their "treasure" *elsewhere*. They are afraid of being thought narrow and peculiar, strict and puritanic. Satan has deceived them. They imagine that they can get to heaven by an easier route than by denying self, taking up their cross daily, and *following* Christ!

There are multitudes of religionists who are attempting to *combine* the two "ways," making the best of both worlds and serving two masters. They wish to gratify self in time and enjoy the happiness of heaven in eternity. Crowds of nominal Christians are deluding themselves into believing that they *can* do so, but they are terribly deceived. A profession which is not verified by *mortifying* the deeds of the body in the power of the Spirit (Rom 8:13) is vain. A faith which is not evidenced by complete submission to Christ is only the faith of demons. A love which does not *keep* Christ's commandments is an imposition (Joh 14:23). A claim to being a Christian, where there is no real yieldedness to the will of God, is daring presumption. The reason why so few will enter life is because the multitudes are not seeking it in the way of *God's* appointing. None seek it aright save those who pass through the narrow gate, and who, despite many discouragements and falls, continue to press forward along the narrow way.

Now notice, carefully, the very next thing which immediately follows our Lord's reference to the two ways in Matthew 7, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mat 7:15). *Why* does this come in next? *Who are* the "false prophets" against which a serious soul needs to be on his guard? They are those who teach that heaven *may be* reached *without* treading the narrow way! They are those who loudly insist that eternal life may be obtained on much easier terms. They come in "sheep's clothing." They appear (to undiscerning souls) to exalt Christ, to emphasize His precious blood, to magnify God's grace. BUT, they do not insist upon repentance. They fail to tell their hearers that nothing but a broken heart which hates sin can truly believe in Christ. They declare not that a saving faith is a *living* one which purifies the heart (Act 15:9) and overcomes the world (1Jo 5:4).

These "false prophets" are known by their "fruits," the primary reference being to their "converts"—the fruits of their fleshly labours. Their "converts" are on the broad road, which is *not* the path of open wickedness and vice, but of a religion which pleases the flesh. It is that "way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro 14:12). Those who are on this broad road (this way which "seemeth right" to so many), have a head-knowledge of the truth, but they *walk not in it*. The "narrow way" is *bounded* by the commandments and precepts of Scripture. The broad road is that path which has *broken out beyond* the bounds of Scripture. Titus 2:12-13 supplies the test as to *which* "way" we are in, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, *denying* ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should *live* soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

Ere closing, let us anticipate and seek to remove an objection. Probably many of you are saying, "I thought *Christ* was the way to the Father (Joh 14:6). So He is, but *how*? First, in that He has removed every legal obstacle, and thereby opened a way to heaven for His people. Second, in that He has "left us an example that we should *follow* HIS steps." The mere opening of a door does not give me entrance into a house. I must tread the path leading to it, and mount the steps. Christ has, by His life of unreserved obedience to God, *shown us* the way which leads to heaven, "When he putteth forth his own sheep, HE goeth *before* them, and the sheep *follow* him" (Joh 10:4). Third, in that He is willing and ready to bestow grace and strength to walk therein.

Christ did not come here and die in order to make it *un-necessary* for *me* to please and obey God. No, indeed! "He died for all, *that* they which live should *not* henceforth live *unto themselves*, but unto Him which died for them" (2Co 5:15). "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might *deliver us from* this present evil world" (Gal 1:4). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and *purify* unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works* (Ti 2:14). Christ came here to "save his people *from* their sins" (Mat 1:21), and if you are not *now* delivered from the power of sin, from the deceptions of Satan, from the love of the world, and from the pleasing of self, then *you* are NOT saved.

May it please the God of all grace to add His blessing.

(The above is an address delivered by A. W. Pink in Glenolden (a suburb of Philadelphia) on September 28, 1931.)

THE ORDAINED LAMP

“I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed” (Psa 132:17). The first part of this Psalm records a series of prayer-petitions. From verse 11, to the close, are a number of great and precious promises relating to David and his family in the type, but mainly, and ultimately, to Christ and His New Testament church in the antitype. Let the reader constantly bear in mind this important principle and fact, namely, that everything in the Old Testament Scriptures typified or represented Gospel or eternal realities. First, God here promises to fix His residence in the church (Psa 132:13-14). Then, to bless the provision He makes for her (Psa 132:15). To give her faithful and successful ministers (Psa 132:16). That, however low the interests of Christ on earth may be brought, even though (like Himself) it may appear a root in a dry place, yet, like a tree well-planted in the ground, but sore lopt and hacked by man and Satan, it will sprout again (Psa 132:17).

In our present verse, three things are before us. First, the designation which is given unto the Saviour of sinners by the Father—He calls Him “mine anointed.” Though despised and rejected of men, though an unbelieving world see no form nor comeliness in Him, God owns Him as the Prophet, Priest, and King of His church. Compare Psalms 89:20-21. Second, the chief agency of God’s ordering for the manifestation of Christ to a lost world, “I have ordained a *lamp* for mine anointed.” This is the Gospel. The use of a lamp is to give light to people in the darkness of the night. So the proclamation of Christ’s glorious person, offices, and work, is a light shining in a dark place, until the day of glory dawns. Third, the *sovereign authority* by which this Gospel “lamp” is lighted and carried through this dark world—It is “ordained” of God. It is by divine command that His servants preach and spread the light of the Gospel. Compare Mark 16:15, 20.

This Gospel “lamp” was first set up in the purpose of God from eternity, in the “counsel of peace” (Zec 6:13 and cf. Pro 8:22-23, 31), when the whole plan of salvation through Christ was laid. Second, this “lamp” was first lighted in this lower world immediately after the fall in paradise. When a dark and dismal night of woe had spread itself over our first parents, a gleam of hope then shone out through the promise of Genesis 3:15. Third, the lamp of the Gospel shone prophetically (Gal 3:8) and typically (Heb 4:2) during all the Old Testament period. It shone, as it were, through a veil. Fourth, after the coming of Christ in the flesh, and His resurrection and ascension into heaven, the lamp of Gospel light was brightened and its blessed rays were more widely diffused, but even then (and now), according to the sovereign pleasure of God. To show how much God is concerned about this “lamp” of the everlasting Gospel, we mention several things which He had ordained concerning it.

1. God has appointed *those places* and parts of the world where the Gospel lamp shall be set up and shine, “The wind bloweth *where it listeth*...so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:8). It was so in Old Testament times, “He showeth his word *unto Jacob*, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath *not* dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, *they* have not known them” (Psa 147:19-20). It was so when Christ was upon earth. To His apostles, He said, “*Go not* into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mat 10:5-6).

It was so after His ascension, “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the regions of Galatia, and were *forbidden* of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit *suffered them not*” (Act 16:6-7).

That which regulates God in His providential dealings concerning the Gospel—opening doors or shutting them, sending one of His ministers to a place or withdrawing him—is whether or no there be some of those for whom Christ died in that particular locality, for the “sheep” *shall* hear His voice (Joh 10:16). Where there is no Gospel preaching for a protracted period, it is an indication that none of God’s elect are there. “Also I have *withholden* the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvests: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it *not* to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered” (Amo 4:7). *So it is* spiritually, and for the reason thus given.

2. God has appointed *how long* the Gospel lamp shall remain in each place, before it be sent to another part of the earth. He ordered how long it should shine among the Jews, namely, until Christ came. He ordained how long it should shine in each of the seven churches in Asia before He came and removed His candlestick. So, He has decreed where and when the Gospel shall continue in this country. There is probably more real Gospel preaching in China today than there is in the U.S.A. Many a church, which was once a bright testimony for Christ, is so no longer, nor does it know that “Ichabod” (“The glory is departed”) has been written over it. Many a town, which formerly was blest with the ministry of a true servant of God, is now left desolate.

3. God has appointed *which persons* should be converted and edified under the Gospel, when He sends it to any nation or congregation. The Most High has not left it to the caprice of His servants, nor to the whims of their hearers, what measure of success the proclamation of His truth shall enjoy. No, the Lord holds in His own right hand the instruments which He employs (Rev 1:16), and causes His word to be either a “savor of death unto death” or “a savor of life unto life” (2Co 2:15). Paul was bidden by the Lord to remain at Corinth, for, said He, “I have much people in *this* city” (Act 18:10). On the other hand, God suffered him not to go into Bithynia (Act 16:7).

When a servant of God settles in a new place, he knows not who are the particular ones that he has been ordained a blessing unto. His business is to preach the word to all who will hear him, leaving it with the Spirit to make whatever application He pleases. The election of grace shall obtain eternal life. The rest will be blinded (Rom 11:7). Some will prove to be wayside hearers, others, stony-ground hearers. Only a few will give evidence that they are good-ground-hearers. But that is all in the hands of “the *Lord of the harvest.*” Nor should we desire it to be otherwise. God is working out His own eternal purpose, and absolute subjection to the Master’s will is what is required of servants. A beam of the Gospel lamp will shine into one heart, when many others are left in nature’s darkness.

*“Why was I made to hear His voice
And enter while there’s room?
While others make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come.*

*'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
Which sweetly forced me in;
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.'*

4. God has ordained by *what instrument* or minister the Gospel lamp shall be brought unto a people or particular person. Paul was ordained for the Gentiles, Peter for the Jews. But every *one* of Christ's servants is guided by the hand of the sovereign Lord to labour in this, or that, or the other part of His vineyard. The stars are held in *His* right hand (Rev 1:16), and He causes them to shine in this or that orb of His church. And, when He pleases, He removes them from one place to another in His kingdom, where He has other work for them. And when He takes them to heaven, then they that "turn many to righteousness" shall shine "as the stars forever and ever" (Dan 12:3).

It is not by chance or "good luck" (horrible expression for any child of God to use!) that any one is privileged to sit under the ministry of a man of God to whom the Spirit blesses such to his conversion. No, when God works, He works at both ends of the line, making "all things *work together* for good" unto His own. It was sovereign grace which selected the Lord of glory to be the one who should preach the word of life to the Samaritan adulteress (Joh 4). It was sovereign grace which appointed Philip to be the Spirit's mouthpiece to the Ethiopian eunuch (Act 8). It was sovereign grace which determined that Peter should give forth the word of salvation to Cornelius and his household (Act 10). Cornelius was a Roman, and Paul (already then saved) was the apostle unto the Gentiles, yet, Peter (the apostle to the circumcision) was the one sent to him!

5. God has ordained the *measure* of fruit which each servant of His shall reap from his labours, the degree of success which each Gospel lamp-bearer shall have. He has determined what number of souls shall be edified, and which shall be hardened by His light. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1Co 3:7).

It is not always the most gifted ministers, nor the most godly, who are the most successful. So far as we can ascertain from the Gospel records, fewer souls were saved under the preaching of Christ Himself than under Peter's on the day of Pentecost! Why? "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Mat 11:26) must be the answer.

