

The Work of the Spirit

It is a great mistake to suppose that the works of the Spirit are all of one kind, or that His operations preserve an equality as to degree. To insist that they are and do, would be ascribing less freedom to the Third Person of the Godhead, than is enjoyed and exercised by men. There is variety in the activities of all voluntary agents: even human beings are not confined to one sort of works, nor to the production of the same kind of effects; and where they design so to do, they moderate them as to degrees according to their power and pleasure. Much more so is it with the Holy Spirit. The nature and kind of His works are regulated by His own will and purpose. Some He executes by the touch of His finger (so to speak), in others He puts forth His hand, while in yet others (as on the day of Pentecost) He lays bare His arm. He works by no necessity of His nature, but solely according to the pleasure of His will: 1 Corinthians 12:11.

Many of the works of the Spirit, though perfect in kind and fully accomplishing their design, are wrought by Him upon and within men who, nevertheless, are not saved. "The Holy Spirit is present with many as to powerful operations, with whom He is not present as to gracious inhabitation. Or, many are made partakers of Him in His spiritual gifts, who are not made partakers of Him in His saving grace: Matthew 7:22, 23" (John Owen on Hebrews 6:4). The light which God furnishes different souls varies considerably, both in kind and degree. Nor should we be surprised at this in view of the adumbration in the natural world: how wide is the difference between the glimmering of the stars from the radiance of the full moon, and that again from the shining of the midday sun. Equally wide is the gulf which separates the savage with his faint illumination of conscience from one who has been educated under a Christian ministry, and greater still is the difference between the spiritual understanding of the wisest unregenerate professor and the feeblest babe in Christ; yet each has been a subject of the Spirit's operation.

"The Holy Spirit works in two ways. In some men's hearts He works with restraining grace only, and the restraining grace, though it will not save them, is enough to keep them from breaking out into the open and corrupt vices in which some men indulge who are totally left by the restraints of the Spirit . . . God the Holy Spirit may work in men some good desires and feelings, and yet have no design of saving them. But mark, none of these feelings are things that accompany salvation, for if so, they would be continued. But He does not work Omnipotently to save, except in the persons of His own elect, whom He assuredly bringeth unto Himself. I believe, then, that the trembling of Felix is to be accounted for by the restraining grace of the Spirit, quickening his conscience and making him tremble" (C.H. Spurgeon on Acts 24:25).

The Holy Spirit has been robbed of much of His distinctive glory through Christians failing to perceive His varied workings. In concluding that the operations of the blessed Spirit are confined unto God's elect, they have been hindered from offering to Him that praise which is His due, for keeping this wicked world a fit place for them to live in. Few today realize how much the children of God owe to the Third Person of the Trinity for holding in leash the children of the devil, and preventing them from utterly consuming Christ's church on earth. It is true there are comparatively few texts which specifically refer to the distinctive Person of the Spirit as reigning over the wicked, but once it is seen that in the Divine economy all is from God the Father, all is through God the Son, and all is *by* God the Spirit, each is given his proper and separate place in our hearts and thoughts. Let us, then, now point out a few of the Spirit's *general and inferior* operations in the non-elect, as distinguished from His *special and superior* works in the redeemed.

1. *In restraining evil.* If God should leave men absolutely to their own natural corruptions and to the power of Satan (as they fully deserve to be, as He will in Hell, and as He would now but for the sake of His elect), all show of goodness and morality would be entirely banished from the earth: men would grow past feeling in sin, and wickedness would swiftly and entirely swallow up the whole world. This is abundantly clear from Genesis 6:3, 4, 5, 12. But He who restrained the fiery furnace of Babylon *without* quenching it, He who prevented the waters of the Red Sea from flowing *without* changing their nature, now hinders the working of natural corruption *without* mortifying it. Vile as the world is, we have abundant cause to adore and praise the Holy Spirit that it is not a thousands times worse.

The world *hates* the people of God (John 15:19): why, then, does it not devour them? What is it that holds back the enmity of the wicked against the righteous? Nothing but the restraining power of the Holy Spirit. In Psalm 14:1-3 we find a fearful picture of the utter depravity of the human race. Then in verse 4 the Psalmist asks, "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up My people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD." To which answer is made, "There were they in great fear: *for* God is in the generation of the righteous" (v. 5). It is the Holy Spirit who places that "great fear" within them, to keep them back from many outrages against God's people. He curbs their malice. So completely are the reprobate shackled by His almighty hand, that Christ could say to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, *except* it were given thee from above" (John 19:11)!

2. *In inciting to good actions.* All the obedience of children to parents, all the true love between husbands and wives, is to be attributed unto the Holy Spirit. Whatever morality and honesty, unselfishness and kindness, submission to the powers that be and respect for law and order, which is still to be found in the world, must be traced back to the gracious operations of the Spirit. A striking illustration of His benign influence is found in 1 Samuel 10:26, "Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts *God* (the Spirit) had touched." Men's hearts are naturally inclined to rebellion, are impatient against being ruled over, especially by one raised out of a mean condition among them. The Lord the Spirit inclined the hearts of those men to be subject to Saul, gave them a disposition to obey him. So too, later, the Spirit touched the heart of Saul to spare the life of David, melting him to such an extent he wept (1 Sam. 24:16). In like manner, it was the Holy Spirit who gave the Hebrews favour in the eyes of the Egyptians—who hitherto had bitterly hated them—so as to give earrings to them (Exo. 12:35, 36).

3. *In convicting of sin.* Few seem to understand that conscience in the natural man is inoperative unless stirred up by the Spirit. As a fallen creature, thoroughly in love with sin (John 3:19), man resists and disputes against any conviction of sin. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, *for* that he also *is* flesh" (Gen. 6:3): man, being "flesh," would never have the least distaste of any iniquity unless the Spirit excited those remnants of natural light which still remain in the soul. Being "flesh," fallen man is perverse against the convictions of the Spirit (Acts 7:51), and remains so forever unless quickened and made "spirit" (John 3:6).

4. *In illuminating.* Concerning Divine things, fallen man is not only devoid of light, but *is* "darkness" itself (Eph. 5:8). He has no more apprehension of spiritual things than the beasts of the field. This is very evident from the state of the heathen. How, then, shall we explain the intelligence which *is* found in thousands in Christendom, who yet give no evidence that they are new creatures in Christ Jesus? They have been enlightened by the

Holy Spirit: Hebrews 6:4. Many are constrained to enquire into those Scriptural subjects which make no demand on the conscience and life; yea, many take great delight in them. Just as the multitudes took pleasure in beholding the miracles of Christ, who could not endure His searching demands, so the *light* of the Spirit is pleasant to many to whom His *convictions* are grievous.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

73. *The Faith of Moses: 11:27.*

In our last two articles (upon 11:24-26) we had before us the striking example of the power of faith to rise above the honours, riches, and pleasures of the world; now we are to behold it triumphing over *its terrors*. Faith not only elevates the heart above the delights of sense, but it also delivers it from the fear of man. Faith and fear are opposites, and yet, strange to say, they are often found dwelling within the same breast; but where one is dominant the other is dormant. The constant attitude of the Christian should be, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, *and not be afraid*" (Isa. 12:2). But alas, what ought to be, and what is, are two vastly different things. Nevertheless, when the grace of faith *is* in exercise, its language is, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee" (Psa. 56:3). So it was with Moses: he is here commended for his courage.

The leading feature of that particular working of Moses' faith which we are now to consider, was its *durability*. That which engaged our attention on the last two occasions occurred when our hero had "come to years." Forty years had elapsed since then, during which he passed through varied experiences and sore trials. But now that he is eighty years of age, faith is still active within him. That spiritual grace moved him to withstand the attractions of Egypt's court, had led him to relinquish a position of high honour and wealth, had caused him to throw in his lot with the despised people of God; and now we behold faith enabling him to endure the wrath of the king. A God-given faith not only resists temptations, but it also endures trials, and refuses to be daunted by the gravest dangers. Faith not only flourishes under the dews of the Spirit, but it survives the fires of Satanic assault.

True faith neither courts the smiles of men nor shuns their frowns. Herein it differs radically from that natural faith, which is all that is possessed by thousands who think they are children of God. Only yesterday we received a letter in which a friend wrote, "I know some professing Christians who boasted that the prospect of being out of work did not trouble them at all: for they knew every need would be supplied. Now that they have no work, they are not nearly as confident, but are wondering how in the world they are going to get along. So too we read of the stony ground hearer. "The same is he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth It; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: *for when tribulation or persecution ariseth* because of the Word, by and by he is offended" (Matt. 13:20-21). Far otherwise was it with Moses.

"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). Moses left Egypt on two different occasions, and there is some diversity of opinion among the commentators as to which of them is here in view. Personally, we think there is little or no room for doubt that the Holy Spirit *did not* have reference unto the first, for we are told, "And Moses *feared*, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian" (Exo. 2:14, 15). There he fled as the criminal, here he went forth as the commander of God's people! then he left Egypt in terror, but now "by faith."

There are some, however, who find difficulty in the fact that Moses' leaving of Egypt is here mentioned *before* his keeping of the Passover and sprinkling of the blood in verse 28. But this difficulty is self-created, by confining our present text unto a single event, instead of understanding it to refer to *the whole conduct* of Moses: his forsaking of Egypt is a general expression, which includes all his renouncing a continuance therein and his

steady determination to depart therefrom. So too his “not fearing the wrath of the king” must not be restricted unto the state of his heart immediately following the Exodus, but also takes in his resolution and courage during the whole of his dealings with Pharaoh. And herein we may perceive again the *stability* of his faith, which withstood the most fiery ordeals, and which remained steadfast to the end. Thus did he supply a blessed illustration of “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5).

The experiences through which Moses passed and the testings to which his faith was subjected, were no ordinary ones. First, he was bidden to enter the presence of Pharaoh and say, “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness” (Exo. 5:1). Let it be duly considered that for forty years Moses had lived the life of a shepherd in Midian, and now, with no army behind him, with none in Egypt’s court ready to second his request, he has to make this demand of the haughty monarch who reigned over the greatest empire then on earth. Such a task called for no ordinary faith. Nor did he meet with a favourable reception, instead, we are told, “And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go” (Exo. 5:2).

Not only did the idolatrous king refuse point-blank to grant Moses’ request, but he said, “Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. . . .Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves” (Exo. 5:4, 7). Well might the heart of the stoutest quake under such circumstances as these. To add to his troubles, the heads of the Israelites came unto Moses and said, “The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us” (Exo. 5:21). Ah, faith must be tested; nor must it expect to receive any encouragement or assistance from men, no, not even from our own brethren—it must stand alone in the power of God.

Later, Moses was required to interview Pharaoh again, *after* Jehovah had informed them He had “hardened” his heart, and say, “The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river” (Exo. 7:16-18). It is easy for us now, knowing all about the happy sequel, to entirely *under-estimate* the severity of this trial. Seek to visualize the whole scene. Here was an insignificant Hebrew, belonging to a company of *slaves*, with no powerful “union” to press their claims. There was the powerful monarch of Egypt, who, humanly speaking, had only to give the word to his officers, and Moses had been seized, beaten, tortured, murdered. Yet, notwithstanding, he “feared not the wrath of the king.”

We cannot now follow Moses through all the stages of his great contest with Pharaoh, but would pass on to the closing scene. After the tenth plague, Pharaoh called for Moses and proposed a compromise, which, upon Moses refusing, he said, “Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die” (Exo. 10:28). But Moses “feared not the wrath of the king,” and boldly announced the final plague. Not only so, he declared that his servants should yet pay him homage (Exo. 11:4-8). “He had before him a bloody tyrant, armed with all the power of Egypt, threatening him with present death if he persisted in the work and duty which God had

committed to him; but he was so far from being terrified, or declining his duty in the least, that he professeth his resolution to proceed, and denounceth destruction to the tyrant himself” (John Owen).

After the tenth plague had been executed, Moses led the children of Israel out of the land in which they had long groaned in bondage. “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king” (Heb 11:27). Even now he was not terrified by thoughts of what the enraged monarch might do, nor at the powerful forces which he most probably would send in pursuit; but staying his mind upon God, he was assured of the Divine protection. He allowed not gloomy forebodings to discourage him. Yet once more we would say, it is easy for us (in the light of our knowledge of the sequel) to under-estimate this marvel. Visualize the scene again. On the one hand was a powerful nation, who had long held the Hebrews in serfdom, and would therefore be extremely loath to let them altogether escape; on the other hand, here was a vast concourse of people, including many thousands of women and children, unorganized, unarmed, unaccustomed to travel, with a howling wilderness before them.

Ah, my reader, does not such a situation as we have hastily sketched above, seem utterly hopeless? There did not seem one chance in a thousand of succeeding. Yet the spirit of Moses was undaunted, and he is here commended to us for his courage and resolution. But more; Pharaoh, accompanied by six hundred chariots and a great armed force, pursued them, and “when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?” (Exo. 14:10-11). Here was the crucial moment, the supreme test. Did Moses’ heart fail him, was he now terrified by “the wrath of the king”? No indeed; so far from it, he calmly and confidently said unto the people, “*Fear ye not*, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Exo. 14:13, 14).

O how the undaunted courage of Moses shames *our* petty fears! What cause have we to blush, and hang our heads in shame. Many are there who fear very much less than the wrath of a “king”: such things as darkness and solitude, or even the rustling of a leaf, will frighten them. No doubt such fear is constitutional with some, but with the great majority it is a guilty conscience which makes them alarmed at a shadow. The best way for weak ones to overcome their timidity is to cultivate the sense of God’s presence; and for the guilty, to confess and forsake their sins. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). Fear is the result of distrust, of taking the eye off God, of being unduly occupied with difficulties and troubles.

And what was it that enabled Moses to conduct himself with such firmness and boldness? What was it that delivered his heart from fearing the wrath of the king? FAITH, a spiritual, supernatural, God-given, God-energized faith. Reader, do you know anything, experimentally, of *such* a faith? Again we would be reminded that “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Moses had heard, he had heard something from God, and his faith laid hold of and rested upon the same. What was it that he had heard? This, “Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye *shall* serve God upon this mountain” (Exo. 3:12). So too, if we are Christians, God has said to

us, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Therefore “we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:5, 6).

Perhaps some one may ask, But was there *no wavering* in Moses’ faith? Yes, dear reader, for he was a man of like passions with us. They who have a faith which never varies, which remains the same whether it be cloudy and stormy, or fair and sunny, have nothing but a natural and letter faith. A spiritual and supernatural faith is one which *we* did not originate and is one which we cannot call into exercise whenever we please: God imparted it, and He alone can renew and call it into action. When the leaders of Israel murmured against Moses, and charged him with endangering their lives (Exo. 5:21), we are told that “Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast Thou so *evil* entreated this people? why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people; *neither hast thou delivered Thy people at all*” (Exo. 5:22, 23). Blessed is it to behold the patience of God with His failing servant, and to see how He comforted and strengthened him: Exodus 6:1-8.

“By faith he forsook Egypt.” Faith assures the heart of *a better portion* in return for any thing God calls us to relinquish. No matter how attractive to the senses, no matter how popular with our fellows, no matter how necessary it may seem for the interests of our family, faith is convinced that God will not suffer us to be the losers: Genesis 12:1. So Abraham left Chaldea, so Ruth forsook Moab (Ruth 1:16). Here is one way in which a true faith may be discerned and known: if we were born and brought up in an idolatrous place, where honors, pleasures and treasures might be enjoyed, and we, for conscience sake, have forsaken that place, then surely we have a *spiritual* faith. Few are now required to do as Abraham did, but all *are* commanded to obey 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17.

Ah, there are many who forsake Egypt’s (the world’s) vices and pleasures, who do not separate from *its religion*, and *that* was the central thing in the final test which Moses’ faith had to overcome. Again and again Pharaoh sought a compromise, but with inflexible firmness Moses stood his ground. The demand of God was, “Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me *in the wilderness*” (Exo. 5:1): there must be a complete separation from the religion of the world. But that is something which the world cannot brook, for the withdrawal of God’s people condemns them; hence we find Pharaoh saying, “Go ye, sacrifice to your God *in the land*” (Exo. 8:25). But Moses was not to be moved, “We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, *as He shall command us*” (Exo. 8:27).

Next we are told Pharaoh said, “I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only *ye shall not go very far away*” (8:28): this was tantamount to saying, “If you are determined to adopt this holier than thou attitude, there is no reason why there should be a complete break between us.” After the Lord had further plagued Egypt, the king again sent for Moses and Aaron and asked, “*Who* are they that shall go?” Moses answered, “We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds” (Exo. 10:9). But that was too much for Pharaoh, who replied, “Not so: go now *ye that are men*, and serve the LORD” (10:11). See here in Pharaoh, my reader, our great Adversary, striving to get us to temporize: “If you are determined to forsake the church, at least leave your children in the Sunday School!” How subtle the devil is! What a *living* book is the Word! How thoroughly suited to our present lot and needs!

One more effort was made by Pharaoh to induce Moses to render only a partial obedience unto God’s demands: “Go ye, serve the LORD; *only let your flocks and your herds be stayed*” (10:24)—If you must be so unsociable, if you will be so mulish and not

allow your children to remain in Sunday School, at least retain your *membership* with us and *pay* into the “church treasury” as hitherto! Ah, had Moses feared the wrath of the king, he had yielded this point. Instead, he remained firm, and said, “Thou must give us *also* sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God. Our cattle *also shall* go with us; there shall *not an hoof* be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God” (10:25, 26). Well might the Apostle write, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: *for we are not ignorant of his devices*” (2 Cor. 2:11)—no, for they have been fully exposed to us in Holy Writ.

All of what has been before us above is included in these words “By faith he *forsook Egypt*,” and all of it is “written for *our* learning” (Rom. 15:4). The offers made by Pharaoh to Moses to prevent Israel from completely forsaking Egypt in their worship of the Lord, are, in essence, the very temptations which His people now have to overcome, if they are to fully heed and obey 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, *and touch not the unclean thing*.” O my Christian reader, seek grace to obtain the uncompromising spirit of Moses. When urged to worship God in “Egypt” (i.e. the white-washed “churches” *of the world*), say it is impossible, for “what communion hath light with darkness!” When pressed to leave your children in a worldly Sunday School, to be instructed by those who have not the fear of God upon them, refuse. When invited to at least retain your membership in the Holy Spirit-deserted “churches” and contribute of your means to their upkeep, decline to do so.

“Not fearing the wrath of the king.” The courage of Moses is here set forth in three degrees: he feared not *man*; he feared not the greatest of men, a *king*; he feared not that which most affrights people, the *wrath of a kingreligious* Egypt, must expect to encounter the “wrath” of man: none hates so bitterly, none acts so cruelly, none come out more in their true colors, than the worldly religionist when the veneer of hypocritical piety has been seen through by a child of God. Yet *their* “wrath” is less to be feared than was Pharaoh’s: “If God be for us, who can be against us!” (Rom. 8:31).

“For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). Ah, here is the key to all that has been before us. Moses “endured,” which tells us of the state of his heart. He “endured” the attractive honors and alluring pleasures of Egypt’s court; he “endured” the repeated compromises of Pharaoh; he “endured” the terrors which his conduct might inspire. His courage was no mere flash in the pan, or momentary bravado; but was steady and real. O how little of *this* faith and its blessed fruit of holy boldness is now to be seen in poor, degenerate Christendom. Yet how could it be otherwise, when worldliness has “quenched” the Spirit on every hand? May we who have, by sovereign grace, been drawn to Christ outside the camp, be very jealous and watchful against grieving the Spirit.

The precise word which is here rendered “endured” is not employed elsewhere in the New Testament. Scholars tell us that it is derived from a root meaning strength or fortitude, to bear evils, undergo dangers with resolution and courage, so as not to faint beneath them, but hold on our way to the end. It was a word most appropriate to express the firmness of Moses’ mind in this work of faith in “forsaking Egypt.” He met with a long course of difficulties, and was repeatedly threatened by the king; and, in addition, he had to endure a great conflict with his own unbelieving brethren. But he strengthened himself with spiritual courage and resolution to abide in his duty to the finish. *How?* Whereby was his strength renewed?

“For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” Ah, it was no mulish stupidity nor obstinate imprudence that wrought such a resolution in Moses, but the constant occupation of his heart with the Divine perfections. We say “the *constant* occupation,” for note carefully our text does not say “he endured because he *saw* Him who is invisible,” but “as *seeing* Him who is invisible”—it was a continuous act! O to be able to say in our measure, “I have *set the Lord always before me*” (Psa. 16:8). This is absolutely essential if faith and courage are to be kept healthy. Nothing else will enable *us* to “endure” the frictions and trials of life, the attractions and distractions of the world, the assaults of Satan.

“He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” “God is said to be invisible (as He *is* absolutely) in respect of His essence, and is often so called in Scripture: Romans 1:20, Colossians 1:15, 1 Timothy 1:17. But there is a peculiar reason for this description of Him here. Moses was in that state and condition, and had those things to do, wherein he stood in need continually of Divine power and assistance. Whence this should proceed, he could not discern by his senses, his bodily eyes could behold no present assistant, for God is ‘invisible’. And it requires an especial act of the mind in expecting help from Him who cannot be seen. Wherefore this is here ascribed to him. He saw Him who was in Himself invisible; that is, he saw Him by faith, whom he could not see with his eyes” (John Owen). This word “invisible” shows the uselessness (as well as sin) of making images to represent God, and warns against our forming any apprehensions in our mind patterned after the likeness of any visible object. Though God be invisible, yet He sees us!

“He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” “A double act of the faith of Moses is intended herein. 1. A clear, distinct view and apprehension of God in His omnipresence, power and faithfulness. 2. A fixed trust in Him on their account, at all times and on all occasions. This he rested on, this he trusted to, that God was everywhere present with him, able to protect him, and faithful in the discharge of His promise” (John Owen). God is the proper object of faith: on which it rests, from which it expects every good, and to which it returns the glory for all.

O the surpassing excellency of faith. It takes in eternal, invisible, infinite objects. By His providences God often appears to be against His people, but faith knows He is for them. In this world we are subject to many trials and miseries, but faith knows that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28). The bodies of God’s children die, are buried, and return to dust; but faith beholds a glorious resurrection for them. O the wondrous power of faith to rise above the things of sight and sense. It is true that neither the impartation of faith, nor its growth and exercise, lie within *our* power; nevertheless, we *are* responsible to avoid those things which becloud and weaken faith, and we are responsible to nourish faith. How very few make serious efforts *to see* “Him who is invisible!”—A.W.P.

The Life of David

25. His Sorrow at Ziklag.

“*Preserve me*, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust” (Psa. 16:1). This is a prayer which, in substance at least, every child of God frequently puts up to his heavenly Father. He feels his own insufficiency, and calls upon One who is all-sufficient. He realizes how incompetent he is to defend and protect himself, and seeks the aid of Him whose arms are all-mighty. If he is in his right mind, before starting out on a journey, when any particular danger threatens him, and ere settling down for the night’s repose, he commits himself into the custody and care of Him who never slumbers or sleeps. Blessed privilege! Wise precaution! Happy duty! The Lord graciously keep us in a spirit of complete dependence upon Himself.

“The LORD *preserveth* all them that love Him” (Psa. 145:20). Most Christians are more ready to perceive the fulfillment of this precious promise when they have been delivered from some physical danger, than when they were preserved from some moral evil; which shows how much more we are governed by the natural than the spiritual. We are quick to own the preserving hand of God when a disease epidemic voids our home, when a heavy falling object just clears our path, or when a swiftly-moving auto just misses the car we are in; but we ought to be just as alert in discerning the miraculous hand of God when a powerful temptation is suddenly removed from us, or we are delivered from it.

“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (2 Thes. 3:3). The Lord’s people are surrounded with a variety of evils within and without. They have sin in them, and it is the cause and fountain of all the evil and misery which they at any time feel and experience. There is the Evil One without, who endeavours at times to bring great evil upon them. But the Lord “keepeth His people from evil,” not that they are exempted wholly and altogether from evil. Yet they are kept from being overcome by and engulfed in it. Though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth them with His right hand.

Wondrous are the ways in which God *preserves* His saints. Many a one has been withheld from that success in business on which he had fondly set his heart: it was God delivering him from those material riches which would have ruined his soul! Many a one was disappointed in a love affair: it was God delivering from an ungodly partner for life, who would have been a constant hindrance to your spiritual progress! Many a one was cruelly treated by trusted and cherished friends: it was God breaking what would have proved an unequal yoke! Many a parent was plunged into grief by the death of a dearly loved child: it was God, in His mercy, taking away what would have proved an idol. Now we see these things through a glass darkly, but the Day will come, dear reader, when we shall perceive clearly that it was the *preserving* hand of our gracious God thus dealing with us at those very times when all seemed to be working against us.

The above meditations have been suggested by what is recorded in 1 Samuel 29. At the close of our last article we saw how mercifully God interposed to deliver His servant from the snare of the fowler. Through his unbelief and self-will, David had gotten into a sore dilemma. Seeking help from the ungodly, he had placed himself under obligations to the king of Gath. Pretending to be the friend of the Philistines and the enemy of his own people, Achish was now determined to employ David and his men upon the attack which was planned against Israel. Then it was that the Lord interposed and *preserved* the object of His love from falling into much graver evil. He now graciously made “a way to es-

cape” (1 Cor. 10:13), lest His poor erring child should be tempted above that which he was able.

And *how* was that “way to escape” opened for him? Ah, *this* is the point which we wish to particularly direct our attention unto. It was not by means of any visible or outward work, but through the inward and secret operations of His power. The Lord turned against David the hearts of the other “lords of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 29:3-5); and in consequence, Achish was obliged to part with his services. Ah, my reader, how often was the Lord secretly working *for* you, when He turned the heart of some worldling *against* you! If we were more spiritual, this would be perceived more clearly and frequently by us, and we should then render unto our gracious Deliverer the praise which is His due. David’s discharge from the service of Achish was just as much a miracle as was his deliverance from the enmity of Saul; it was as the truly the working of God’s *preserving* power to rouse the jealousy and enmity of the Philistine lords against David, as it was to shield him from the javelin which the demon-possessed king hurled at him (1 Sam. 18:11).

“So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel” (1 Sam. 29:11). Commanded by the king of Gath so to do (v. 10), there was no other prudent alternative. Thus the snare was broken, and David was now free to return unto his own city, not knowing (as yet) how urgently his presence was needed there. Stealing away amid the shadows of the dawn, the flight of David and his men was scarcely any less ignominious than was the banishment of back-slidden Abraham from Egypt (Gen. 12:20). Though God often extricates His people from the dangerous situations which their unbelief brings them into, nevertheless, He makes them at least taste the bitterness of their folly. But, as we shall see, the shame which the Philistine lords put upon David, turned to his advantage in various ways. Thus does God, sometimes, graciously overrule unto good even our failures and falls.

“So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel” (1 Sam. 29:11). Delivered from a sore dilemma, a heavy burden removed from his shoulders, we may well suppose it was with a light heart that David now led his men out of the camp of Achish. Blithely unconscious of the grievous disappointment awaiting them, David and his men retraced their steps to Ziklag, for it was there he had deposited all that was chiefly dear to him on earth: his wives and his children were there, it was there he had formed a rest for himself—but apart from God! Ah, how little do any of us know what a day may bring forth: how often is a happy morning followed by a night of sadness: much cause have we while in this world to “rejoice with trembling” (Psa. 2:11).

Though David had now been delivered from his false position as an ally of Achish against Israel, not yet had he been brought back to God. Deep exercises of heart were required for this, and He who preserveth His people from fatal back-sliding saw to it that His erring servant should not escape. Though He is the God of all grace, yet His grace ever reigns “through righteousness,” and never at the expense of it. Though His mercy delivers His saints from the sad pitfalls into which their folly leads them, usually, He so orders His providences, that they are made to smart for their wrong-doing; and the Holy Spirit uses this to convict them of their sins, and they, in turn, *condemn themselves* for the same. The means employed by God on this occasion were drastic, yet surely not more so than the case called for.

“And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire” (1 Sam. 30:1). After a three days’ march from the camp of Achish, hoping to find rest in their homes and joy in the bosom of their families, here was the scene upon which the eyes of David and his men now fell! What a bitter moment must this have been for our hero! His little all had vanished: he returns to the place where his family and possessions were, only to find the city a mass of smoking ruins, and those whom he loved no longer there to welcome him. When we leave our families (though it be for only a few hours) we cannot foresee what may befall them, or ourselves, ere we return; we ought therefore to commit each other to the protection of God, and to render unto Him unfeigned thanks when we meet again in peace and safety.

“And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way” (30:2). Let us learn from this that it is the part of wisdom, on *all* occasions, to moderate our expectation of earthly comforts, lest we should by being over-sanguine, meet with the more distressing disappointment. Behold here the restraining power of the Lord, in preventing the Amalekites slaying the women and children. “Whether they spared them to lead them in triumph, or to sell them, or to use them for slaves, God’s hand must be acknowledged, who designed to make use of the Amalekites for the correction, but not for the destruction, of the house of David” (Matthew Henry). Blessed is it to know that even in wrath God remembers “mercy” (Hab. 3:2).

“And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way” (1 Sam. 30:2). From this we may also see how sorely David was now being chastened for being so forward to go with the Philistines against the people of God. Hereby the Lord showed him he had far better have stayed at home and minded his own business. “When we go abroad, in the way of our duty, we may comfortably hope that God will take care of our families, in our absence, *but not otherwise*” (Matthew Henry). No, to count upon the Lord’s protection, either for ourselves or for our loved ones, when we enter forbidden territory, is wicked presumption and not faith. It was thus the devil sought to tempt Christ: Cast Thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and the angels shall safeguard Thee.

“So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep” (1 Sam. 30:3, 4). Ah, now he was tasting the bitterness of being without the full protection of God. As a homeless wanderer, hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, despised by the Nabals who dwelt at ease in the land, yet never before had he known the like of this. But now, under the protection of the king of Gath, and with a city of his own, he learns that without *God’s shelter* he is exposed indeed. Learn from this, dear reader, how much we lose when we enter the path of self-will. In the first shock of disappointment, David could only weep and wail; all appeared to be irrevocably lost.

“It was indeed no wonder that David’s heart was stricken. He had never before known what it was to be smitten like this by the chastening hand of God. Of late he had seemed even more than ordinarily to be the subject of His care: but now the relation of God seemed suddenly changed into one of severity and wrath. During the year that David had watched his father’s flock, during his residence in the courts of Saul, during the time of his sorrowful sojourn in the wilderness, during his late eventful history in Ziklag, he had never experienced anything but kindness and preservation from the hand of God. He

had become so long accustomed to receive sure protection from God's faithful care, that he seems to have calculated on its uninterrupted continuance. He had lately said, 'The Lord render unto every man his righteousness . . . and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation.' But now the Lord Himself seemed turned into an enemy, and to fight against him. Nor could the conscience of David have failed to discern the reason. It must have owned the justice of the blow. Thus, however, the bitterness of his agony would be aggravated, not lessened" (B.W. Newton).

"And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite" (v. 5). Why did the historian, after specifically stating in verse 2 that the Amalekites had "taken the women captives," enter into this detail? Ah, is the answer far to seek? Is it not the Holy Spirit making known to us the prime cause of the Lord's displeasure against David? His "two wives" was the occasion of the severing of his communion with the Lord, which, as we have seen, was at once followed by Saul's renewed attack (see 25:43, 44 and 26:1, 2), his unbelieving fear (27:1), and his seeking help from the ungodly (27:2, 3). We mention this because it supplies *the key* to all that follows from 25:44, and because so far as we know no other writer has pointed it out.

"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters" (1 Sam. 30:6). Poor David! one trouble was added to another. Heartbroken over the loss of his family, and the burning of his city, additional distress was occasioned by the murmuring and mutiny of his men. They considered the entire blame rested upon their leader, for having journeyed to Achish and left the city of Ziklag defenseless, and because he had provoked the Amalekites and their allies (27:8, 9) by his inroad upon them, who had now availed themselves of the opportunity to avenge the wrong. "Thus apt are we, when in trouble, to fly into a rage against those who are in any way the occasion of our troubles, when we overlook the Divine providence and have no due regard to *God's hand* in it" (Matthew Henry).

"On all past occasions he had ever found some to sympathize with, and to console him in his afflictions. In the house of Saul, he had had the affection of Jonathan, and the favour of many beside: even in the wilderness, six hundred out of Israel had joined him, and had faithfully struggled with him through many a day of difficulty and danger: but now, they too abandon him. Enraged at the sudden calamity (for they also were bereaved of everything)—stung to the quick by a sense of its bitter consequences—imputing all to David (for it was he who had guided them to Ziklag)—even they who shrunk not from the sorrows of the cave of Adullam, and who had braved all the dangers of the wilderness, forsook him now. They all turned fiercely upon him as the author of their woe, and spake of stoning him. Thus stricken of God, despised by his friends, bereaved of all that he loved, David drank of a cup which he never tasted before. He had earned it for himself. It was the fruit of his self-chosen Ziklag" (B.W. Newton).

And what was the Lord's purpose in these sore trials which now came upon David? It was not to crush him and sink him into despair. No, rather was it with the design of moving him to "humble himself beneath His mighty hand" (1 Peter 5:6), confess his wrongdoing, and be restored to happy fellowship. God's heaviest chastenings of "His own" are sent in love and for the benefit of their subjects. But to enter into the good of them, to afterward enjoy "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" therefrom, the recipient of those chastenings *must be* "exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11): he must bow beneath the rod, yea, "hear" and "kiss" it, before he will be the spiritual gainer. Thus it was with the subject of these articles, as will appear in the immediate sequel.—A.W.P.

Dispensationalism

7. The Law of God

When the Son of God took upon Him the form of a servant, He announced, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, *Thy law* is within My heart" (Psa. 40:8). The sweet Psalmist of Israel declared, "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. . . O *how love I thy law!* it is my meditation all the day . . . Great peace have they which *love Thy law:* and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119:72, 97, 165). The Apostle to the Gentiles wrote, "The law *is holy,* and the commandment holy, and just, and good. . . The law is *spiritual* . . . *I delight in* the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:12, 14, 22). In view of these passages, how solemn and how sad is the opposition against the holy Law of God that we now behold on every side.

It is grievous beyond expression to find so many who refused the fables of "Higher Criticism" and who have boldly stood for the full inspiration and Divine authority of the Sacred Scriptures, using their influence *against* the holy Law of God, and telling their hearers that the few now left who insist upon the law being the believer's Rule of Life, are only desirous of "bringing them into bondage." Satan indeed secured a great triumph when he succeeded in getting the "champions of orthodoxy" to declare that Christians are dead to the law in *every* sense, and that its requirements are no longer binding upon them. The vagaries of "Dispensationalism" have had much to do with this modern outcry against the Law of God, and unspeakably solemn is it to think of what their proponents will have to answer for in the Day to come, when they must render an account unto the Law-Giver Himself. O that it may please the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of some of them before it is too late.

There have been four chief mistakes made by our moderns on the subject of the Law. First, that it was never given by God until He promulgated it upon Mount Sinai. Second, that it was given only to and for the nation of Israel, the fleshly descendants of Jacob. Third, that Christians are not under it in *any* sense, and that every effort to press it upon them is an attempt to deprive them of their spiritual liberty. Fourth, that law and grace are mutually antagonistic, and can no more be combined than can oil and water; that they are opposing principles, the one being the enemy of the other. These are the principal errors which have been vigorously propagated the past two or three generations by many who were, and are, regarded as the leading contenders for the Faith once delivered to the saints. Is it too much to ask the reader to follow us now as we seek to challenge these positions, *to test them by Holy Writ?*

Before proceeding further, let us give a definition of what we intend by the Law of God. "It is the eternal rule of righteousness, which is essential to the being and glory of God's moral government and kingdom, and is in a sense the foundation of it, pointing out and declaring the duty of rational creatures, or moral agents, as what is fit and proper to be required of them, and containing the rule of God's conduct toward them, as their Moral Governor" (Sam. Hopkins, 1800). That "eternal rule of righteousness" was formally summarized in the Ten Commandments which were written by the finger of Jehovah on the two tables of stone. Those we speak of as "the moral law" in distinction from the ceremonial.

"What is the moral law? the moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he oweth to God

and man: promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it. Question: is there any use of the moral law to man since the Fall? Answer: although no man since the Fall can attain righteousness and life by the moral law; yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate, or the regenerate. Question: of what use is the moral law to all men? Answer: the moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a cleaner sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of His obedience” (Westminster Catechism). The “Westminster Catechism” was drawn up by many of the ablest of the Puritans, assembling first in 1643. It is still the standard of the Scottish Presbyterians, and was adopted by the synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1788. We have transcribed the above, not because we regard them as of any final authority, but because the definitions given are superior to any that we can frame.

“What is the moral law? I define it to be the holy, just, and good will of God made known and promulgated to His creatures in all those particulars, wherein He requires their perfect obedience, in order to their happiness. The law is the discovery of His will: for the Almighty Creator and sovereign Lord of Heaven and earth governs all His works and creatures according to the good pleasure of His own will.

“1. The Lord God, the Almighty Creator of all things visible and invisible, has an unalienable right to make laws for the government of His creatures. This right is founded in His absolute dominion on and sovereignty over them. They are His property, the work of His hands. He hath created and made them, and not they themselves. Their life, and all things belonging to it are His, coming from His gift, and continued by His bounty; and therefore He has a most indisputable claim to their obedience. What He requires, they must perform; because they are His creatures. The relation between the Creator and His creatures puts them under a necessity of obeying His law and will, or else of suffering whatever He shall threaten to inflict upon their disobedience.

“2. The Law of the Lord God, the Almighty Creator, is unalterable. It changeth not; for it is the copy of God’s most holy mind and will, in which there can be no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning. If the mind and will of God were to change, then God would be a changeable being, and whatever is changeable is imperfect; but God is perfect, therefore His mind and will change not. His Word will He not break, nor alter the Law that has gone out of His mouth. His infinite wisdom and His almighty power stand engaged to maintain its dignity, that it may be always an holy, just, and good law, which He will not break or alter.

“3. The moral law, which the Lord God revealed to Adam in Paradise, required of him perfect uninterrupted obedience. The whole moral law is summed up in one word, love; love to God for the blessings of creation and providence, and love to man for God’s sake. This love was the indispensable homage due to the Creator. It could not be alienated from Him, and given to any other object without idolatry; for which reason the moral law is unalterable. If a man withdraw his love in the least from God, he breaks that law which positively enjoins him to love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength.

“4. The law given to Adam being unalterable, all his descendants are bound to keep it; for they are all under the law, as God’s creatures. His will is the indispensable rule of their obedience. He requires their love, and if they refuse to give it to Him, then their will

is opposite to His, which is rebellion against their sovereign Lord, and which must bring upon them swift destruction” (W. Romaine, 1760).

The law was given to Adam in a twofold manner: subjectively and objectively. Subjectively, God endowed our first parents with a nature suited to and responding unto all the requirements of His holy will. The Creator placed in Adam’s heart holy instincts and inclinations unto whatsoever He commanded, and an aversion for all which He prohibited. As it is the “nature” of beasts to care for their young, for birds to build nests before they lay their eggs, for ants to lay by a store of food for the winter, so it was the “nature” of unfallen man to love and fear God, and seek His glory in a spiritual manner. This was wrought into the very constitution of his soul and spirit, enlightening his understanding, inclining his affections, and moving his will Godwards. He was endowed with inward abilities suited to every duty required from him. It is one of the many errors of Plymouth Brethrenism (echoed from Socinianism) that Adam had merely a negative “innocence,” and lacked a positive righteousness and holiness.

In proof of what has been affirmed in the preceding paragraph, we appeal to Genesis 1:26, “And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” This cannot mean less than that, in his original state, man reflected in his nature the moral perfections of God—love, wisdom, holiness. That Adam was endowed with *spiritual* life is clear from the fact that in the day he disobeyed his Maker, he *died spiritually*, and he could not have done so unless he had first been in possession of spiritual life. That Adam, and all his posterity as federally represented by him *were* originally in possession of spiritual life is clear from Ephesians 4:18, where his fallen children are declared to be “*alienated from the LIFE OF GOD*”: how could they be “alienated from” that life, had it never been theirs? That the Law of God was written upon Adam’s heart in the day of his creation, that this formed his very “nature,” or the characteristic constitution of his soul (distinguishing him from the beasts), and that his being created in the image and likeness of God signified that his nature reflected His moral perfections, is clear from the fact that in regeneration the elect are “*renewed* in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col. 3:10), which is amplified in Ephesians 4:24 as, “which after God is created *in righteousness and true holiness.*”

Though all his descendants fell in and with Adam, their federal head, and have inherited from him a depraved nature and constitution, being born into this world “dead in trespasses and sins,” nevertheless, they still bear clear traces of that Law of God which was, originally, written on their first parent’s heart. Positive proof of this is furnished in Romans 2:14, 15, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do *by nature* the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, (the scriptural revelation of the same), are a law unto themselves: Which show *the work of the law written in their hearts.*” The “work of the law” is that which the law *does*, namely, *instructs* concerning the goodness and badness of actions, teaching men what is right and wrong. In honouring their parents, paying their debts, being kind to the poor, men do (some of) “the things contained in the law,” for those are actions which the law prescribes; and thereby they give evidence that the law was once written on their hearts. The *effects* thereof are sufficient to render men inexcusable, but not enough to direct them in the way of holiness and happiness.

But Adam also had the Law of God set before him *objectively*. Being “made upright” (Eccl. 7:29), or perfectly holy, necessarily supposes a *rule* of conduct, or that there was a *standard* to determine right and wrong in moral character and action; in other words, man was placed under moral government, which supposes a law requiring perfect obedience

of him—defining his whole duty—and forbidding all disobedience on pain of suffering the just dessert of it. He was required to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; and to express this in all proper ways, and to obey every precept which God should give him. To suppose otherwise would be to deny that man was treated as a moral agent at his creation. Nor does this conclusion rest merely on logical supposition. While it be true that no particular account is found in Genesis of man’s being placed under this moral government, yet it may be clearly demonstrated from what has been since revealed.

The Apostle Paul, speaking of the law under which all mankind are, asserts the tenor of it in these words, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10). Now that “law” must have existed *before* man sinned, and while he had opportunity and was in a capacity *to* “continue” to do everything required by it; for if man, when in those circumstances, was not under law, with this sanction, and bound by it, there could be no reason or propriety in making this requirement of such a penalty, when man had *already* violated it, and rendered it impossible *to do* what it required. It necessarily follows, therefore, that man was originally made under the law, when in a state of innocency, which denounced a curse upon him, if he failed to render perfect obedience!

This is further confirmed by what the Apostle says of the law given to man, in his primitive state, namely, that it was “(ordained) *unto life*” (Rom. 7:10), and that the man who doeth the things required by it “*shall live by them*” (Rom. 10:5). This *must* refer to the *original* law given to man when innocent, or before he sinned; for no such law could be ordained or given “unto life,” that is, proposing and promising life, on *this* condition, since sin took place; for it is *impossible* that men, since the first apostasy, should obtain “life” in this way! This the Apostle plainly observes in his own case: “the commandment, which was ordained (or “given”), unto life, I found to be *unto death*” (Rom. 7:10). Thus, the law given to man in the day of his creation, and which threatened death for transgression, also promised *life* to him upon obedience!

A careful study of the book of Genesis reveals the fact that, from the beginning, all the posterity of Adam were under the Law of God, and that they possessed a knowledge of the same. It is passing strange that anyone should imagine the opposite: Romans 4:5 plainly enough declares, “Where no law is, there is no transgression.” If the early descendants of Adam had not been under the Law of God, then they had been left *without any Divine standard for the regulation of their conduct*, they had been without any moral government and consequently, none of their actions had been either good or evil. To what gross absurdities does a departure from Holy Writ reduce us!

“Sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom. 5:13). What could be plainer than that? If from Adam to Moses men had not been under the Law of God, then none of their actions would have deserved punishment, for it is a breach of His law only which subjects men to God’s displeasure and penalty. How could God charge Cain with the murder of Abel, had there been no law forbidding murder? By what authority did Noah curse his son (which curse was approved by God Himself) if there was then no commandment *to* “honour” parents? Why was Abimelech held guilty for taking unto himself the wife of Abraham, had there been no law forbidding the same? God Himself told him “I also withheld thee from *sinning* against Me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her” (Gen. 20:6). “Sinning” *against what?* why, the commandment “thou shalt not commit adultery”! Why should Judah say “Bring her forth, and let her be *burnt*” (Gen. 38:24) when he learned his daughter-in-law had “played the harlot,” unless the *same* law as Leviticus

21:9 had *then* been in force: “And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be *burnt* with fire”!

Noah was a “preacher of *righteousness*” (2 Peter 2:5), and the standard or rule of “righteousness” is *the law*. Noah pressed upon the Antediluvians the holy claims of God, denounced their rebellions against Him, and threatened them with the certain doom awaiting them if they repented not and turned from their evil ways. The sending of the Flood upon the world of the ungodly, is clear proof that God *was* then “imputing sins” and executing the penalty of His law. Once more: “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1): read through the whole of that chapter, and then ask, If the holy Law of God was unknown to men in those early times, *where* had Job learned such a high standard of morality and piety? An echo will still answer “where!” O the blindness of men who affirm that there was no Divine law given before Sinai.—A.W.P.

Divine Providence

Carson on Esther

The great design of this portion of the Holy Scriptures is to display the wisdom, providence, and power of God in the preservation of His people, and in the destruction of their enemies. We learn from it that the most casual events which take place in the affairs of the world are connected with His plans respecting His people; and that the most trifling things are appointed and directed by Him to effect His purposes. It decides a question that philosophy has conversed for ages, and will never fathom; recording a number of events, the result of man's free will, yet evidently appointed of God, and directed by His providence. From this book the believer may learn to place unbounded confidence in the care of his God in the utmost danger; and to look to the Lord of omnipotence for deliverance when there is no apparent means of escape. It demonstrates a particular providence, in the minutest things, and affords the most solid answer to all the objections of philosophy to this consoling truth.

The wisdom of this world, with all its acuteness, is not able to perceive how God can interfere on any particular occasion, without deranging the order of His general plans. Philosophers account for the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous, from the operation of general laws. A villain grows rich by industry, and oppresses the virtuous poor; a rich man loses his all by a storm at sea, or is himself overwhelmed in the ruins of an earthquake. In all this, the philosopher's god cannot interfere, for he is tied down by the order of a general providence. He is fettered by his own previously established laws, as effectually as the gods of the heathen were when they swore by the river Styx. He must quietly look on amidst all the occasional mischief resulting from his plans, which, though upon the whole the best possible, yet have many unavoidable defects. Storms and earthquakes result from the operations of general laws established at first by the Author of nature; and the Almighty, it is supposed, without unsuitably counteracting the order appointed by Himself, can neither prevent them nor deliver from their dreadful consequences. Famine and war, with all the evils that destroy or afflict men, are accounted for on principles that exclude a particular providence. The arrogance of the oppressor cannot be restrained, nor the sufferings of the virtuous prevented, without an unbecoming deviation from the order of nature. Philosophy cannot see how her god could dispose every particular event without a miracle on every occasion of interference. On this supposition, she thinks that he must be continually suspending and counteracting the general laws which he at first established for the government of the world.

How different from this philosophic god is the Lord God of the Bible! Jehovah has indeed established general laws in the government of the world, yet in such a manner that *He is the immediate Author* of every particular event. His power has been sometimes displayed in suspending these laws, but is usually employed in directing them to fulfill His particular purposes. The sun and the rain minister to the nourishment and comfort equally of the righteous and the wicked, not from the necessity of general laws, but from the immediate providence of Him who, in the government of the world, wills this result. Accordingly, the shining of the sun and the falling of the rain on the fields of the wicked, are represented in Scripture, not as the unavoidable effects of general laws, but as the design of supreme goodness. A fowling-piece well aimed will strike a particular object; but Divine truth has assured us that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without the permission of the Ruler of the world. This book (Esther) teaches us that God exerts His particular providence in an inconceivably wise and skillful manner, even by the operation of His general laws, and by the exercise of the free determinations of men. The very laws that in

the opinion of the philosopher stand in the way of a particular providence are here exhibited as the agents that He deposes to effect His purposes. The most astonishing interferences that ever were recorded are here effected solely through the operation of general laws, and the actions of voluntary agents. The people of God are delivered out of the most imminent danger, and their enemies most marvelously overturned, without a single miracle. The glory of the Divine wisdom, and power, and providence shines here the more illustriously, because God effects His work *without* suspending the laws of nature, or constraining the determination of the agents employed in the execution of His work. Had the earth opened and swallowed the enemies of the Jews, the power of Jehovah would have been displayed; but when He saved them by a train of events according to the general laws of nature, each of which separately viewed seems fortuitous, yet when seen in combination must necessarily have been designed to bring about the one great end; the existence of a particular providence is proved, and the nature of it is delightfully illustrated. It is not merely taught in doctrine, but it is exhibited in example.

In the history of the deliverance of the Jews through the exaltation of Esther we have *the whole history of the world in miniature*. The book of Esther is the History of Providence. In the inspired account which we have here of an interesting portion of Jewish history, we have an alphabet, through the judicious use of which we may read all the events of every day, of every age and nation. This is a Divine key which will open all the mysteries of providence. It is God's commentary on all that He has done and all that man has done since the finishing of the works of creation. All is natural and seemingly fortuitous; yet if the whole had been a work of mere fiction for amusement, the events could not have been better adapted to the end. There is all the simplicity of nature, yet all the surprise and interest of romance. The grand object is evolved like the plot of a regular drama; every event recorded contributes its influence in producing the effect. There is nothing wanting; there is nothing superfluous. Had the most trifling incident refused its aid, the whole plan would have been deranged—the most fatal results would have succeeded. From the first to the last, all parts are connected and influenced like the machinery of a watch. By a thousand wheels the mainspring guides the index. We have first a train of events to raise up deliverance to the Jews, even before they were brought into danger; next, we have a train of events to bring them to the brink of ruin; then following the surprising means of their preservation, and the destruction of their enemies. To one or other of the objects every circumstance recorded in the history contributes, and the whole forms one of the grandest displays of the wisdom, power, and providence of God that is to be met with in the Scriptures, and is well calculated to represent that noble plan by which the kingdom of Satan is overturned, and God's people are delivered from the power of their great enemy, through the very means intended for their utter extirpation.

In reviewing the train of events that provided the means of deliverance for the Jewish nation, before they were brought into danger, the first thing that presents itself is the great feast of Ahasuerus. At first sight nothing could have been more unconnected with the intended object. It is quite a fortuitous and ordinary matter. A royal revel would appear calculated to defeat the designs of Jehovah, rather than to fulfill them. But the wisdom and omnipotence of Jehovah can use ordinary events by a worldly assembly, or even a synagogue of Satan, as well as by a church of Christ. *He reigns as absolutely over His enemies as among His friends*. He works through Satan and his emissaries, as well as through the ministry of the angels of His presence; and employs the councils of sinners, as well as the loyal and loving exertions of saints. The occasion of originating this deliverance to the people of God was a feast to exhibit the glory of a worldly kingdom, and

not a religious assembly. God employs His agents in works suitable to their character! Had the wisdom of men formed the plan of deliverance, the monarch would have been made a proselyte to the religion of the Jews, and the work would have been effected by him as a servant of the God of Israel. But God does every thing by him while he continues, as far as we are informed, altogether uninfluenced by the law of the Lord of Heaven. Had David sat on the throne of Persia, his zeal for the preservation of Israel and destruction of their enemies could not have flamed with greater ardor than that of Ahasuerus.

What was the particular occasion of this feast we are not informed, and therefore it can be no way useful for our edification. Commentators are usually very obliging with their conjectures on such an emergency, and edify us with many a shrewd guess. But it is the duty of a Christian to learn everything that the Scriptures record; and it is equally his duty to remain in the most obstinate ignorance of everything they do not reveal. Whether this was a birthday, or a feast for commemorating the accession to the throne; whether it was an annual festival, or an occasional revel, I know not—I care not. What I know is, that God had evidently determined it as a link of the wonderful concatenation of ordinary events employed by Him to effect His glorious purpose of delivering His people. Though the free appointment of man, it was also the appointment of God. It was necessary to give birth to the events that followed.

The whimsical, tyrannical, and indecent thought that struck the mind of the monarch in his wine, though originating with himself, was according to the appointment of a wise Providence. Why did such a thought come into his mind? It was evidently contrary to the custom of Persia, for Vashti to make such an appearance, as the females on this occasion feasted apart. It was extremely indecorous for the female majesty of the empire to be exposed to the formal survey of such an assembly, heated with wine. The queen's disobedience of the orders of an absolute monarch, accustomed to universal obedience, shows how much the thing required was contrary to the general sentiments of decorum. Had such a thing been usual, it would not have been so offensive to the queen. It may be said it was a drunken frolic. But was the king never drunk before? Is this the only time that he acted under the influence of wine? Why did the thought strike him now rather than at any other time of his drinking? Why is it that this is the only instance of the kind on record? God's intention undoubtedly was that a thing might be enjoined on the queen with which she would not comply, that her disgrace might make way for the exaltation of the deliverer of His people. Yet though in one point of view it was the appointment of God, in another it was the result of the actions of free and voluntary agents.

God's purpose is brought about by those whose only view is to fulfill *their own* purposes.

How inscrutable are the mysteries of Providence! How unsearchable are His counsels in the government of the world! Men are His enemies—they hate Him, and disobey Him; yet in all their plans and actions *they fulfill His will*. The regularity of the heavenly bodies in their courses is wonderful; but they are not voluntary agents; they are constantly urged on by the hand of their Creator. But men think, and resolve, and act for themselves; yet *they* fulfill the plans of Jehovah as much as the sun, moon and stars. His very enemies in opposing Him are made the instruments of serving Him. How consoling to the believer is this view of Providence! When he looks around him he sees everywhere men trampling on the laws of God, and openly putting dishonor on Him. Is God disappointed in the end that He proposed by His works? Is He really overcome and thwarted by the prince of darkness? No! Jehovah is executing His purposes even through the wickedness of men

and devils: and all things that have taken place from the Creation must minister to His glory.

Though Satan has usurped the throne of God in the world for so many thousand years, yet in all this God has been executing His own plans, and He *now* rules on earth as absolutely and as unreservedly as He does in Heaven. This is a depth which we cannot fathom; but it is a truth necessary for the honor of the character of God; and one of which the Scriptures leave no room for doubt. The sin and misery that are on the earth, the endless perdition of wicked men and devils, are subjects of melancholy consideration to the man of God; but let him be consoled with the thought that Jehovah worketh *all* things according to the counsel of His own will, and that the darkest spots on the book of God may appear in the brightness of meridian light in the world of glory. "The LORD hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. 16:4). The Apostle Paul declares that he was a "sweet savour unto God," as well "in those that perish," as "in those that are saved." A fool may ask, How can these things be so? and the wisest man on earth cannot answer him. But is it not enough that *God* has said it? Shall little children receive the word of their parents with the utmost confidence of conviction, when they testify the most incredible things, and shall we hesitate to receive the Word of the God of Truth?

The queen's refusal is another providential circumstance which we are here called to observe and to admire. Notwithstanding the singularity, the indelicacy, and the unreasonableness of the command, it is remarkable that the queen should venture to disobey a despot heated with wine. She could scarcely expect to escape with impunity. Even Esther herself, with all her surpassing beauty, was exceedingly reluctant to venture uncalled into his presence. She was not willing to risk her life on his caprice, whether he would hold out his golden scepter, or suffer her to perish in her rashness. What, then, must have been the danger of Vashti? What must have been the intrepidity of the daring woman that refused to obey him? Her conduct was singularly bold and imprudent, her resolution was no doubt suggested by her pride, or by her sense of decorum; but a regard to self-interest is usually stronger than these principles, especially in courts. Why, then, did her delicacy at this time prevail over her prudence? Not one woman in a thousand would have acted in this manner, in the same circumstances. Why then did a woman of such spirit fill the situation of queen at this critical moment? Why was not her duty accompanied with an abject spirit of servility, as is usually the case among slaves of Eastern despots? The reason evidently is, *God* had provided this high-spirited woman for the occasion which He meant to serve by her. He had determined her character and conduct as the means of executing His purposes, and by the ordinary course of events, His providence had given a consort to the monarch who was fitted for the part which He designed that she should act. As a voluntary agent she ignorantly fulfilled the will of Him whom she knew not, when she was influenced solely by a regard to her own feelings.

The advice of the king's counselors on this occasion is also remarkable. The sycophants around despots are generally distinguished for caution. Even in their revels they are seldom off their guard. Now it was at the utmost hazard that they gave this advice. They must succeed, or fall. Though pure love could not influence the breast of a licentious Eastern monarch, yet it is evident that Ahasuerus admired the beauty of his queen. The favorite mistress of despots is known to prevail against the most subtle and most powerful ministers. We see how readily this very monarch gave up to Esther the man whom he most singularly honored and raised above all the princes of the empire. If the counselors of the king should fail in displacing Vashti from the affections of their master,

they were evidently planning their own ruin. Had the king refused to listen to their counsel, and the queen been restored to power, their overthrow was certain. Why, then, did not the subtle statesmen take the wisest course, and make their court to the queen by interceding for her pardon? After all the provocation of the king by the queen's disobedience, it was still possible that a man who admired her beauty, and had provoked her transgression, might not instantly put it out of his power to forgive her. She might have been disgraced in such a way as not to prevent her restoration, on repentance. Such a bold step in the ministers of a despot is certainly remarkable. But whatever might influence them, *God had determined* their counsel as the means of fulfilling His own.

That the king should subject her to a temporary degradation or disgrace, even though his own improper command was the occasion in her transgression, is very natural; but that, for the cold-hearted purposes of setting an example to the wives of the empire, he could consent to give up forever one whom he so much admired, discovers more stoicism than is generally to be found in absolute monarchs. Their treatment of their wives is usually more influenced by passion than by a view to public good. In the heat of his fury it would have been less strange that he should have given orders for her death, than he should divorce her for an example to the wives of his subjects. Yet, to the frigid morality of his wise men does this Eastern sensualist sacrifice his beautiful queen. By a harsh decree she is divorced forever. But this great feat, this capricious command, this imprudent disobedience, this rash advice, this unfeeling consent, this sacrifice of affection to policy, this harsh decree, are all necessary in the plans of Providence. Vashti must be removed, that Esther may be exalted to her place.—Alex Carson, 1853.

The Law and a Christian

The law was given *twice* upon Mount Sinai, but the appearance of the Lord, when He gave it the second time, was wonderfully different from that of His, when at first He delivered it to Israel.

1. When He gave it the first time, He caused His terror and severity to appear before Moses, to the shaking of his soul, and the dismaying of Israel. But when He gave it the second time, He caused all His goodness to pass before Moses, to the comfort of his conscience, and the bowing of his heart.

2. When He gave it the first time, it was with thunderings and lightnings, with blackness and darkness, with flame and smoke, and a tearing sound of the trumpet. But when He gave it the second time, it was a proclamation of His name to be merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgressions and sins.

3. When He gave it the first time, Moses was called to go up to receive it through the fire, which made him exceedingly to fear and quake. But when he went to receive it the second time, he was laid in a cleft of the rock.

4. From all which I gather, that, though as to the *matter* of the law, both as to its being given the first time, and the second, it binds the unbeliever, under the pains of eternal damnation (if he close not with Christ by faith); yet as to the *manner* of its giving at these two times, I think the first doth more principally intend its force as a covenant of works, not at all respecting the Lord Jesus; but this second time (at least in the manner of its being given) not respecting such a covenant, but rather as *a rule or directory*, to those who already are found in the cleft of the rock, Christ; for the saint himself, though he be without law to God, as it is considered the first or old covenant, yet even he is not without law to Him as considered under grace, nor without law to God, but under the law to Christ.

5. Though therefore it be sad with the unbeliever, because he only and wholly standeth under the law as it is given in fire, in smoke, in blackness and darkness, and thunder, all which threatening him with eternal ruin if he fulfill not the utmost tittle thereof; yet the believer stands to the law under no such consideration, neither is he so at all to hear or regard it; for he is now removed from thence to the blessed mountain of Zion, to grace and forgiveness of sins; he is now, I say, by faith in the Lord Jesus, shrouded under so perfect and blessed a righteousness, that this thundering law of Mount Sinai cannot find the least fault or diminution therein, but rather approveth and alloweth thereof, either when or wherever it find it. This is called the righteousness of God without the law, and is also said to be witnessed by both the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.

6. Wherefore, whenever thou who believest in Jesus doth hear the law in its thundering and lightning fits, as if it would burn up Heaven and earth, then say thou, I am free from this law, these thunderings have nothing to do with my soul; nay, even this law, while it thus thundereth and roareth, it doth both allow and approve of my righteousness. I know that Hagar would sometimes be domineering and high even in Sarah's house, and against her; but this she is not to be suffered to do, nay, though Sarah herself be barren; wherefore serve it also as Sarah served her, and expel her out of thy house. My meaning is, when this law with its thunderings and threatenings doth attempt to lay hold on thy conscience, shut it out with a promise of grace; cry, The inn is taken up already, the Lord Jesus is here entertained, and here is no room for the law. Indeed if it will be content with

being my informer, and so lovingly leave off to judge me, I will be content, it shall be my sight, I will also delight therein; but, otherwise, I being now made upright without, and that too with that righteousness which this law speaks well of and approveth, I may not, will not, cannot, dare not, make it my saviour and judge, nor suffer it to set up its government in my conscience; for by so doing I fall from grace, and Jesus Christ doth profit me nothing.

7. Thus, therefore, the soul that is married to Him that is raised up from the dead, both may and ought to deal with this law of God; yea, it doth greatly dishonour its Lord, and refuse its Gospel privileges, if at any time it otherwise doth whatever it seeth or feels. The law hath power over the wife so long as her husband liveth, but if her husband be dead she is freed from that law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she be married to another man. Indeed, so long as thou art alive to sin, and to thy righteousness, which is of the law, so long thou hast them for thy husband, and they must reign over thee. But when once they are become dead unto thee, as they then most certainly will, when thou closest with the Lord Jesus Christ; then, I say, thy former husbands have no more to meddle with thee, thou are freed from their law. Set the case of a woman being cast into prison for a debt of one hundred pounds; if after this, she marry, yea, though while she is in the jailer's hand, in the same day that she is joined to her husband, her debt is all become his; yea, and the law also, that arrested and imprisoned this woman, as freely tells her, Go; and she is freed, saith Paul, from that. The sum, then, of what hath been said is this: The Christian hath now nothing to do with the law *as it thundereth* and burneth on Sinai, or as it bindeth the conscience *to wrath* and the displeasure of God for sin, for, from its *thus* appearing, it is freed by faith in Christ. Yet *it is to have regard thereto* and to count it holy, just, and good, which, that it may do, it is always, when it seeth or regards it, to remember that He who giveth it to us is "merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."—John Bunyan, 1660.

We earnestly commend this brief article to the thoughtful attention of each reader. It not only illustrates what was the uniform teaching of the Puritans on this important subject—from which our moderns have so deplorably departed; but it also calls attention to a vitally important distinction. The twofold giving of the Law by God *to His people*, adumbrated His giving it to them first *in Adam*, when its fearful threat, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shall surely die" was suspended over them—symbolized by the thunders and lightnings at Sinai. And second, it being given to them *in Christ*, who now administers it faithfully and righteously, as the gracious and merciful Mediator.—A.W.P.

God's Jewels

“And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels” (Mal. 3:17). To whom is God here referring? who are the favoured ones whom He terms His “jewels”? The previous verse tells us, “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name.” A twofold description is there given by which the people of God may be identified: they have a reverential awe and profound respect of God’s majesty and authority; they have a deep love and adoration for Him—evidenced by their thinking upon His name.

It almost surprises one to learn that the great and self-sufficient God has “jewels,” but our surprise increases to astonishment when we learn that these “jewels” are living creatures, and astonishment gives place to overwhelming amazement when we discover that these living creatures are fallen and depraved sinners redeemed from among the children of men. Truly, naught but Divine grace would ever liken such wretched worms of the dust unto precious stones. Yet that is the very thing which we find God doing in our text. It is not the unfallen angels, nor the holy seraphim and exalted cherubims who are spoken of as Jehovah’s valued treasure, but lost and ruined sinners saved by amazing grace. Saints are likened unto wheat, fishes, trees, stars, but here to “jewels”; the figure is a deeply interesting and instructive one.

In Isaiah 55:8-9 we read, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” This is seen in the difference between human and Divine estimates of relative values. The world’s standard of worth is very different from that of God’s. Who are the immortals of human history? Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon: soldiers and warriors. Among statesmen and politicians we may mention Gladstone and Lincoln: among dramatists, Goethe and Shakespeare. Those were great in the eyes of earth; but who were great in the eyes of Heaven? For the most part they were unknown down here. They were humble and lowly, insignificant in the affairs of the world. Their names were never chronicled among men; *but they were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life!*

It is noteworthy that our text is found in the book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, which corresponds in many respects with the character of our days, as we seem to be nearing the end of the New Testament era. As the late C. H. Spurgeon pointed out, “These words were spoken in a very graceless age, when religion was peculiarly distasteful to men; when they scoffed at God’s altar, and said of His service, ‘What a weariness it is’! and scornfully asked, ‘What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance’? Yet even those dark nights were not uncheered by bright stars. Though the house of national worship was often deserted, there were secret conventicles of those who ‘feared the Lord,’ and who ‘spake often one to another,’ and our God, who regards quality more than quantity, had respect to these elect twos and threes. He ‘hearkened and heard,’ and so approved of that which He heard that He takes notes of it, and declared that He will publish it. ‘A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name’! Yea, and He valued so much these hidden ones that He called them His ‘jewels,’ and declared in the great day when He should gather together His retinue, His regalia, the peculiar treasure of kings, He would look upon these hidden ones as being more priceless than emeralds, rubies, or pearls.”

So it is now when all corporate testimony has broken down, when Christendom is in spiritual ruins. Many of God's dear children no longer have the privilege of church fellowship, for they dare not attend the modern "synagogues of Satan." But some of them still have the joy of meeting with little groups of fellow pilgrims, seeking to strengthen one another's hands as they journey through this wilderness scene. But there are others of God's "scattered" (John 11:52) saints, who are cut off from practically all (*real* Christian fellowship), isolated ones, who have to mourn with David, "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Psa. 102:7). Yet, though they can no longer "speak often one to another," they still have the holy and blessed privilege of *thinking upon* that Name which is above every name. These, too, shall be numbered among His precious treasure in the day when He shall "make up" His "jewels."

Let us now endeavour to ponder this beautiful figure, and reverently enquire why the Lord has likened His people to "jewels." 1. *Because of their inestimable value in His sight.* This is an exceedingly hard thing for the Christian to really grasp, for he feels such a wretched and worthless creature in himself. That the Lord of Glory should deem *him* of any consequence is difficult to conceive, that He regards him as of great worth "passeth knowledge." Yet so it is. The Scriptures are very plain on this point. They declare, "For the LORD'S portion is His people" (Deut. 32:9). They speak of, "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). The Lord Jesus likens His Church unto "one pearl of great price," so that He "went and sold all that He had, and bought it" (Matt. 13:46).

From the remotest antiquity men have thought much of precious stones, and almost fabulous prices have been paid for them. With great ardour, and toil do men hunt after gold, but with even greater eagerness and labour will they seek the diamond. Hundreds of men will labour for a whole year in one of the diamond mines of Africa, and the entire result of their efforts may be held in the palm of your hand. Princes have been known to barter their estates in order to obtain some gem of peculiar brilliance and rare excellence. More desirable still are His saints in the esteem of the Lord Jesus. The value of a thing in the eyes of its possessor may be gauged by the price he was willing to pay for it. So valuable was the Church unto Christ that He gave *Himself* for it, and shed His "precious blood" to purchase it for Himself. Thus, the saints are likened unto "jewels" because of the great value which the Lord places upon them.

2. *Because of their Divine creation.* "A jewel is the production of God. Diamonds have been burned, and other jewels have been resolved into their elements; but, after the most laborious attempts, no chemist has yet been able to make a diamond. Men can cut the Gordian knot, but they cannot tie it again. Lives have been wasted in attempts to produce precious stones, but the discovery is still unmade; they are the secret productions of God's own skill, and chemists fail to tell how they are produced, then though they know their elements. So the world thinks it knows what a Christian is, but it cannot make one. All the wit in the world put together could not find out the secret of the heaven-born life; and all the sacraments, vestments, priests, prayers, and paraphernalia of Popery cannot create a Christian. The Lord alone can create a child of grace, and a Christian is as much a miracle as was Lazarus when he rose from the tomb. It is as great a work of Deity to create a believer as it is to create a world" (C.H. Spurgeon).

This is the basic reason why the saints are precious unto the heart of the Lord Jesus: He regards and receives them as the Father's workmanship, the Father's gift unto Him. This comes out, again and again in that wondrous 17th Chapter of John: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which *Thou gavest Me* out of the world: Thine they were,

and Thou gavest them Me” (v. 6). “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which *Thou hast given Me*; for they are Thine” (v. 9). From all eternity Christ viewed them in the glass of God’s decrees, and before the foundations of the earth were laid His “delights were with the sons of men” (Prov. 8:31). Because the Father had, by His pre-destinating purpose, fashioned His elect as vessels “unto *honour*” (Rom. 9:21) the Son prizes them as of infinite value.

3. *Because of their rarity.* It is this, chiefly, which constitutes the value of precious stones. Were they numerous and common, found in the soil of every man’s garden, they would not be so costly, nor so highly esteemed. The number of large diamonds, called paragons, is very small; and so we read, “*Not many* wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Cor. 1:26). Possibly the disparity between diamonds and the pebbles of the brook is no greater than that which exists, numerically, between the regenerate and the unregenerate. The Lord Jesus plainly declared that God’s flock is only a “little” one (Luke 12:32), and that *few* find that narrow way that leadeth unto Life (Matt. 7:14). God had never likened His people unto “jewels” had they been nearly so numerous as is now popularly supposed.

4. *Because of their beauty.* The jewel is prized for its luster. It is the brilliance of the gem which, in a great measure, is the evidence and test of its value. It is said that the colors of jewels are the brightest known, and are the nearest approaches to the rays of the solar spectrum that have yet been discovered. See how the diamond flashes and sparkles! And yet its beauty and brilliance are not so much inherent. Examine it in a dark room, and it emits no radiance. It is simply a reflector: its glory is borrowed from the light. So it is with the saint: his comeliness is a comeliness which has been placed upon him, imputed to him. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for *He hath clothed me* with the garments of salvation, *He hath covered me* with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10).

It is very blessed to develop this aspect of our subject. To His disciples the Lord Jesus said, “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14), and why are they so? Because He could say “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The light of a Christian is a *reflected* one. That supplies the key to that little understood exhortation, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16): “so shine” that *Christ* gets all the glory; “so shine” that we make it clear and plain to all that whatever goodness or righteousness there is in us, and whatever fruits are produced by us, all is *from Christ* as the Root. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8)—yes “in the Lord”!

5. *Because of their variety.* Precious stones vary considerably both in colour and in size, kind and value, brilliance and worth. If order is Heaven’s first law, variety is certainly its second, for there is no uniformity in the ways and works of God, though there is a blessed underlying unity. So it is among gems, all are valuable, but all are not the same. There is the white diamond, the red ruby, the green emerald, the blue sapphire, the violet amethyst. Probably there is not a single ray of the spectrum which is not reflected by some of them. So it is among the saints. All are God’s children, all bear the marks of the Divine “workmanship” (Eph. 2:10), all are equally precious to Christ, but all are not alike. Beautifully was this typified of old in the breastplate of Israel’s high priest: twelve different precious stones adorned it, representing the tribes of Israel. No two of these gems were alike, but all were equally near to Aaron’s heart!

This brings before us an important aspect of the truth which we do well to ponder. What difference we perceive between Thomas and John, between Peter and Paul; yet all were the Apostles of Christ. So it is now among the saints: there is almost endless variety in their capacities, their talents, their growth, the varying graces which they manifest. No one gem reflects *all* the colours of the spectrum, and no one believer exhibits all the excellencies of Christ. As the varied rays of the spectrum are *distributed* among jewels, so the varied excellencies of Christ are distributed among His people: one is conspicuous for meekness, another for courage; one for gentleness, another for firmness; one for patience, another for love. God's people are not all alike, and never will be; and all attempts at uniformity must fail. But it matters little whether we shine with the sapphire's blue, or the emerald's green, or the ruby's red, so long as we are the Lord's on the Day when He makes up His jewels.

6. *Because of their durability.* Precious stones are one of the very few things in this world which, notwithstanding the flight of time, neither decay nor die; and thus do they strikingly adumbrate in the natural realm that eternal life which pertains to the spiritual world. Diamonds are exceedingly hard: many of them will cut glass, while they cannot be scratched with the sharpest file. Many of them will be uninjured by the most potent acid; they will endure the test of fire; they are practically imperishable. In this also they resemble the Christian, who has within him a principle which is incorruptible, undefiled, and destined to endure forever. The world has often tried to destroy God's people, but all their efforts to do so have been futile. The empty professor, the sham gem, is like a "paste" diamond: it quickly succumbs to trial; but the genuine child of God endures to the end, and shall reign with Christ forever and ever.

7. *Because of their history.* This is very striking indeed, and a separate sermon might well be devoted to enlarging thereon. First, think of *their lowly origin*. Trees grow in parks and flowers in the garden, but jewels are discovered in the mud and mire of earth. Even the lovely pearl is housed in the rough and unsightly shell of the oyster; while diamonds are found in the deep mines, in the bowels of the earth. What a parable and picture of the joint-heirs with Christ in their *natural* state! each of which has to own, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). Well did God say to Israel of old, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the *hole of the pit* whence ye are digged" (Isa. 51:1). O the lowly origin of the Christian: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock" (Psa. 40:2).

Second, consider the *cutting of them*. As the precious gem has been located and removed from its original position, the skillful fingers of the lapidary must work upon it. It has to be cut into a proper shape and many facets given to it, for in its original state it is rough and unsymmetrical. So it is with the elect of God. In their natural state they are "darkness" and quite incapable of reflecting the Light. But the Divine Lapidary, the Holy Spirit, after having sought them out, regenerates them. And what is the instrument He employs in this work? Why, the Word of God, which is "quick, and powerful, and *sharper* than any two-edged sword, *piercing* even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb. 4:12). There is the spiritual *cutting* of God's "jewels." The "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) enters the conscience, searches the heart, cuts down pride, self-will, and self-righteousness.

Third, consider the *polishing of them*. This also forms an important part of the lapidary's work: he must smooth down the rough edges, and polish each facet so that it may sparkle the more gloriously; and often that is a long and tedious process. Thus it is in the

history of the Christian. God does not take him to Glory the moment he is regenerated. No, though a spiritual life has been communicated to him, he needs to pass through many and varied experiences ere he is ripe and ready for Heaven. Ah, does not the spiritual reader perceive what we now have in mind? The reason you are still left in this world is because the Spirit has not yet finished the work of *polishing* your soul; you are not yet ready to be placed among the crown-jewels of the King. Here, then, is a comforting and heartening thought: let us seek to remind ourselves when passing through fiery trials, when smarting under chastisement, that it is part of the polishing process!

8. *Because of their glorious destiny.* “Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God” (Isa. 62:3). What marvelous words are these—for faith and hope to lay hold of, for our feeble intellects cannot grasp them! Wondrous is it to think of rough stones, which first look like small pebbles, being found in the mud and mire of earth; then cut and polished till they scintillate with a brilliancy surpassing any earthly object, and being given an honoured place in the diadem of a monarch. But infinitely more wonderful is it that poor lost sinners, saved by sovereign grace, should be among the crown-jewels of the Son of God. But He will yet “present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). Then shall He say to the Father, “The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them” (John 17:22). Then shall be fulfilled that word, “When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and *to be admired* in all them that believe” (2 Thess. 1:10).

“And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels” (Mal. 3:17). That Day has not yet arrived, but it is not far distant: “For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37). What is meant by “When I *make up* My jewels”? Is it not when the *complete* number of His redeemed are regenerated and polished? Is it not when He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, resurrect the sleeping saints and transform the living ones and rapture them *together*, so that we shall “ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17): “make up” (Mal. 3:17), “caught up” (1 Thess. 4:17)!

Our dear father, now in Heaven, once wrote us: “Earthly jewels sometimes get separated from their owner, Christ’s jewels never: ‘For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Rom. 8:38, 39). Earthly jewels are sometimes lost; Christ’s jewels never: ‘I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand’ (John 10:28). Earthly jewels are sometimes stolen: Christ’s never: ‘in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal’ (Matt. 6:20).” Are you *sure* that *you* are one of Christ’s jewels? Then seek to shine for Him now.—A.W.P.

(The above is a sermon, slightly revised, which was preached by the editor in Garden Grove, California, over twenty year ago.)

Good News

Our prayer-helpers and Christian friends will rejoice to hear that, by the abounding goodness and faithfulness of God, we were permitted to close our Magazine accounts for 1933 (on November 30) with \$95 (19 pounds sterling) to the good: the largest credit balance we have ever had in any one year: this will be carried forward to 1934. Hallelujah! Truly “the cattle upon a thousand hills” *are* the Lord’s. Every day last year we supplicated the Throne of Grace that we might have a substantial amount left after all the bills were paid, that God might be glorified and His dear people encouraged and rejoiced. We are also very happy to say that quite a number of letters are coming to hand from our readers, telling of how, in a wonderful way, the Lord has graciously shown Himself strong on *their* behalf. He never fails those who are enabled to *trust Him* fully, though sometimes He severely tries faith up to the very moment of deliverance.

We believe that the rich mercy of God unto us during 1933 was also a “token for good,” an earnest that He is about to do even greater things for us. We have long desired to reach a larger number of Christ’s starving sheep, for in the majority of places the “churches” are providing little or nothing for their souls. We are therefore praying that the Lord will now “*enlarge* our coast” (1 Chron. 4:10) by increasing the circulation of this little monthly messenger, and shall appreciate it if others are led to cooperate with us by earnest and expectant supplication in bringing this to pass.—A.W.P.

An Announcement

For sometime past we have hoped that it would please the Lord to raise up someone to print our tracts as a service unto Him, and not for personal profit. It has appeared to us that the majority of the book and tract depots are merely commercial enterprises, many of them being ready to handle almost anything which is "a good seller"; others providing the "manager" with an easy job at the expense of the gifts of hard-working people. Where such be the case, we cannot expect the blessing of God will attend in a spiritual way.

Mr. O.T. Waite, of 27 North Parker Ave., Glenolden, Pa., has already issued our 4-page tract "Repent or Perish" (for distribution among the unsaved); "Miraculously Delivered"—a message for Christians; "The Snare of Service," which is a much needed word for Martha-like souls who are attempting too much in a zeal that is not according to knowledge; and "Neglecting the Gospel," by T.S. Reade (5 cents each). He also has some nice gummed texts for sealing letters. Brother Waite is a business man, and is doing this work in his spare time. He desires no financial gain, and will use money received (D.V.) to print further tracts. Send him 50c and he will forward you an assortment of the above.—A.W.P.

(Remember, the above was written by Brother Pink in 1934!)