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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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

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STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

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THE ANOINTING OF CHRIST

The theme of our present article is inseparably connected with that of the preceding one. To connect the two, it should be pointed out that Holy Writ ascribes to our blessed Saviour a number of other precious titles which are synonymous with that of “Mediator.” Among them is that of “the Christ” or “Anointed” One. But ere considering it, let us mention several others. As Mediator, Christ meets the deep longing of Job, who lamented, “Neither is there any *daysman* betwixt us, that might lay his hands upon us *both*” (Job 9:33). As Mediator, Christ is, “surety of a better testament” (Heb 7:22). So, also, is He “an advocate with the Father” (1Jo 2:1).

Another name or title of Christ’s equivalent to “the Mediator” is that of “the messenger [Angel] of the covenant” (Mal 3:1). This opens to us a most interesting subject into which we cannot now enter at length. But there are many, many passages, both in the Old Testament and the Revelation, which cannot be understood aright unless we perceive that “the angel” or “the angel [messenger] of the LORD” has specific reference to the Son of God in His mediatorial character. For instance, Jacob speaks of “the Angel which redeemed me from all evil” (Gen 48:16). “The angel of the LORD appeared” unto Moses “in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush,” proclaiming Himself to be “the God of Abraham,” etc. (Exo 3:2, 6). In Exodus 32:34, Jehovah promised Moses, “Mine Angel shall go before thee,” which is explained in Exodus 33:14, “My presence shall go with thee.”

Another remarkable passage, which presents Christ *exercising* His mediatorial office in Old Testament times, is found in Zechariah 1:12, “Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem.” There, we behold Christ making intercession for His erring people! Another blessed Scripture is that of Revelation 8:3-4, “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden

censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." It is for the sake of Christ's merits that the prayers of saints on earth find acceptance with God in heaven.

Coming now to our immediate subject—"Christ" signifies "the Anointed" One. It is His *official* title, as "Jesus" is His *personal* name. These two titles are applied to Him as our proper and surname to us. "Jesus" is the anglicized form of Joshua, which signifies "Saviour." This name "Jesus" was given to Him by God Himself (Luk 1:31). After He was conceived, but before He was born, it was said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mat 1:21)—thus fulfilling Isaiah 49:1! By this name, His people are constantly put in mind of the great object for which the son of God became incarnate. "Christ" refers to His *official* character—"Jesus, who is called Christ" (Mat 1:16), "A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luk 2:11).

"Why was our Mediator called Christ? *Answer:* Our Mediator was called Christ because He was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure, and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability to execute the office of Prophet, Priest and King of His church, in the estate both of His humiliation and exaltation" (Westminster Catechism, 1634).

As was pointed out in a previous article, the correct translation of Proverbs 8:23 is, "I was *anointed* from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." The Speaker is the eternal Son, conversing with the Father in regard to the "everlasting covenant" (Heb 13:20). He was anointed as Mediator before the universe was created, being then invested with that office. As "a lamb without blemish and without spot," He "verily was foreordained before the world" (1Pe 1:19-20). Therefore was it that He exercised this office all through the Old Testament dispensation and therefore was it that God's elect were redeemed and taken then to heaven.

"Our Saviour is called in the Old Testament the Messiah, and in the New Testament, the Christ, and both words import that He was the Anointed One. This designation is given to Him in allusion to the rite by which persons were consecrated to their offices under the former dispensation, namely, by being anointed with oil" (John Dick, 1764-1833). The inauguration of Israel's kings to the throne was by anointing with oil (1Sa 10:1; 16:13; 2Sa 5:3; 1Ki 1:39, etc). When this was done by divine appointment, it signified two things—a deputation of our Saviour's unto the kingdom, and an ability to execute the royal function. The great emphasis which the Holy Spirit has placed upon this official designation of our Saviour's may be seen from...passages wherein He is referred to as "the Christ" (Joh 20:31), "that Christ" (Joh 6:69), "very Christ" (Act 9:22), "the Lord's Christ" (Luk 2:26), "the Christ of God" (Luk 9:20).

This official title of our Saviour's denotes three things. First, the *offices* or functions which the Son of God took for the salvation of His people. These were three in number, and each was foreshadowed of old: the prophetic (1Ki 19:16; Psa 105:15), the priestly (Lev 8:12, 30; Psa 110:4), the kingly (1Sa 10:1). Second, the right which He had to undertake those functions. He who anointed the Lord Jesus was the Father (Act 10:38), thereby appointing and authorizing Him (Heb 5:5). Thirdly, His *ability* to perform those functions

whereunto He was anointed. Therefore did He declare, “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, *because* he hath anointed me to preach,” etc. (Luk 4:18). That expression, “the Spirit of the LORD is upon me” referred to that divine endowment which had been conferred upon Him. Compare John 3:34.

The “anointing” of the Lord Jesus, then, has reference to God’s solemn appointment of His Son to the mediatorial office, and, when incarnate, furnishing Him with all the requisite qualifications. Historically, this received a threefold fulfillment. First, at His miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin (Luk 1:35), when His humanity was sanctified by the Holy Spirit and endowed with all graces—see our article on “The Work of the Spirit in the Saviour,” September 1929. Second, at His baptism, for entrance upon His public ministry (Mat 3:16; Act 10:38). The Holy Spirit descending from the opened heaven, resting upon Him in a visible form (in conjunction with the voice which proceeded from the excellent glory), denoted that the Father owned Him as His incarnate Son, and bestowed upon Him an abundant measure of heavenly influences. In this manner, He was *publicly* installed in His office and fitted for the discharge of His duties. Then was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 11:2-5.

The fullest and final anointing of the Mediator took place upon His ascension. Then was fulfilled that blessed word, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a righteous scepter. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Psa 45:6-7). It was at His ascension that Christ received the Spirit, not only in a greater “measure” (Joh 3:34) than any of His brethren, but also in a way wholly different from them. As some are puzzled by the expression, “thy God” in the above quotation, a word or two on it is called for.

“God, even thy God, hath anointed thee.” God was Christ’s “God,” first, in respect of His human nature, as He was made of a woman, made under the law. Second, in respect of His whole person, God and man, as He was designated unto the whole work of mediation. So Christ owned Himself—Matthew 27:46; John 20:17. It is in this last sense that God is here said to be Christ’s “God.” That is, His God in especial covenant, as He was appointed to be the Head and King of His Church, for therein did the Father undertake to be with Him, stand by Him, convey Him through His work, and in the end, to crown Him with glory—cf. Isaiah 49:1-11; 50:4-7!

“Hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Psa 45:7). The general reference is to the exceeding high honours which were bestowed upon Christ when He had so gloriously completed His work on earth, namely, the exalting of Him *above* all created beings and the seating of Him at God’s right hand. More specifically, the allusion is to what is mentioned in Acts 2:33, when He “received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,” which He shed forth on His ministers and people—cf. Revelation 3:1. Christ is still exercising His mediatorial office, for He has gone into heaven “now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24). It only remains to add that, by virtue of the mystical and spiritual union which exists between Christ and His people, they too (His “fellows”) are “anointed” (2Co 1:21) with the Spirit, and, therefore, are denominated “*Christians*” (1Pe 4:16). Yea, the Church and its Head together, as a whole, is termed “Christ” (1Co 12:12; Gal 3:16).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

50. Access to God (10:19-23)

The verses which are now to engage our attention contain the apostle's transition from the doctrinal to the practical part of the epistle, for privileges and duties are never to be separated. Having at great length discoursed upon the priestly office of Christ in the foregoing part of the epistle, he now sums up in a few words the scope and substance of all he had been saying (Heb 10:19-21), and then draws the plain inference from the whole (Heb 10:22). Like a wise master builder, he first digs till he comes to the foundation, and then calls himself and others to build upon it with confidence. Having demonstrated the vast superiority of Christianity over Judaism, the apostle now exhorts his Christian readers to avail themselves of all their blessed advantages and enjoy the great privileges which have been conferred upon them.

The apostle's great argument is concluded, and the result is placed before us in a very short summary. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, and we have, in the heavenly sanctuary, a great Priest over the house of God. All difficulties have been removed, perfectly and forever. We have access, and He, who is the way, is also the end of the way. He is even now our great Priest, interceding for us, and our all-sufficient Mediator, providing us with every needful help.

“On this foundation rests a threefold exhortation. 1. Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith. 2. Let us hold fast the profession of hope without wavering. 3. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, labouring and waiting together, and helping one another in the unity of brethren. Faith, hope, and love—this is the threefold result of Christ's entrance into heaven, spiritually discerned. A believing, hoping, and loving attitude of heart corresponds to the new covenant revelation of divine grace” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891).

“In these words, the apostle enters on the last part of the epistle, which is wholly hortatory. For though there be some occasional intermixtures of doctrine consonant to those which are insisted on before, yet the professed design of the whole remainder of the epistle is to propose to, and press on the Hebrews such duties of various sorts, as the truths he had insisted on, do direct unto, and make necessary to all that believe. And in all his exhortations, there is a mixture of the *ground* of the duties exhorted to, of their *necessity*, and of the *privilege* which we have in being admitted to them, and accepted with them, all taken from the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, with the effects of them, and the benefits which we receive thereby” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

The same order of truth may be clearly seen in other epistles of the apostle Paul. In Romans, the first eleven chapters are devoted to doctrinal exposition, the next four being practical, setting forth the Christian's duties. See Romans 12:1. Likewise in Ephesians, the

first three chapters set forth the sovereign grace of God, the last three the Christian's responsibilities. See Ephesians 4:1. From this, the teacher and preacher may gather important instruction, showing him *how to* handle the word, so that the whole man may be edified. The understanding needs to be enlightened, the conscience searched and comforted, the heart inflamed, the will moved, the affections well ordered. Nothing but doctrine will produce a cold and conceited people, nothing but exhortation, a discouraged and ill-instructed people.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb 10:19). "The preceding part of this epistle has been chiefly occupied with stating, proving, and illustrating some of the grand peculiarities of Christian doctrine, and the remaining part of it is entirely devoted to an injunction and enforcement of those duties which naturally result from the foregoing statements. The paragraph (verses 19-23) obviously consists of two parts—a statement of principles, which are taken for granted as having been fully proved, and an injunction of duties grounded on the admission of these principles" (John Brown, 1722-1787).

The great privilege which is here announced unto Christians is that they may draw near unto God as accepted worshippers. This privilege is presented under a recapitulation of the principal points which the apostle had been treating of, namely, first, Christians have liberty to enter the presence of God (Heb 10:19). Second, a way has been prepared for them so to do (Heb 10:20). Third, a Guide is provided to direct them in that way (Heb 10:21). These three points are here amplified by showing the nature of this "liberty." It is with "boldness," to enter the presence of God, and that by virtue of Christ's blood. The "way" is described as a "new" and "living" one, and it is ready for our use because Christ has "consecrated" it. The "Guide" is presented by His function, "priest"; His dignity, "great"; His authority, "over the house of God."

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." To "enter into the holiest" is, as verse 22 shows, to "draw near" unto God in Christ, for "No one cometh unto the Father, but by him" (Joh 14:6). The "holiest" here is only another name for heaven, the dwelling place of God, being designated so in this instance because the holy of holies in the tabernacle and the temple was the type thereof. This is established by what was before us in Hebrews 9:24, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself." It is most blessed to link with Hebrews 10:19 what is said in Hebrews 9:12, "by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place." The title of the members of His body for entering in the Sanctuary on high is the same as that of their Head's!

The boldness to "enter into the holiest," which is spoken of in our text, is not to be limited to the Christian's going to heaven at death or at the return of the Saviour, but is to be understood as referring to that access unto God in spirit, and by faith, which he now has. Here again, we see the tremendous contrast from the conditions obtaining under the old and the new covenants. Under Judaism as such, the Israelites were rigidly excluded from drawing nigh unto Jehovah. His dwelling place was sealed against them. Nay, even the Levites, privileged as they were to minister in the tabernacle, were barred from the holy of holies. But now, the right has been accorded unto all who partake of the blessings of the

new covenant, to enjoy free access unto God, to draw near unto His throne as supplicants, to enter His temple as worshippers, to sit at His table as happy children.

Most blessedly was this set forth by Christ in the close of that remarkable parable in Luke 15. There, we find the prodigal—having “come to himself” (verse 17)—saying, “I will arise and *go to my Father.*” (verse 18) He arose and went, and *where* do we find him? Outside the door, or looking in at the window? No, but *inside* the house. Sovereign grace had given him boldness to “enter.” And why not? Having confessed his sins, he had received the “kiss” of reconciliation, and the “best robe” had been placed upon him, and thus, he was *fitted* to enjoy the Father’s house. In perfect accord with our Lord’s teaching in that parable, we have been told here in Hebrews 10:14, that “by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified,” and because of this, God has put His laws into their hearts, written them upon their minds, and avowed that their sins and iniquities He would “remember no more.”

Here, then, is the force of the “therefore” in our present verse. Inasmuch as Christ’s satisfaction has removed every legal obstacle, and inasmuch as the work of the Spirit in the Christian has made him “*meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*” (Col 1:12), there is not only nothing to hinder, but every reason and motive to induce us *to* draw near unto God and pour out our hearts before Him in thanksgiving, praise, and worship. In Hebrews 4:16, we are invited to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may *obtain mercy*, and find grace to help in time of need.” But here, in Hebrews 10:19-22, it is *worship* which is more specifically in view—entrance into “the holiest,” which was the place of worship and communion. See Numbers 7:89.

A further word of explanation needs to be given on the term “boldness.” Saphir rightly pointed out that this expression “must be understood here objectively, not subjectively, else the subsequent exhortation would be meaningless.” In other words, the reference is to something outside ourselves and not to a condition of heart. Literally, the Greek signifies, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entrance into the holiest,” and hence, some have rendered it “the *right* of entrance.” Most probably the word is designed to point a double contrast from conditions under the old covenant. Those under it had a legal prohibition against entering the sacred abode of Jehovah, but Christians have a perfect title to do so. Again, those under Judaism were *afraid* to do so, whereas faith now perceives that we may come to God with the fullest assurance, because He has accepted us “in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). There is no valid reason why we should hesitate to draw near unto our Father in perfect freedom of spirit.

“By the blood of Jesus.” This is the meritorious cause which procures the Christian’s right of entrance into the “holiest”—the place where all the tokens of God’s grace and glory are displayed (Heb 9:3-4). The blood of the Jewish sacrifices did not and could not obtain such liberty of access into the immediate presence of God. The blood of Jesus *has* done so, both in respect unto God as an oblation, and in respect unto the consciences of believers by its application. As an oblation or sacrifice, the atonement of Christ has removed every legal obstacle between God and believers. It fulfilled the demands of His law, removed its curse, and broke down the “middle wall of partition”—in token whereof, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, when the Saviour expired. So, too, the Holy Spirit has so applied the efficacy of the blood to the consciences

of Christians that they are delivered from a sense of guilt, freed from their dread of God, and enabled to approach Him in a spirit of liberty.

“By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh” (Heb 10:20). This presents to us the second inducement and encouragement for Christians to avail themselves and make use of the unspeakable privilege which Christ has secured for them. In order to understand these verses, it is necessary to bear in mind that New Testament privileges are here expressed in the Old Testament dialect. The highest privilege of fallen man is to have access unto the presence of God, his offended Lord and Sovereign. The only way of approach is through Christ, of whom the tabernacle (and the temple) was an illustrious type. In allusion to those figures, Christ is here presented to our faith in a threefold view.

First, as a *gate* or door, by which we enter into the holiest. No sooner had Adam sinned, than the door of access to the majesty of God was bolted against him and all his posterity, the cherubim with the flaming sword standing in his way (Gen 3:24). But now the flaming sword of justice, being quenched in the blood of the Surety (Zec 13:7), the door of access is again wide open. The infinite wisdom of God has devised a way how His “banished” may be brought home again to His presence (2Sa 14:14), namely, through the satisfaction of Christ.

Second, to encourage us in our approaches to God in Christ, He is also presented to us under the figure of “a new and living way, which he hath consecrated *for us*” (Heb 10:20). “Having told us that we have ‘an entrance into the holiest,’ he now declares what the way is whereby we may do so. The only way into the holiest under the tabernacle was a passage with blood through the sanctuary, and then a turning aside of the vail. But the whole church was forbidden the use of this way, and it was appointed for no other end but typically, that in due time, there should be a way opened unto believers into the presence of God, which was not yet prepared. And this the apostle describes. 1. From the preparation of it—‘which he hath consecrated.’ 2. From the properties of it—it was a ‘new and living way.’ 3. From the tendency of it, which he expresseth, first, typically, or with respect unto the old way under the tabernacle—it was ‘through the vail.’ Secondly, in an exposition of that type—‘that is, his flesh.’ In the whole, there is a description of the exercise of faith in our access unto God by Christ Jesus” (John Owen).

In the previous verse, it was declared that heaven has been opened unto the people of God. But here, Christ is set forth more as the antitype of that “ladder” (Gen 28:12; Joh 1:51), which, being set up on earth, reaches to heaven. In this respect, Christ is styled “the way, the truth, and the life” (Joh 14:6), for He is the only true “way” which conducts unto God. That “way” is variously referred to in Scripture as the “way of life” (Pro 10:17), the “way of holiness” (Isa 35:8), the “good way” (Jer 6:16), the “way of peace” (Luk 1:79), the “way of salvation” (Act 16:17). All of these refer to the same thing, namely, the only path unto heaven. Christ Himself is that “way” in a twofold sense. First, when the heart turns away from every other object which competes for the first place in its affections, abandons all confidence in its own righteousness, and lays hold of the Saviour. Second, when grace is diligently sought to take Christ as our Exemplar, following “*his steps*” in the path of unreserved and joyful obedience to God.

The “way” to God is here said to be “a new and living” one. The word for “new” is really “newly slain,” for the simple verb, “occido,” from which it is compounded, signifies “to slay.” The avenue of approach to God has been opened unto us because Christ was put to death in this way. But this word “new” *is not* to be taken absolutely, as though this “way” had no existence previously to the death of Christ, for all the Old Testament saints had passed along it, too. No, it was neither completely “new” as to its contrivance, revelation, or use. Why then is it called “new”? In distinction from the old way of life under the covenant of works, in keeping with the new covenant, because it was now only made fully manifest (Eph 3:5), and because of its perennial vigour—it will never grow old.

This “way” unto God is also said to be a “living” one, and this for at least three reasons. First, in opposition unto the way to God under Judaism, which was by the *death* of an animal, and would be the cause of death unto any who used it, excepting the high priest. Second, because of its perpetual efficacy. It is not a lifeless thing, but has a spiritual and vital power in our access to God. Third, because of its effect. It leads to life and effectually brings us thereunto. “It is called a living way because all that symbolizes Christ must be represented as possessing vitality. Thus, we read of Him as the living stone, the living bread, etc.” (Adolph Saphir). Probably this epithet also looks to Christ’s resurrection. Though slain, the grave could not hold Him. He is now “alive for ever more” (Rev 1:18), and by working in His people repentance, faith, and obedience, conducts them safely through unto life everlasting.

This new and living way unto God has been “consecrated for us” by Christ. “It is a path consecrated by Him for the service and salvation of man—a way of access to the eternal sanctuary for the sinner which has been set apart by the Redeemer for this service of men” (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870). As Christ Himself is the “way,” the meaning would be, that He has dedicated Himself for the use of sinners in their dealings with God—“For their sakes I sanctify myself” (Joh 17:19). As the “way” is also to be regarded as the path which we are called upon to follow through this world as we journey to heaven, Christ has “consecrated” or fitted it for our use by leaving us an example that we should follow His steps—“When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth *before* them” (Joh 10:4).

“The phrase ‘consecrated for us’ giveth us to understand that Christ hath made the way to heaven fit for us, and this, by His three offices. First, as a Priest, He hath truly dedicated it, and that, by His own blood, as by the blood of sacrifices things were consecrated under the law. Christ, by His blood, has taken away our sins, which made the way to heaven impassible. Second, as a Prophet, He hath revealed and made known this way to us. This He did while He was on earth, by Himself, and since His taking into heaven, He hath done it by His ministers (Eph 4:11). Third, as a King, He causes the way to be laid out, fenced in, and made common for all His people, so as it may well be styled the King’s highway” (William Gouge, 1575-1653).

“Through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” It is through the humanity of Christ that the way to heaven has been opened, renewed, and consecrated. But prior to His death, the very life which was lived by the man, Christ Jesus, only served to emphasize the awful distance which sinners were from God, just as the beautiful veil in the tabernacle shut out the Israelite from His presence. Moreover, the humanity of Christ was a sinbearing one, for the iniquities of His people had all been imputed to Him. While, then, the flesh of Christ was

uncrucified, proof was before the eyes of men that the curse was not abolished. As long as He tabernacled in this world, it was evident that sin was not yet put away. The vail must be rent, Christ must die, before access to God was possible. When God rent the vail of the temple, clear intimation was given that every hindrance had been removed, and that the way was opened into His presence.

“And having an high priest over the house of God” (Heb 10:21). Here is the third great privilege of the Christian, the third inducement which is presented to him for approaching unto God, the third character in which Christ is presented unto faith. Whereas it might be objected that, though the door be opened and a new and living way consecrated, yet, we are too impotent to walk therein, or too sinful to enter into the holiest. Therefore, to obviate this, Christ is now set forth as Priest over the house of God. O what encouragement is here! As Priest, Christ is “ordained *for* men in things pertaining to God” (Heb 5:1). He is a living Saviour within the vail, interceding for His people, maintaining their interest before the Father.

“And having an high priest over the house of God.” The opening, “And,” shows that the contents of this verse form a link in the chain begun in verse 19, so that they furnish a further ground to help us in approaching unto God. The next word, “having,” while not in the Greek, is obviously understood, and as the principal verb (needed to complete the sentence) is fetched from verse 19. The adjective should be rendered “great” and not “high.” It is not a relative term, in comparison with other priests, but an absolute one, denoting Christ’s dignity and excellency. He is “great” in His person, in His worthiness, in His position, in His power, in His compassion.

To show for whom in particular Christ is the great Priest, it is here added, “over the house of God.” “The apostle doth not here consider the sacrifice of Christ, but what He is and doth after His sacrifice, now that He is exalted in heaven. For this was the second part of the office of the high priest. The first was to offer sacrifice for the people, the other was to take the oversight of the house of God. See Zechariah 3:6-7—Joshua being an eminent type of Christ” (John Owen). The “house of God” represents the whole family of God both of heaven and earth. Compare 3:7. The church here below is what is first comprised in this expression, for it is unto it that this encouragement is given, and unto whom this motive of drawing nigh is proposed. But, as it is in the heavenly sanctuary that Christ now ministers, and into which we enter by our prayers and spiritual worship, so the “house of God” includes both the church militant and the church triumphant.

When it is said that Christ is “*over* the house of God,” it is His headship, lordship, authority, which is in view. The Lord Christ presides over the persons, duties, and worship of believers. In that, all their acceptable worship is of His appointment. In that, He assists the worshippers by His Spirit for the performance of every duty. In that, He directs the government of the church, ordains its officers, and administers its laws. In that, He makes their service acceptable with God. He is King in Zion, wielding the scepter, protecting the interests of His church, and, according to His pleasure, overthrowing its enemies. It is the Lord who adds to the church those who are to be saved. He is the alone Head, and, as the wife is to be subject to her husband in all things, so the members of Christ’s mystical body are to own no other Lord. From Him we are to take our orders. Unto Him we must yet render an account.

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). Having described the threefold privilege which Christians have been granted, the apostle now points out the threefold duty which is entailed. The first of which is here in view, namely, to enter the holiest, to draw near unto God as joyful worshippers. To “draw near” unto God is a sacerdotal act, common to all the saints, who are made priests unto God (Rev 1:6). The Greek word expressing the whole performance of all divine worship, approaching unto the Most High to present their praises and petitions, both publicly and privately.

“To draw near to God is an act of the heart or mind, whereby the soul, under the influence of the Spirit, sweetly and irresistibly returns to God in Christ as its only center of rest. There is a constant improvement of the merit and mediation of Christ in every address made to the Majesty on High. The believer, as it were, fixes himself in the cleft of the Rock of ages. He gets into the secret place of the blessed stair, by which we ascend unto heaven. And then, he lifts up his voice in drawing near to God, by the new and living way. He says with David, ‘I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy’ (Psa 43:4). And if God hides His face, the soul will wait, and bode good at His hand, saying, ‘Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him: He will command his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night, his song shall be with me’ (Psa 42:8). And if the Lord smiles and grants an answer of peace, he will not ascribe his success to his own faith or fervour, but unto Christ alone” (Condensed from Ebenezer Erskine, 1680-1754).

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22). This is the requisite manner in which we must approach unto God. It is not sufficient to assume a reverent posture of body, or worship with our lips only. Nor is God honoured when we give way to unbelief. A “true heart” is opposed to a double, doubting, distrustful, and hypocritical heart. All dissimulation is to be avoided in our dealings with Him who “trieth the hearts and the reins” (Psa 7:9) and “whose eyes are like a flame of fire” (Rev 2:18).

God desireth truth in the inward parts, and therefore, “Son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26) is His first demand upon us. Nothing short of this will ever satisfy Him. But more—there must be “a true heart”—a sincere, genuine, honest desire and determination to render unto Him that which is His due. We cannot impose upon Him. Beautiful language designed for the ears of men, or emotional earnestness which is only for effect, does not deceive God. “God is spirit: and they that worship him *must* worship him in spirit and in truth” (Joh 4:24). How this condemns those who rest satisfied with the mere outward performance of duty, and those who are content to substitute an imposing ritual for real heart dealings with God! O to be able to say with David, “With my whole heart have I sought thee” (Psa 119:10).

“In full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22)—which means, negatively, without doubting or wavering—positively, with unshaken confidence—not in myself, nor in my faith, but in the merits of Christ, as giving the unquestionable title to draw near unto the thrice holy God. “Full assurance of faith” points to the heart resting and relying upon the absolute sufficiency of the blood of Christ which was shed for my sins, and the efficacy of His present intercession to maintain my standing before God. Faith looks away from self, and eyes the great Priest, who takes my feeble praise or petitions, and, purifying and perfuming

them with His own sweet incense (Rev 8:3-4), renders them acceptable to God. But let not Satan deter any timid child of God from drawing near unto Him because fearful that he neither possesses a “true heart” or “full assurance of faith.” No, if he cannot consciously come *with* them, then, let him earnestly come unto the throne of grace *for* them.

“Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Here we have a description of the characters of those who are qualified or fitted to enter the holiest. A twofold preparation is required in order to draw near unto God. The individual must have been both justified and sanctified. Here, those two divine blessings are referred to under the typical terms which were obtained during the old covenant.

“Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” The Jewish cleansing or “sprinkling” with blood related only to that which was external, and could not make the conscience perfect (Heb 9:9). But the sacrifice of Christ was designed to give peace to the troubled mind and confidence before God. An “evil conscience” is one that accuses of guilt and oppresses because of unpardoned sin. It is by the exercise of faith in the sufficiency of the atoning blood of Christ—the Spirit applying experimentally its efficacious virtue—the conscience is purged. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God” (Rom 5:1). We are freed from a sense of condemnation and the troubled heart rests in Christ.

“And our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). This figurative language is an allusion to the cleansing of the priests when they were consecrated to the service of God (Exo 29:4). The antitypical fulfillment of this is defined in Titus 3:5, as “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” But here, the emphasis is thrown on the *outward* effects of regeneration upon the daily life of the believer. We need both an internal and an external purification. Therefore are we exhorted, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1). The sanctity of the body is emphatically enjoined in Scripture (Rom 12:1; 1Co 6:16, 20).

The whole of this 22nd verse contains most important teaching on the practical side of communion with God. While the first reference in the cleansing of the conscience and the washing of the body be to the initial experience of the Christian at his new birth, yet, they are by no means to be limited thereto. There is a constant cleansing needed, if we are to consciously draw near to the holy God. Daily do we need to confess our sins that we may be daily pardoned and “cleansed from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). An uneasy conscience is as real a barrier to fellowship with Jehovah as ceremonial defilement was to a Jew. So too, our walk needs to be incessantly washed with the water of the Word (Joh 13). The Levitical priests were not only washed at the time of induction into their holy office, but were required to wash their hands and feet *every time* they entered the sacred sanctuary (Exo 30:19-20).

It is just at this very point that there is so much sad failure today. There is so little exercise of heart before God. So feeble a realization of His high and holy requirements. So much attempting to rush into His presence without any previous preparation. “Due preparation, by *fresh* applications of our souls unto the efficacy of the blood of Christ for the purification of our hearts, that we may be meet to draw nigh to God, is required of us. This, the apostle hath special respect to, and the want of it is the bane of public worship. Where this is not, there is no due reverence of God, no sanctification of His name, nor any benefit to be expected unto our own souls” (John Owen).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

2. *His Anointing*

In our last article, we called attention to the time in which David's lot was cast. The spirituality of Israel had indeed fallen to a low ebb. The law of God was no longer heeded, for "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jdg 21:25). The terrible failure of the priesthood stands out clearly in the character of Eli's sons (1Sa 2:12). The one, then on the throne, was such a worthless reprobate that it is written, "The LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel" (1Sa 15:36). The utter contempt which the people paid to the sacred tabernacle appears in the dreadful fact that it was suffered to languish in "the fields of the wood" (Psa 132:6). Well, then, might our patriarch cry out, "Help LORD, for the godly man ceaseth" (Psa 12:1).

But though the righteous government of God caused Israel to be sorely chastised for their sins, He did not completely abandon them. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Amid the prevailing darkness, Almighty power sustained, here and there, a light unto Himself. The heart of one feeble woman laid hold of Jehovah's strength. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth: and he *shall* give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his *anointed*" (1Sa 2:8-10). That was the language of true faith, and faith is something which God never disappoints. Most probably, Hannah lived not *to see* the realization of her Spirit-inspired expectations, but, in "due season," they were realized.

How encouraging and comforting ought the above to be to the little remnant of God's heritage in this "cloudy and dark day" (Eze 34:12)! To outward sight, there is now much, very much, to distract and dishearten. Truly, "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luk 21:26). But, blessed be His name, "The LORD hath his way in the whirlwind" (Nah 1:3). Faith looks beyond this scene of sin and strife, and beholds the Most High upon His throne, working "all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11). Faith lays hold of the divine promises which declare, "At evening tide it shall be light" (Zec 14:7). And, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa 59:19). In the meantime, God's grace is sufficient for the feeblest who really trusts Him.

Samuel was given by God in response to the prayers of Hannah, and who can doubt that David also was the answer to the earnest supplications of those who sought Jehovah's glory. And the Lord's ear has not grown heavy that it can no longer hear. Yet, the *actions*

of present-day professing Christians say they believe that it has! If the diligence which is now paid to the ransacking of daily newspapers in search for sensational items which are regarded as “signs of the times,” and if the time that is now given to Bible conferences was devoted to confession of sin and crying unto God to raise up a man after His own heart, whom He would use to bring back His wayward people into the paths of righteousness, it would be spent to much greater profit. Conditions are not nearly so desperate today as they were at the close of the “dark ages,” nor even as bad as they were when God raised up Whitefield. To your knees, my brethren! God’s arm is not shortened that it cannot save.

Now, not only was the raising up of David a signal demonstration of divine grace working in the midst of a people who deserved nought but untempered judgment, but, as pointed out in the preceding paper, it marked an important stage in the unfolding of God’s counsels, and a further and blessed adumbration of what had been settled upon in the everlasting covenant. This has not been sufficiently emphasized by recent writers, who, in their zeal to stress the *law* element of the Mosaic economy, have only too often overlooked the *grace* element which was exercised throughout. No “new dispensation” was inaugurated in the days of David, but a most significant advance was made in the divine foreshadowings of that kingdom over which the Messiah now rules. The Mediator is not only the arch Prophet and High Priest, but He is also the King of kings, and *this* it is which was now to be specifically typified. The *throne*, as well as the altar, belongs to Christ!

From the days of Abraham, and onwards for a thousand years, the providential dealings of God had mainly respected that people from whom the Christ was to proceed. But now, attention is focused on that particular person whence He was to spring. It pleased God, at this time, to single out the specific man of whom Christ was to come, namely, David. “David, being the ancestor and great type of Christ, his being solemnly anointed to be king over his people, that the kingdom of His church might be continued in his family forever, may in some respects be looked on as an anointing of Christ Himself. Christ was, as it were, anointed in him, and, therefore, Christ’s anointing and David’s anointing are spoken of under *one* Scripture, ‘I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him’ (Psa 89:20). And David’s throne and Christ’s are spoken of as one, ‘And the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David’ (Luk 1:32). ‘David—knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne’ (Act 2:30)” (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758).

The *typical* character of David’s person presents a most precious line of study. His very name signifies, “the Beloved.” His being an inhabitant of Bethlehem was ordained to point to that place where the Darling of God’s heart was to be born. His “beautiful countenance” (1Sa 16:13) spoke of Him who is “fairer than the children of men” (Psa 45:2). His occupation as a shepherd set forth the peculiar relation of Christ to God’s elect, and intimated the nature of His redemptive work. His faithful discharge of the pastoral office forecast the love and fidelity of the Great Shepherd. His lowly occupation before he ascended the throne prefigured the humiliation of the Saviour’s prior to His glorious exaltation. His victory over Goliath symbolized the triumph of Christ over the great enemy of God and His people. His perfecting of Israel’s worship, and instituting of a new ecclesiastical establishment, anticipated Christ as the Head and Law-giver of His church.

But it is in the *anointing* of David that we reach the most notable feature of our type. The very name or title "Christ" means "the Anointed" one and David was the first of Israel's kings who thus foreshadowed Him. True, Saul also was anointed, but he furnished a solemn contrast, being a dark foreboding of the antichrist. At an earlier period, Aaron had been anointed unto the sacerdotal office (Lev 8:12), and, at a later day, we read of Elisha the prophet being anointed (1Ki 19:16). Thus, the threefold character of the Mediator's office, as Prophet, Priest, and Potentate, was fully typed out centuries before He was openly manifested here on earth.

It is a remarkable fact that David was anointed *three* times. First, privately at Bethlehem (1Sa 16:13). Second, by the men of Judah (2Sa 2:4). Third, by the elders of Israel (2Sa 5:3). So also was that august One whom he foreshadowed. This will appear the more evident if we quote the following, "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in [or "from"] the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of *the LORD* came upon David from that day forward" (1Sa 16:13). Concerning our Lord, His humanity was miraculously conceived and sanctified by the Spirit and endowed with all graces in the virgin's womb (Luk 1:35). Second, He was publicly "anointed with the Spirit" (Act 10:38) at His baptism, and thus equipped for His ministry. See Isaiah 61:1. Third, at His ascension, He was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows" (Psa 45:6-7). It was *to this* that the anointing of David more especially pointed.

It is striking to observe that God anointed David *after* Saul, to reign in his room. He took away the crown from him who was higher in stature than any of his people, and gave it to one who resided in Bethlehem, which was "little among the thousands of Judah" (Mic 5:2). In this way was God pleased to prefigure the fact that He who, when on earth, was "despised and rejected of men," should take the kingdom from the great ones of the earth. At a later date, this was more expressly revealed, for in the divine interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel declared, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter" (Dan 2:44-45).

It was the mediatorial reign of Christ which David foreshadowed, and of which he prophesied, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter" (Psa 45:6). That "throne" is His *mediatorial* throne, and that "scepter" is the symbol of authority over His mediatorial kingdom. Those metaphors are here applied to Christ as setting forth His kingly office, together with His dignity and dominion, for the throne whereon He sits is "the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb 8:1). "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Psa 45:7). This is in contrast from the days when He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3). It denotes His triumph and exaltation. It was at His ascension that He was "crowned with glory and honour" (Psa 8:5).

Just as the priestly office and work of Christ were foreshadowed by Melchizedek and Aaron, so the kingship and kingdom of the Mediator were typed out by both David and

Solomon. It would lead us too far afield to enlarge upon this very much, but the interested reader will do well to ponder such Scriptures as 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 16:5; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-17; Acts 13:34; and Rev 3:7, 5:5. And let us not be robbed of the preciousness of these passages by the attempts of "dispensationalists" who would have us believe they belong only to the future. In many instances, their insistence of *literalizing* many portions of Holy Writ has resulted in the *carnalizing* of them, and the missing of their true and *spiritual* import. Let the reader beware of any system of interpretation which takes away from the Christian any portion of God's Word. All Scripture is "profitable for *doctrine*" (2Ti 3:16).

Between the first and the third anointings of David, or between Samuel's consecrating of him to the kingly office and his actually ascending the throne, there was a period of severe trials and testings, during which our patriarch passed through much suffering and humiliation. Here, too, we may discern the accuracy of our type. David's Son and Lord trod a path of unspeakable woe between the time when the Holy Spirit first came upon Him and His being exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on High. It is indeed blessed to read through the first book of Samuel and take note of the series of wonderful providences by which God preserved David's life until the death of Saul. But it is yet more precious to see in these so many adumbrations of what is recorded in such passages as Matthew 2:16; Luke 4:29, John 8:59; 10:31, 39, etc.

Ere passing on, let us seek to make practical application unto ourselves of what has just been referred to above. God promised Abraham a son, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen 12:3), yet he performed it not for thirty years (Gen 21:2). God anointed David king over Israel, yet, before the kingdom was actually given to him, his faith was severely tested, and he was called on to endure many sore buffetings. He was hated, persecuted, outlawed, and hunted like a partridge on the mountains (1Sa 26:20, etc.). Yet was he enabled to say, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Psa 40:1). So the Christian has been begotten to a glorious inheritance, but "We *must* through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Act 14:22). It is only "through faith and patience [we] inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12).

Another thing which God did at that time toward furthering the great work of redemption was His inspiring David to show forth Christ and His salvation in divine songs. David was endowed with the spirit of prophecy, and is called "a prophet" (Act 2:29-30) so that here, too, he was a type of Christ. "This was a great advancement that God made in this building. And the light of the Gospel, which had been gradually growing from the fall, was exceedingly increased by it. For, whereas before there was but here and there a prophecy given of Christ in a great many ages, now, here, Christ is spoken of by David abundantly, in multitudes of songs, speaking of His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, His satisfaction, intercession, His prophetic, kingly, and priestly office, His glorious benefits in this life and that which is to come, His union with the church, the blessedness of the church in Him, and the calling of the Gentiles. All these things concerning Christ and His redemption are abundantly spoken of in the book of Psalms" (Jonathan Edwards).

To quote again from this Spirit-taught man, "Now, first it was that God proceeded to choose a particular city out of all the tribes of Israel to place His name there. There is

several times mention made in the law of Moses of the children of Israel's bringing their oblations to the place which God should choose, as Deuteronomy 12:5-7. But God had never proceeded to it till now. The tabernacle and ark were never pitched, but sometimes in one place, and sometimes in another. But now God proceeded to choose Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem was never thoroughly conquered or taken out of the hands of the Jebusites till David's time. It is said in Joshua 15:63, 'As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out.' But now, David wholly subdued it, as we have an account in 2 Samuel 5. And now, God proceeded to choose that city to place His name there, as appears by David's bringing up the ark thither soon after, and, therefore, this is mentioned afterwards as the first time God proceeded to choose a city to place His name there (2Ch 6:5-6; 12:13).

"The city of Jerusalem is therefore called the *holy city*, and it was the greatest type of the church of Christ in all the Old Testament. It was redeemed by David, the captain of the hosts of Israel, out of the hands of the Jebusites to be God's city, the holy place of His rest forever where He would dwell, just as Christ, the Captain of His people's salvation, redeemed His church out of the hands of devils, to be His holy and beloved city. And, therefore, how often does the Scripture, when speaking of Christ's redemption of His church, call it by the names of *Zion and Jerusalem*! This was the city that God had appointed to be the place of the first gathering and erecting of the Christian Church after Christ's resurrection, of that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit of God on the apostles and primitive Christians, and the place whence the Gospel was to sound forth into all the world. The place of the first Christian Church, that was to be, as it were, the mother of all other churches in the world. Agreeably to that prophecy, Isaiah 2:3-4, 'Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem'" (*Work of Redemption*, Jonathan Edwards).

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

8. *The Scriptures and the Promises*

The divine promises make known the good pleasure of God's will unto His people, to bestow upon them the riches of His grace. They are the outward testifications of His heart, who from all eternity loved them and foreappointed all things for them and concerning them. In the person and work of His Son, God has made an all-sufficient provision for their complete salvation, both for time and eternity. To the intent that they might have a true, clear, and spiritual knowledge of the same, it has pleased the Lord to set it before them in the exceeding great and precious promises, which are scattered up and down in the Scriptures, as so many stars in the glorious firmament of grace. By the which, they may be assured of the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning them, and take sanctuary in Him accordingly. And through this medium, have real communion with Him in His grace and mercy at all times, no matter what their case or circumstances may be.

The divine promises are so many declarations to bestow some good or remove some ill. As such, they are a most blessed making known and manifesting of God's love to His people. There are three steps in connection with God's love. The first, His inward purpose to exercise it. The last, the real execution of that purpose. But in between, there is the gracious *making known* of that purpose to the beneficiaries of it. While love is concealed, we cannot be comforted therewith. Now God, who is "love," not only loves His own, and will not only show His love fully to them in due time, but in the interim, He will have us *informed* of His benevolent designs, that we may sweetly rest in His love, and stretch ourselves comfortably upon His sure promises. Thereby, we are able to say, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (Psa 139:17).

In 2 Peter 1:4, the divine promises are spoken of as "exceeding great and precious." As Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) pointed out, "Greatness and preciousness seldom go together, but in this instance, they are united in an exceeding degree." When Jehovah is pleased to open His mouth and reveal His heart, He does so in a manner worthy of Himself in words of superlative power and richness. To quote again the beloved London pastor, "They come from a great God. They come to great sinners. They work for us great results, and deal with great matters." While the natural intellect is capable of perceiving much of their greatness, only the renewed heart can taste their ineffable preciousness, and say with David, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psa 119:103).

1. We are profited from the Word when we perceive *to whom the promises belong*. They are available only to those who are in Christ. "For all the promises of God *in Him* [the Lord Jesus] are yea, and in him amen" (2Co 1:20). There can be no intercourse between the thrice holy God and sinful creatures except through a Mediator, who has satisfied Him on their behalf. Therefore must that Mediator receive from God all good for His people, and they must have it at the secondhand through Him. A sinner might just as well petition a tree, as call upon God for mercy while he despises and rejects Christ.

Both the promises and the things promised are made over to the Lord Jesus, and conveyed unto the saints from Him, "And this is *the* [chief and grandest] promise, that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (1Jo 2:25). And, as the same epistle tells us, "This life is in his Son" (1Jo 5:11). This being so, what good can they who are not yet in Christ have by the promises? None at all! A man out of Christ is out of the favour of God, yea, he is under His wrath. The divine threatenings, and not the promises, are *his* portion. Solemn, solemn consideration is this. Those who are "without Christ" are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and *strangers* from the covenants of *promise*, having *no* hope, and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). Only the "children of God" are "the children of the promise" (Rom 9:8). Make sure, my reader, that you are one of them.

How terrible, then, is the blindness and how great is the sin of those preachers who indiscriminately apply the divine promises unto saved and unsaved alike! They are not only taking "the children's bread" and casting it to the "dogs," but they are handling the "word of God deceitfully" (2Co 4:2), and beguiling immortal souls. Nor are they who listen to and heed them little less guilty, for God holds all responsible to search the Scriptures for themselves, and test whatever they hear or read by that unerring standard. If

they are too lazy to do so, and prefer to blindly follow their blind guides, then, their blood is on their own heads. Truth has to be "bought" (Pro 23:23), and those who are unwilling to pay the price must go without it.

2. We are profited from the Word when we *labour to make our own* the promises of God. To do this, we must first take the trouble to become really acquainted with them. It is surprising how many promises there are in Scripture which the saints know nothing about. The more so seeing that *they* are the peculiar treasure of believers, the substance of faith's heritage lying in them. True, Christians are already the recipients of wondrous blessings, yet, the capital of their wealth, the bulk of their estate, is only prospective. They have already received an "earnest," but the better part of what Christ has purchased for them lies yet in the promise of God. How diligent, then, should they be in studying His testamentary will, familiarizing themselves with the good things which the Spirit "hath revealed" (1Co 2:10), and seeking to take an inventory of their spiritual treasures.

Not only must I search the Scriptures to find out what has been made over to me by the everlasting covenant, but I need also to *meditate* upon the promise to turn them over and over in my mind, and cry unto the Lord for a spiritual understanding of them. The bee would not extract any honey from the flowers as long as he only gazed upon them. Nor will the Christian derive any real comfort and strength from the divine promises until his faith lays hold of and penetrates to the heart of them. God has given no assurance that the dilatory shall be fed, but He has declared, "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Pro 13:4). Therefore did Christ say, "*Labour* not for the meat which perisheth, but *for* that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (Joh 6:27). It is only as the promises are stored up in our minds that the Spirit brings them to remembrance at those fainting seasons when we most need them.

3. We are profited from the Word when we *recognize the blessed scope* of God's promises. "A sort of affectation prevents some Christians from seeking religion, as if its sphere lay among the commonplaces of daily life. It is to them transcendental and dreamy. Rather a creation of pious fiction than a matter of fact. They believe in God, after a fashion, for things spiritual, and for the life which is to be. But they totally forget that true godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come. To them, it would seem almost a profanation to pray about the small matters of which daily life is made up. Perhaps they will be startled if I venture to suggest that this should make them question the reality of their faith. If it cannot bring them help in little troubles of life, will it support them in the greater trials of death?" (Charles Spurgeon).

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having *promise* of the life that *now is*, and of that which is to come" (1Ti 4:8). Reader, do you really believe this, that the promises of God cover *every* aspect and particular of your present life? Or, have the "dispensationalists" deluded you into supposing that the Old Testament belongs only to the fleshly Jews, and that "*our promises*" respect spiritual and not material blessings? How many a Christian has derived comfort from, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). Well, *that is* a quotation from Joshua 1:5! So, too, 2 Corinthians 7:1 speaks of "*Having therefore these promises*," yet, one of them referred to in 2 Corinthians 6:18 is taken from the book of Leviticus!

Perhaps someone asks, "But where am I to draw the line? Which of the Old Testament promises rightfully belong unto me?" We answer, "According unto *your faith* be it unto you" (Mat 9:29). Psalm 84:11 declares, "The LORD will give grace and glory: *no* good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." *If* you are really walking "uprightly," then, you are entitled to appropriate that blessed promise and count upon the Lord giving you whatever "good thing" is truly required by you. "My God shall supply *all* your need." (Phi 4:19). If, then, there is a promise *anywhere* in His Word, which just fits your present case and situation, then make it your own as suited to your "need"! Steadfastly resist every attempt of Satan to rob you of any portion of your Father's Word.

4. We are profited from the Word when we *make a proper discrimination between* the promises of God. Many of the Lord's people are frequently guilty of spiritual theft, by which we mean that they appropriate to themselves something to which they are not entitled, but which belongs to another. "Certain covenant engagements, made with the Lord Jesus Christ, as to His elect and redeemed ones, are altogether without condition, so far as we are concerned. But many other wealthy words of the Lord contain stipulations which must be carefully regarded, or we shall not obtain the blessing. One part of my reader's diligent search must be directed toward this most important point. God will keep His promise to thee. Only see thou to it that the way in which He conditions His engagement is carefully observed of thee. Only when we fulfill the requirement of a conditional promise can we expect that promise to be fulfilled to us" (Charles Spurgeon).

Many of the divine promises are addressed to particular characters, or, more correctly speaking, to particular *graces*. For example, in Psalm 25:9, the Lord declares that He will "guide in judgment" the *meek*. But, if I am out of communion with Him, if I am following a course of self-will, if my heart is haughty, then, I am not justified in taking unto myself the comfort of this verse. Again, in John 15:7, the Lord tells us, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." But, if I am not in experimental communion with Him, if His commands are not regulating my conduct, then, my prayers will remain unanswered. While God's promises proceed from pure grace, yet, it ever needs to be remembered that grace reigns "through righteousness" (Rom 5:21), and never sets aside human responsibility. If I ignore the laws of health, I must not be surprised that sickness prevents me from enjoying many of God's temporal mercies. In like manner, if I neglect His precepts, I have only myself to blame if I fail to receive the fulfillment of many of His promises.

Let none suppose that, by His promises, God has obligated Himself to ignore the requirements of His holiness. He never exercises one of His perfections at the expense of another. And let none imagine that God would be magnifying the sacrificial work of Christ were He to bestow its fruits upon impenitent and careless souls. There is a *balance of truth* to be preserved here. Alas, that it is now so frequently lost, and that under the pretense of exalting divine grace, men are, really, "turning it into lasciviousness." How often one hears quoted, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" (Psa 50:15). But that verse begins with, "And," and the preceding clause is "*pay thy vows* unto the Most High!" Again, how frequently is, "I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psa 32:8) seized by people who pay no attention to the context! But, *that* is God's promise to one who has "acknowledged" his sin and confessed his "transgressions" unto the Lord (Psa 32:5), who

has made the Lord his “hiding place” (Psa 32:7). If, then, I have unconfessed sins on my conscience, and have leaned on the arm of flesh or sought help from my fellows, instead of waiting *only* upon God (Psa 62:5), then, I have no right to count upon the Lord’s guiding me with His eye—which necessarily presupposes that I am walking in close communion with Him, for I cannot see the eye of another while at a distance from him.

5. We are profited from the Word when we are enabled to make God’s promises *our support and stay*. This is one reason why God has given them to us. Not only to manifest His love by making known His benevolent intentions, but also to the comfort of our hearts and development of our faith. Had He so pleased, He could have bestowed His blessings without giving us notice of His purpose. The Lord might have given us all the mercies we needed without pledging Himself to do so. But, in that case, we could not have been believers. Faith without a promise would be a foot without ground to stand upon. Our tender Father planned that we should enjoy His gifts twice over. First, by faith, and, then, by fruition! By this means, He wisely weans our hearts away from the things seen and perishing, and draws them onward and upward to those things which are spiritual and eternal.

If there were no promises, not only would there be no faith, but no hope either. For what is hope, but the *expectation* of the things which God has declared He will give us? Faith looks to the Word promising, hope looks to the performance thereof. Thus it was with Abraham, “Who against hope believed in hope...and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:18-20). Thus it was with Moses, “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:26). Thus it was with Paul, “I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me” (Act 27:25). Is it so with you, dear reader? Are the promises of Him who cannot lie the resting place of your poor heart?

6. We are profited from the Word when we *patiently await the fulfillment of* God’s promises. God promised Abraham a son, but waited many years for the performance of it. Simeon had a promise that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord’s Christ (Luk 2:26), yet it was not made good to him till he had one foot in the grave. There is often a long and hard winter between the sowing time of prayer and the reaping of the answer. The Lord Jesus Himself has not yet received a full answer to the prayer He made in John 17, nineteen centuries ago. Many of the best of God’s promises to His people will not receive their richest accomplishment until they are in glory. He who has all eternity at His disposal needs not to hurry. God often makes us tarry so that patience may have “her perfect work,” yet let us not distrust Him. “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come” (Hab 2:3).

“These all died in faith, not having received the [fulfillment of the] promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them” (Heb 11:13). Here is comprehended the whole work of faith—knowledge, trust, loving adherence. The “afar off” refers to the things promised—those they “saw” with the mind, discerning the substance behind the shadow, discovering in them the wisdom and goodness of God. They were “persuaded.” They doubted not, but were assured of their participation in them and

knew they would not disappoint them. "Embraced them" expresses their delight and veneration, the heart cleaving to them with love, and cordially welcoming and entertaining them. The divine promises were the comfort and stay of their souls in all their wanderings, temptations, and sufferings.

Various ends are accomplished by God in delaying His execution of the promises. Not only is faith put to the proof, so that its genuineness may the more clearly appear, not only is patience developed and hope given an opportunity for exercise, but submission to the divine will is fostered. "The weaning process is not accomplished. We are still hankering after the comforts which the Lord intends us forever to outgrow. Abraham made a great feast when his son Isaac was weaned, and, peradventure, our heavenly Father will do the same with us. Lie down, proud heart! Quit thine idols. Forsake thy fond dotings, and the promised peace will come unto thee" (Charles Spurgeon).

7. We are profited from the Word when we make *a right use of* the promises. First, in our dealings with God Himself. When we approach unto His throne, it should be to plead one of His promises. They are to form not only the foundation for our faith to rest upon, but also the substance of our requests. We must ask according to God's will if we are to be heard, and His will is revealed in those good things which He has declared He will bestow upon us. Thus, we are to lay hold of His pledged assurances, spread them before Him, and say, "Do as thou hast said" (2Sa 7:25). Observe how Jacob pleaded the promise in Genesis 32:12, Moses in Exodus 32:13, David in Psalm 119:58, and Solomon in 1 Kings 8:25. Do thou, my Christian reader, likewise.

Second, in the life we live in the world. In Hebrews 11:13, we not only read of the patriarchs discerning, trusting, and embracing the divine promises, but we are also informed of the *effects* which they produced upon them. "And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth," which means they made a public avowal, an open profession of their faith. They acknowledged (and by their conduct demonstrated) that *their* interests were not in the things of this world. They had a satisfying portion in the promises they had appropriated. Their hearts were set upon things above, for where a man's treasure *is*, there *will* be his heart also (Luk 12:34).

"Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1). That is the effect they should produce in us, and *will* if faith really lays hold of them. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: *that* by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Pe 1:4). "Now the Gospel, and the precious promises, being graciously bestowed, and powerfully applied, have an influence on purity of heart and behaviour, and teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Such are the powerful effects of Gospel promises under divine influence as to make men inwardly partakers of the divine nature, and outwardly to abstain from and avoid the prevailing corruptions and vices of the times" (John Gill, 1697-1771).

THE TRUE GOSPEL

The Gospel is a glorious display of mercy to a lost world. Originating in the sovereign, free, and unmerited grace of God, and proclaimed to mankind as a finished salvation through the sole merits, righteousness, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In which rich plan of redemption, there are these striking particularities eminently distinguished. As first, the Gospel considers all men, universally speaking, as lost, and all equally incapable of putting forth a helping hand toward the attainment of their own salvation. For, it is the unalterable sense of Scripture, that it was, "When we were without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). Observe the expression. Not simply when we were maimed or crippled in our faculties by reason of sin. Not when some strength remained, however small, which, when cooperating with other aid, might have procured our recovery. But when all possible resources in ourselves were lost, "without strength"—or, (as elsewhere more strongly expressed) when we were altogether "dead in trespasses and sins," as if some mighty mountain had fallen upon our nature, and crushed all our powers.

And this view of mankind, in which the Gospel considers our nature as universally lost, represents it also as universally undeserving, in every instance, of divine favour. This forms a second striking feature in the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus makes no distinction in the objects of its clemency, as if one man became more worthy of grace than another. For the positive language of Scripture on this point is that "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). And however gratifying it may be to the unmortified pride of nature, when at any time making comparative views of man with man, to fancy one more excellent than his neighbor, the Gospel knows of no distinction but what grace hath made among creatures of universal depravity and corruption. Such notions may float on the imagination of the vain and unawakened, who are strangers to the plague of their own hearts, but they lose their very existence before God. The debtor of five hundred, or the debtor of fifty pence, being both alike insolvent and unable to pay, are both alike equally exposed to the prison, and must continue so forever, unless the goodness of the Almighty Creditor should pass an act of grace, and frankly forgive them their respective debts. Indeed, the dear Lord of His people, as if to encourage the most timid mind, when overpowered with the sense of multiplied transgressions, and to prevent all despondency, mercifully taught in this view of nature's insolvency, in this very parable of the debtors, that as to the greatness or littleness of the debt, it is the same, both as it respects the state of the sinner's mind in violating the divine precept, and as it concerns the divine mind in the exercise of mercy. The difference is wholly on the part of man, and not on the part of God. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Our gratitude for pardoning love will be in proportion to the sense we have of its extent. For, though it may well be supposed that all ransomed debtors, when their fetters are broken off and the prison doors thrown open, will sing, "To the praise and glory of His grace" (Eph 1:6), by whom their salvation is procured, yet his will be the

loudest note whose recovery hath been the most gracious, the most undeserved, and unexpected.

And what sums up and completes this finished view of the Gospel, is the third prominent character of it, in superadding to both of these gracious properties, this striking particularity, that it is altogether unconditional on the part of God, and requires no previous qualification or worth on the part of man. Indeed, the highly favoured objects of such bounty, as is shown in the Gospel, being all along considered as “without strength, and dead in trespasses and sins; and having the sentence of death in themselves, that they should not trust in themselves, but in him who raiseth the dead” (2Co 1:9). It would be a contradiction in terms to suppose that characters so described should be capable of anything to help, or bring anything to recommend them to the divine favour. For even “repentance and faith,” those most essential qualifications of the mind, for the participation and enjoyment of the blessings of the Gospel (and which all real disciples of the Lord Jesus cannot but possess) are never supposed as a condition which the sinner performs to entitle him to mercy, but merely as evidences that he is brought, and hath obtained mercy. They cannot be the conditions of obtaining salvation, for, like the Gospel itself, both faith and repentance are the immediate result of divine operation, and are the gift of God.

The same hand which bestows the Gospel, bestows also faith and repentance, or the sinner would never obtain them. The blessed Redeemer of mankind is called both the author and finisher of faith, and is said to be exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. And when His servant, the apostle, declares that believers are saved by grace through faith, he as positively declares also that this is the gift of God. “Unto you [he says], it is given to believe” (Phi 1:29). I could as easily create a world, as create either faith or repentance in my own heart. Both are of divine origin, and, like the light, and the rain and the dew of heaven, “which tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men” (Mic 5:7), are from above, and “come down from the Father of lights, from whom alone cometh every good and every perfect gift” (Jam 1:17).

This view of the Gospel (and which certainly is the only true view of it) serves to place it in that light which corresponds with our purest and most exalted notions of the beneficence of God, and answers to all the necessities of man. For it consists of nothing but invitations, promises, assurances, and the strongest declarations of mercy, followed up by innumerable instances of those who have been made the happy partakers of it, from one end of the Bible to the other. It seems to court the observation, to solicit the attention, and to invite the acceptance of the miserable and the wretched to its warmest embraces. And, that no broken-hearted sinner might despair in fancying himself placed beyond the reach of this rich tide of mercy, which flows continually without ebbing, it is not enough to say, that it washes on the shore of the undeserving, but it reaches to the ground of the ill-deserving. Not barely to those who have done nothing to merit mercy, but even to those who have done everything to merit punishment. It arises, therefore, above high water-mark, overflows all bounds, overtops even the tallest mountains of corruption, and demonstrates what one of the apostles declared, and thousands of sinners have found to be true, that “Where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded” (Rom 5:20).

Such being undeniably the state of the case in reference to the Gospel, and which, on account of the boundless extent of its mercy, is very properly termed “the unsearchable

riches of Christ," it next follows, that to preach the Gospel under any limitations, restrictions, or reserve whatever, in proposing *conditions* to the sinner as *constituting his title* to a participation of its blessings, is to invert the very order of the Gospel. And, instead of holding forth salvation to the *lost*, is only to propose strength to the *whole*. Just as absurd would it be in a physician to send away his patient, when labouring under some desperate disease, with a recommendation to do *his utmost* towards his own cure, and then, come to him to finish it—as it is in the minister of the Gospel to propose to the sinner to *do his best*, by way of healing the disease of the soul, and then, come to the Lord Jesus to perform his recovery. The only previous qualification is to know our misery, and the remedy is prepared. And as the Lord Jesus Himself, when upon earth, in opening His commission in the synagogue of Nazareth, declared that, "He was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to give deliverance to the captives, to give sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luk 4:18-19), it must follow, by an undeniable inference, that the office to which He hath appointed His servants, who minister in His name, is to preach freely and fully the same Gospel of salvation.

I consider, therefore, the several churches of Christ on earth as so many market-places of public resort, established for this express purpose, where *proclamation* is continually supposed to be made to the poor, and to the wretched, the weary, and heavy-laden, to come with their several wants unto Him, who alone can supply them, and give rest unto their souls, without money and without price. And it is very certain, that the various ordinances of worship, which the Lord Jesus hath appointed in His church, are for this purpose, and this only—that they may become so many channels of communication, between Christ and His people, by which empty, needy, distressed, and burdened sinners may bring their wants and their cares, their sorrows and their sins, before the Lord, and receive a suitable supply out of His abundant fulness, and "grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). And were I to drop into a church of Christians, professing the eternal truths of the Gospel, and found not evidences of these things, but discovered that moral essays were supplying the place of evangelical truths, that the person of the Lord Jesus, and His precious offices to lost souls, were not made the great topic of discourse, I should be led to conclude that I had mistaken my path, and had fallen into a synagogue of the Jews, and not the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My brother in the ministry (if peradventure one of the sacred order should condescend to be among my readers) shall I intreat you not to be offended with this statement of the case, neither hastily turn away from the serious consideration of a subject which involves, in its final consequences, the everlasting welfare both of ourselves and our people? Do not fancy that this doctrine leads to licentiousness, or that any poor *self-condemned* and heart-broken sinner, can possibly adopt the horrible maxim of "continuing in sin that grace may abound" (Rom 6:1). And for characters of a different description, with whom both the awful threats of the law, and the sweet allurements of the Gospel have lost all their influence, there can be no apprehension. They wrest *whatever* is preached, as they do also the "Scriptures themselves, unto their own destruction" (2Pe 3:16). And, would any man, in compliment to such persons, hold forth a restrained, mutilated, half-preached Gospel?

For my part, I am not afraid to imitate Him in whose service I minister, by preaching a full, free, and finished salvation, through the sole merits, death, and righteousness of the

Lord Jesus Christ. And while I trace the footsteps of mercy in His history when upon earth, in going about the streets of Jerusalem, constantly inviting sinners to come to Him for life and salvation—while I see Him now with the eye of faith on His throne of glory, calling unto such persons in all the ends of the earth, to “look unto him and be saved” (Isa 45:22)—while every ordinance of worship is uniformly directed to follow up the Saviour’s declaration of mercy, that, “If any man thirst and come to him, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Joh 7:37-38)—and while the “Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17)—I am not afraid to echo these glorious proclamations of grace, nor fear I to exceed my commission in declaring that, “He can and will save to the uttermost them that come to God by him; and that all that do come he will in no wise cast out.” Nay, in the market-days of His church, were I to perceive a case of more than ordinary wretchedness, in some poor *self-loathing* sinner, who, like the publican Christ describes, dared not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, I should particularly direct my message to *him*, and say, “To *you* is the word of this salvation *sent*.” For the only difference known in the church of the Lord Jesus is that which arises from a penitential sense of wretchedness, and faith in divine mercy. And where these qualities have the precedence, the most famished and the most hungry, after the person and righteousness of the Redeemer, are first to be supplied. But while I feel a growing confidence in thus publishing salvation according to the directions of the Saviour, forgive me if I add, I cannot but be awfully concerned for those who restrain the truths of redemption, and preach Gospel-mercies as if they were the *sale*, and not the *free gift* of God.

My poor brother, for whom I write, whose heart the Lord hath touched with a sense of sin, and a desire of salvation, and whose self-condemnation every action subscribes to, hear the call of grace. And while the heavenly voice sweetly sounds, “Return, thou backslider, and I will heal your backsliding” (Jer 3:22), let your whole soul echo back to the gracious invitation, “Behold I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God.” But from man, I turn to the Lord. I know that everything is alike ineffectual unless directed to the heart from above. Will the Lord be graciously pleased to commission my feeble call with His divine power, and send it to the heart of some poor self-condemned and despairing sinner! And if the success of my embassy be never known upon earth, it will open a new source of thanksgiving and joy, when the writer and reader shall meet before the throne of glory, mutually striving which hath most cause to sing the loudest note to the praise of redeeming grace, in ascribing “Salvation to God and the Lamb” (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827).

THE TWO BUILDERS

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was

founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Mat 7:24-27).

Our present passage is intimately related to what was before us in Matthew 7:13-14. Ere considering its details, let me summarize what we took up last night, amplifying a little some of the principal points. All mankind are *travellers*, journeying to a future destiny. But the great majority conduct themselves as though they will live on and on, forever in this world. The "ways" in which they walk are many and varied, but all may be reduced to two—the narrow way, which "leadeth unto life," and the broad road, which "leadeth to destruction." The latter has everything to commend itself to the nature of fallen man. It exactly suits his depraved inclinations, all the desires of his soul lying in that direction. It is easy to enter, for it has a "wide gate." There is no lack of company, for the vast majority both of the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, are found therein. Thus, those who are on the broad road have the majority on their side, and with most people, that is a great matter. But the "end thereof are the ways of *death*" (Pro 14:12).

Now, the narrow way is exceedingly hard and disagreeable to the flesh. Great difficulty attends the entrance upon it, for to "enter" it, all idols must be given up without a single reserve, and *that* is terribly hard work to a corrupt heart. But self *has to be* "denied," the "cross" taken up, and Christ "followed," if heaven is to be reached. Such a task is likened to the "cutting off" of a right hand, and the "plucking out" of a right eye (Mat 5:29-30). Great difficulty attends our progress along the narrow way. There will be fierce opposition from the world, particularly from the *religious* world. Professing Christians will be all the time tempting you to *compromise*, and Satan will tell you that *they* are not strictly conforming their lives to the commands and precepts of Scripture, so why should *you*? So, too, there will be sore temptations from within—deceit in the heart, which loves to call the sweet "bitter," light "darkness," liberty "bondage and legality." Moreover, you will have *very little* company. You will meet with scarcely any that encourage you to live as a "stranger and pilgrim" in this world, few who make it the one business of their lives to *please God*.

Not only does great difficulty attend the entrance upon and continuance in this narrow way, but especially does great difficulty attend our *enduring to the end* along this path and winning through to heaven. Many make a start. Some go on for quite a distance, but only a fractional minority *persevere* in practical godliness and actually *overcome* the flesh, the world, and the devil. Let me prove this to you from Scripture. Of old, God said, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew *it goeth away*" (Hos 6:4). How accurately and how solemnly, do these words describe many whom we knew some years ago!

"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth [lasteth] *for a while*: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Mat 13:20-21). This passage finds its fulfillment in the large number of those who "make a profession," who claim to have "accepted Christ as their personal Saviour," and whose beaming countenances and joyous words seem to show that they have been

saved. But alas, all is not gold that glitters. The *sequel* is disappointing. They do not wear. When the time of testing arrives, they are “weighed in the balances and *found wanting*.”

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:66). The words, “no more,” clearly show that these disciples had once “walked” outwardly with Christ. That is, they had taken their place among those who profess to be His followers. But now, they were offended, and so deserted His cause. Nor were they ever recovered from their backsliding. “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2Ti 4:10). Here was one who had, for a brief season, companied with the apostle Paul. But the self-denying discipline which this demanded was too much for him, and the allurements of the world proved too strong and attractive. What force do these Scriptures give to that pointed exhortation, “Let *us labour* therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb 4:11)!

Yes, my friends, this narrow way which leads to heaven *is* difficult, and those who tell you that the saving of the soul is an easy and simple matter are “false prophets” (Mat 7:15), deceivers (2Ti 3:13), blind leaders of the blind. The narrow way is *difficult* to enter, difficult to tread, difficult to follow unto the end. It is a “fight” (1Ti 6:12). That is why the question is asked, “And if the righteous *scarcely* be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1Pe 4:18). That is why Christ declared, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mat 19:24). This it is which supplies the key to Luke 14:26-33, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he *cannot* be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth *the cost*, whether he hath sufficient to finish it?...Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able...So *likewise*, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be *my* disciple.”

Let me now refer you to other passages wherein this same narrow way which “leadeth unto life” is referred to under various names or titles. “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep *the way* of the Lord, to do justice and judgment” (Gen 18:19). “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them *the way*” (Exo 13:21). “They have turned aside quickly out of *the way*” (Exo 32:8). “That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep *the way* of the LORD” (Jdg 2:22). “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and *the right way*” (1Sa 12:23). “And he forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and walked not in *the way of* the LORD” (2Ki 21:22). “Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make *thy way* straight before my face” (Psa 5:8). “The meek will he teach *his way*” (Psa 25:9). “Blessed are the undefiled *in the way*, who walk in the law of the LORD” (Psa 119:1). “I will run *the way of* thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Psa 119:32). “I have taught thee in *the way of* wisdom” (Pro 4:11). “I lead in *the way of* righteousness” (Pro 8:20). “He is in *the way of* life that keepeth instruction” (Pro 10:17). “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the *way of holiness*; the unclean shall not pass over it” (Isa 35:8). “Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not *the way*

of the LORD” (Jer 5:4). “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is *the good way*, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk therein’” (Jer 6:16). “And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom *the way of truth* shall be evil spoken of...Which have forsaken *the right way*...For it had been better for them not to have known *the way of righteousness*, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2Pe 2:2, 15, 21). All of these passages refer to the same narrow “way.”

Now, let us turn to Matthew 7:24-27 (carefully comparing Luke 6:47-49), which records Christ’s concluding words in His Sermon on the Mount. This passage suggests four questions. First, *whom* do the two “builders” represent? Second, what is the “house” here a figure of? Third, exactly what is denoted by the “foundation”? Fourth, what is pictured by the “rain, floods, and winds”?

I. The Two Builders

The two builders represent two classes of professing Christians, one of which are “wise,” the other “foolish.” Hence, they correspond with the “wise” and “foolish” virgins of Matthew 25. While in the case of the two groups of “virgins,” there was a real and vital difference between them, yet outwardly and in a superficial way, they had not a little in common. All went forth to “meet the Bridegroom,” all posed as “virgins,” all carried in their hands the “lamp” of profession. That wherein they differed was not apparent till *the time of testing* came. The foolish had “no oil” in their vessels—no supernatural work of the Spirit had been wrought in their hearts. So it is here. The two builders had three things in common.

First, each of them was alike impressed with *the need* of erecting a building. What, then, is signified by the “house” here? If we attend to all the details of the passage, there should be no difficulty in interpreting this figure aright. The “house” here denotes a shelter, a shelter from the approaching storm, or in other words, a refuge from the wrath to come. Thus, both of these men represent to us those who had been impressed of their need of a Saviour.

Second, each of them was alike resolved *to set about the obtaining of* that which they felt they needed. Neither of them procrastinated, nor neglected their welfare. In this respect, both of them were very different from the great crowds of sinners who read or listen to the preaching of God’s Word without any personal concern. Each of these men went to work, or made it their aim to get saved, for *that is* what the building of the house against the coming storm sets forth.

Third, each of them *finished* his house, and apparently was quite satisfied that a *secure refuge* had been obtained. This it is which is so very solemn and searching in our passage. There is a large class of people in Christendom today, who have been alarmed by thoughts of eternal punishment, and who suppose that they have fled to Christ for refuge, but who are sadly mistaken. “The Lord is far from the wicked” (Pro 15:29), and can only be approached as our hearts repudiate and turn with loathing away from all that is abhorrent to Him. But this is what the vast majority will not do. They continue to hug their idols and

please the flesh until they land in hell. Here, all in common between the two builders ends. Let us now ponder some contrasts.

II. The Two Buildings

1. The second one built his “house” *much more quickly* than did the first. Perhaps you ask, “What ground have I for saying so?” The answer is very simple. The second man did no labourious digging, for he merely erected his house upon the sand. Thus, he clearly represents those sinners who get saved easily (without much trouble), or *think* they do—they will yet discover that that “salvation,” which they got so cheaply, is worth nothing! O my friends, those preachers who are telling people that *all* they have to do is consent to God’s verdict that they are lost sinners, and then accept Christ as their personal Saviour, are chloroforming thousands into hell. Yes, that is plain speaking, but our degenerate and apostate age calls for it.

2. Thus, the second man built his “house” *with far less trouble* than did the first, of whom it is said that he “dugged deep” (Luk 6:48). I have no doubt that the one who erected his building on the sand considered his neighbor very foolish to toil and sweat as he did. Probably he prided himself on the *ease* with which his house went up. In like manner, there are many complacent persons in Christendom today who look down with disdain on those who are deeply distressed as to whether or no they have sinned beyond the possibility of divine forgiveness, and who find that to “forsake all” for Christ is the hardest thing in the world. Yes, there are those who despise the few who are giving diligence to make their “calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10), being too dilatory to “*prove their own selves*” (2Co 13:5), and to take thorough pains to examine whether *their* repentance is genuine, and *their* faith that of “God’s elect” (Ti 1:1).

3. But though the second man got through his task much more quickly and easily than the other one, yet *his* “house” had *no real* and solid *foundation* to rest upon! The plough of the law had never done its work in his conscience. His heart had never been changed and renewed. He had a theoretical knowledge of the truth, but no deep, inward acquaintance with it, no experience of its transforming power.

4. Let us now look at the other builder, who dugged deep and founded his house on the rock. *Whom* does he represent? The Lord Himself has here told us, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine [in the Sermon on the Mount], and doeth them” (Mat 7:24). It is the man who (by divine grace—diligently sought) conforms his whole inner and outer life to *the teachings of Christ*, whose whole character was formed and whose entire conduct is regulated by them. Such a one has a *Scriptural* ground upon which to base his hope, and none others have. The truly saved man is the *converted* one, who has undergone a complete round-about-face. Who is no longer “conformed to this world,” but who has been “transformed by the renewing of his mind” (Rom 12:2).

III. The Two Buildings Tested

Whether your profession be genuine or no, it will be tested. Whether it be wheat or chaff, the fan of the great Winnower will surely be brought into operation upon all that lies on His threshing floor. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God

[the sphere of Christian profession]; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1Pe 4:17). This "judgment" or testing is twofold, as is the meaning of the storm which beat upon the "house"—in *this* life, and also in the Day to come. In our present passage, the testing is of a threefold character.

1. "The rain descended" (Mat 7:25) from heaven. Here, we have a figure of *afflictions from God*. The Lord sends trials and tribulations so as to test us out. He has various ways of proving people—disappointments, sorrows, thwarting our plans, sickness, financial losses, the death of loved ones. The response of the heart, the manner in which we act in times of adversity, reveals our true state. If unregenerate, we are unable to bear up under the afflictions of divine providence. If we have no genuine faith, our unbelieving heart will betray itself by acting as the worldling does—seeking to drown the sorrow in fleshly pleasures, or sinking in despair.

2. "The floods came," (Mat 7:25) or as Luke 6:48 says, "The flood *arose*." Thus, it is a thing of the earth which is here in view, namely, *opposition from the world*. These also soon test the professor, and show whether or no his claim to being a Christian is genuine. That opposition from the world assumes many forms. Sometimes, it is ridicule—and how often have the gibes and sneers of the godless tumbled down the "house" of those who made a fair show in the flesh! In other cases, it is reproach and slander, unfair boycotting, open persecution. Only those who have "digged deep," and have a rock foundation, will bear up under them. Not that the ones exposed always drop their Christian profession entirely. Far from it! Often they retain *the name*, but, to escape the "reproach of Christ," hide their light under a bushel.

3. "And the winds blew and beat upon that house" (Mat 7:25). Here it is the Prince of the power of the air who is at work. In other words, it is *the power of Satan* testing the one who claims to have been saved. He employs many tactics. Alluring baits, subtle temptations, as well as fierce attacks, are used by him. He beguiles with error, and only those who are established in the truth can withstand him. He attracts by the world, and only they whose "treasure" is in heaven scorn his gilded baubles. He suggests a compromise, the serving of two masters, and only those who have truly "received Christ Jesus *the Lord*" (Col 2:6) resist him.

4. "And it fell, and great was the fall thereof" (Mat 7:27). It was erected on the "sand," which will bear no weight. The "sand" here stands not only for false doctrinal views (trusting in our own doings to earn heaven thereby), but also for a false basis of hope, a false ground of confidence. There is no other way of being saved from sin and self except by repenting and being *converted*. Nothing short of a complete surrender of the heart and life to Christ's authority, speaking in His Word, will ensure any soul's reaching heaven. If we are strangers to the transforming power of Christ's teachings, we shall eternally perish.

Ere closing, let me anticipate and honestly meet a plain question. Then, does this passage teach salvation by works? Yes, and No! Yes, in the sense that none will enter heaven *without* good works to their account. Genuine Christians are a people whom God has "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph 2:10). When speaking of the resurrection, Christ declared, "And shall come forth, they that have *done good*, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (Joh 5:29). But, No, in the sense that any of our works are the *meritorious cause* of salvation.

The worthiness and work of Christ alone entitles any sinner to the inheritance of the saints in light. Nevertheless, none can scripturally furnish evidence that *they* possess that title, save those who are “zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14). “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith *without* works is DEAD” (Jam 2:20).

The above is an address delivered by the editor in Glenolden on September 29, 1931.

PRAISE THE LORD

Once again, the God of all grace has granted the petitions of His people, and responded to that simple faith that He *would* supply all our need. On November 18 (the usual date), we closed the books of this magazine for 1931, with a balance to the good of \$8.89 (37/-), and this, without asking anyone for a penny. “Great is thy faithfulness” (Lam 3:23). The Lord *never* fails those who trust in Him with all their heart and lean not unto their own understanding (Pro 3:5), though He may test our faith and try our patience. The God of Elijah still lives and reigns.

We trust that the many prayer-helpers, which God has so graciously given us, will join the editor and his helpmate in fervent praise and thanksgiving unto Him who says, “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine” (Hag 2:8). In these degenerate days of soliciting help and begging money for what poses as “The Lord’s work” (sure proof it is not such, for God *always* maintains what is of Himself!), we pray this testimony will rebound to the glory of God and encourage many of His dear people. O that He may speedily deliver His sheep from the hungry wolves who now seek to rob them of their fleece.

It is a holy privilege to have fellowship with any work which is truly of God. It is a solemn thing to help support anything which is of the devil posing as an angel of light. The Lord grant each of us all necessary discernment. Many an enterprise which began “in the Spirit” has ended “in the flesh.” The Lord has departed from numerous churches and institutions which once enjoyed His presence and blessing. To support such is to oppose Him and not to help His cause. Beware of all who *solicit* money!

