

STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

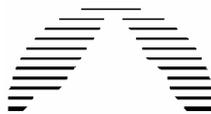
CONTENTS

Our Righteous Redeemer	3
The Prayers of the Apostles.....	5
<i>2. Romans 1:8-12</i>	
The Mission and Miracles of Elisha.....	9
<i>14. The Tenth Miracle</i>	
Doctrine of Saints' Perseverance	13
<i>11. Conclusion</i>	
Spiritual Growth or Christian Progress	17
<i>2. Its Root</i>	

Arthur W. Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886, and born again by God's Spirit in 1908. He studied briefly at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago before his pastoral work in Colorado, California, Kentucky, and South Carolina, USA, and in Sydney, Australia. In 1934, he returned to his native England, taking his final residence on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, in 1940, where he remained until his death in 1952.

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.

Chapel Library is currently reprinting the monthly issues in sequence, mailing quarterly to subscribers in the USA as the Lord enables.



CHAPEL LIBRARY

2603 W. Wright St. • Pensacola, FL 32505
 850 438-6666 • fax: 850 438-0227
 chapel@mountzion.org • www.mountzion.org
A ministry of Mt. Zion Bible Church

OUR RIGHTEOUS REDEEMER

Does such a title have somewhat of a strange sound to the ear of the reader? Is that adjective unfamiliar in such a connection? Probably the great majority of us are far more accustomed to such expressions as “our loving Redeemer” and “our gracious Redeemer,” or even “our mighty Redeemer.” We confess that to the best of our recollection we have never heard this particular expression used, nor do we remember ever coming across it in our reading. Our employment of it here is not because we are striving after originality, nor is it coined for the purpose of alliteration. No, rather is such an appellation required by the teaching of Scripture. In fact, if we carefully observe where the Holy Spirit has placed the emphasis it is incumbent upon us that we should conform our terminology thereto. Test your memory and see how many passages you can recall where either “loving” or “gracious” is used as an adjective in connection with Christ. If memory fails, consult a concordance, and then perhaps you will be surprised that neither of them occurs a single time! Now test your memory with the word “righteous” and see how many passages come to mind where the Lord Jesus is referred to as such.

In Isaiah 53:11 Christ is referred to as “My righteous Servant,” in Jeremiah 23:5 as “a righteous Branch,” and in the next verse as “the Lord our righteousness.” In Malachi 4:2 as “the Sun of righteousness,” in Luke 23:47 as a “righteous Man,” in 2 Timothy 4:8 as “the righteous Judge.” In Hebrews 7:2, 3 He is seen as the antitypical Melchizedek or “King of righteousness”; while in 1 John 2:1, as our Advocate with the Father, He is termed “Jesus Christ the righteous.” In addition, we find the same Greek word (*dikaiois*) rendered “just” in the following passages: in Matthew 27:19 Pilate’s wife sends a warning to her husband saying “Have thou nothing to do with this just [righteous] Man”; while in verse 24 of the same chapter Pilate himself declared “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.” In Acts 3:14 and James 5:6 He is denominated “the Just,” and in Acts 7:52 and 22:14 “the Just One”; while in 1 Peter 3:18 we have the well-known words “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust”—actually rendered “the righteous for the unrighteous” by the American R.V. When Zechariah predicted His entry into Jerusalem, riding on the back of an ass, he said, “Behold, thy King cometh to thee, He is just,” and in Revelation 19:11, where He is depicted on a white horse, it is said “in righteousness He doth judge and make war.”

It hardly requires to be pointed out that, in all of the above passages, the Father’s “Fellow” and Equal is viewed in His official character, as the God-man Mediator. It is equally evident that those verses intimate that the Lord Jesus is righteous in His person, in the administration of His office, in the discharge of the great commission given to Him. Before His incarnation it was announced “righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins and faithfulness the girdle of His reins” (Isa. 11:5), and Christ Himself affirmed by the Spirit of prophecy “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation” (Psa. 40:9). There was no fault or failure in His performing of the honourous and momentous task committed to Him, as His own words to the Father prove: “I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4). God’s owning of Christ as “My righteous Servant” signifies that He excellently executed the work entrusted to Him: as the Holy Spirit declares, He “was faithful to Him that appointed Him” (Heb. 3:2), and when the Father rewarded Him He said, “Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness” (Psa. 45:7).

But further: Christ is the righteous Redeemer of his people because their righteousness is *in Him*. He wrought out a perfect righteousness for them, which, upon their believing in Him, is imputed or reckoned to their account, and therefore is He designated “the Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6). Christ was righteous not as a private Person, not for Himself alone, but for us sinners and our salvation. Throughout He acted as God’s righteous Servant and as His people’s righteous Sponsor. He lived and died that all the infinite merits of His obedience might be made over to them. In the justifying of His sinful people God neither disregarded nor dishonoured His Law: instead He has “established” it (Rom. 3:31). The Redeemer was “made under the Law” (Gal. 4:4) and its strictness was not relaxed nor was one iota of its requirements abated in connection with Him. Christ rendered to the Law a personal, perfect and perpetual obedience, and therefore did He “magnify the Law and make it honourable” (Isa. 42:21). Consequently God is not only gracious but “just” at the very moment He is “the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26), because Jesus satisfied every requirement of righteousness in the stead and behalf of all who trust in Him.

In the righteous Redeemer, then, we find the answer to the question, How can those who have no righteousness of their own and who are utterly unable to procure any, become righteous before God? How can I, who am a mass of corruption, draw nigh unto the ineffably Holy One and look up into His face in peace? By coming to God as unrighteous, acknowledging my inability to remove my unrighteousness, of-

fering nothing to palliate or propitiate Him. By reaching forth the beggar's hand and thankfully receiving the righteousness *He* has provided. Because we were unable to reach up to the holy requirements or righteousness of the Law, God has brought down His righteousness to us: "I bring near My righteousness" (Isa. 46:13). That righteousness was brought near to sinners when the Word became flesh and tabernacled among men. It is brought near to us now in the Gospel, "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith" (Rom. 1:17), a righteousness which God imputes to all who believe and then deals with them according to its deserts, and which will constitute their beautiful array when they enter the celestial courts.

"For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be—not put into a capacity of acquiring a righteousness of our own, but—made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Here we have the double imputation of our sins to Christ and of His righteousness to us. Observe that we are not here said to be made righteous, but "righteousness" itself, and not righteousness only, but "the righteousness of God," which is the utmost that language can reach unto. And in the self-same manner that Christ was "made sin" we are made "righteousness." Christ knew not actual sin, but upon His mediatorial interposition on our behalf, He was regarded and dealt with as a guilty person. We likewise are destitute of all legal righteousness, yet upon our receiving Christ and believing on His name, we are viewed and treated by the Divine majesty as righteous creatures. Both were by imputation: amazing exchange! So as to utterly exclude the idea that any inherent righteousness is in view, it is expressly said "we are made the righteousness of God *in Him*": as the sin imputed to Christ is inherent in us, so the righteousness by which we are justified is inherent in Him.

By the Divine plan of redemption the claims of the Law were fully satisfied. There was nothing in all its sacred injunctions which Christ did not perform, and nothing in its awful threatenings which He did not sustain. He fulfilled all its precepts by an unspotted purity of heart and the most perfect integrity of life. He exhausted the whole curse when He hung upon the cross, abandoned by God, a bleeding Victim, for the sins of His people. His obedience conferred higher honour upon the Law than it could possibly have received from an uninterrupted compliance by Adam and all his posterity. The perfections of God which were dishonoured by our rebellion, are glorified in our redemption. In redemption God appears inflexibly just in exacting vengeance, and inconceivably rich in showing mercy. "The sword of justice and the scepter of grace has each its due exercise, each its full expression" (James Hervey). The interests of holiness are also secured for where redemption is received by faith it kindles in the heart an intense hatred of sin and the deepest love and gratitude unto God. —AWP

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

2. *Romans 1:8-12*

We shall not take up Paul's prayers in their chronological order but according as they are found in his epistles in our present-day Bible. The Thessalonian epistles were written before the Roman, but as Romans (because of its theme and importance) rightly comes first we shall begin with those of his prayers recorded therein. Opinion is divided as to whether the verses before us chronicle a particular prayer actually offered by Paul at that time, or whether he is here informing them how he was wont to remember them at the throne of grace. It appears to us the distinction is such a fine one that it makes little practical difference which view be adopted: personally we incline to the former concept. This epistle was taken down by an amanuensis (16:22), and as the apostle dictated the words "to all that be in Rome beloved of God" (v. 7) his heart was immediately drawn out in thanksgiving that some of His elect were to be found even in the capital of the Roman empire, yea, in "Caesar's household" (Phil. 4:22).

The position of Paul was one of some delicacy, being a stranger to the saints at Rome. No doubt they had often heard of him—at first as a dangerous person. When assured of his conversion, and learning that he was the apostle to the Gentiles, probably they wondered why he had not visited them, especially when he had been so near to Rome as Corinth. So he now makes known his deep personal interest in them. They were continually upon his heart and in his prayers. How his "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all" would draw out their affections unto the writer of this epistle! How it would move them to read with warmer interest what he now sent to them! Nothing more endears one Christian to another than to know he is remembered by him before the throne of grace. As one of our readers recently wrote: "I prize the prayers of God's dear saints more than I would all the riches of the world. The latter would only prove a curse, while the former reaches to blessings in the highest heaven and lays me even lower before God's holy throne."

"First, I thank my God, through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (v. 8). There are five things here which claim our attention. First, *the manner*, or method, of Paul's praying: the first note struck is one of praise. This is made very emphatic: "*First* I thank my God" takes precedence of the "make request" of verse 10. Thus we see how blessedly the apostle practiced what he preached: "In every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). Thanksgiving ought to have a prominent place in our prayers: to say the least, it is due unto God. As one of the Puritans expressed it, "It is rent due Him for the mercies received." It is an effective means of strengthening faith, for it puts the heart into a more suitable frame to petition Him for further favors. It is conducive to joy in the Christian life: "I *thank* my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with *joy*" (Phil. 1:3,4). Nothing is more calculated to dispel a spirit of gloom from the soul than the cultivation of gratitude and praise. The same will encourage and cheer our fellow-Christians: piety is not commended by sadness and sourness.

The above example is so far from being exceptional that it rather indicates the usual custom of the apostle. It is blessed to observe how frequently Paul blended thanksgiving with petitions: let the reader compare 1 Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:16; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 4; and remember, this has been recorded for our learning. Does not failure at this very point go far to explain why so many of our prayers remain unanswered?—if we have not owned the goodness and grace of God for previous mercies can we expect Him to continue bestowing them upon the ungrateful. Praise and petitions, thanksgiving and requests, should ever be conjoined: Colossians 4:2. But it was much more than this, something nobler and more selfless which we see here in the apostle. His heart was continually drawn out in gratitude to God for the wondrous things *He* had done for His people, and this emboldened him to seek further blessings for them.

Second, *the One whom Paul invoked*: termed here "my God." It is indeed blessed to observe how the apostle regards the Deity: not as an absolute, infinitely-removed, unrelated One. There is no formality, no sense of remoteness, no uncertainty: instead, God was a living and personal reality to him: "my God." This was an avowal of *Covenant* relationship. The grand covenant promise is "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people" (Heb. 8:10), which looks back to Jeremiah 24:7; 31:33; and that in turn has its roots in Genesis 17:7 and Exodus 6:7. It was on that ground Moses and the children of Israel sang on the farther shores of the Red Sea, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is *my God*" (Ex. 15:2). It was for that reason David exclaimed "O God, Thou art my God" (Ps. 63:1). In like manner we find that Caleb (Josh. 14:8), Ruth (1:16), Nehemiah (6:14), Daniel (9:4,19) and Jonah (2:6) owned Him as "my God" in avowal of the covenant relationship.

“My God”: this was expressive of a *personal* relationship. He was his God by eternal election, having loved him with an everlasting love. He was his God by redemption, having purchased him with precious blood. He was his God by regenerating power, having communicated to him spiritual life and stamped the Divine image upon his heart, making him manifestly His own dear child. He was his God by personal choice, for when revealed to him and in him he had surrendered to His claims, saying, “What wilt thou have me to do?” By bestowing upon him His own nature and by the apostle’s own acceptance, God had become his everlasting Portion, his all-satisfying Inheritance. “My God”: the One who had shown such sovereign and signal mercy unto him. It was also an *assured* relationship, there was no doubting, hesitation or uncertainty. Paul could say with Job, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee” (42:5). And it was a *practical* relationship: “whom I serve” (v. 9).

Now put the two parts together: “I thank—my God.” What other collocation can there be! Is not such a God worthy of thanks? And if I know Him personally as *my* God, will not, must not, thanksgiving issue spontaneously from my heart and lips. This it is which both opens the meaning of and gives due force to the opening word: “First, I thank my God.” It is not the “first” of enumeration, but of emphasis, of spiritual order. If God Himself be mine, then everything that is pure, holy, lovely, satisfying, is mine. If that glorious fact, that infinitely grand truth, be the subject of constant meditation and adoration, then my heart will not be cold and dull, nor will my mouth be paralysed when I draw near to the throne of grace. It is not an absolute and unrelated Deity whom I approach, but “my God.” And that blessed and blissful relationship is to be duly acknowledged by the Christian when he bows the knee before Him. So far from being the language of presumption, it be wicked presumption, insulting unbelief, to deny it.

Third, *the ground of approach*: “through Jesus Christ.” How thankful is the writer (and the reader too, if regenerate) for this clause. Though God be “my God” yet He ever remains the ineffably Holy One and how can I, conscious of pollution and utter unworthiness, think of approaching Infinite Purity? Ah, there is the blessed answer, the all-sufficient provision to meet my need: I may obtain access to the thrice holy God “through Jesus Christ.” But suppose my assurance be dampened and through sad failure in my walk I no longer enjoy the conscious relationship of His being “my God,” how can I now give thanks to Him? And again, the answer is “through Jesus Christ.” As it is written, “By him [Jesus Christ] therefore, [because of the merit and efficacy of His sanctifying blood, see previous verse], let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*, that is, the fruit of our lips giving *thanks* to his name” (Heb. 13:15). Whatever my case may be, however burdened with a sense of guilt and defilement, it should not only keep me away from the throne of grace, but it must not deter me from giving thanks—for Jesus Christ and God’s provision of Him.

Grammatically the “through Jesus Christ” is connected with the giving of thanks, but theologically or doctrinally there is a double thought. God is “my God” through Jesus Christ: as He declared to His beloved disciples, “I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God” (John 20:17)—*your* God because *My* God. And I give thanks unto “My God” “through Jesus Christ,” for it is both the duty and the privilege of the regenerate, who are members of the holy priesthood, “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). Not only is there no approach to God save “through Jesus Christ” the alone Mediator between God and men, but our worship is acceptable to God only through His merits (Col. 3:17). This too must be the subject of the believer’s constant meditation and adoration, for only thus will the blessed assurance of “my God” be maintained in the heart. Jesus Christ changes not: His mediation changes not: however deeply despondent I may be by my sense of unworthiness as I approach the Throne, let me turn to and believingly ponder the infinite worthiness of Jesus Christ, and I shall “*thank* my God.”

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ.” Upon these words the late Handley Moule most beautifully said, “My God”: it is the expression of an indescribable appropriation and reverent intimacy...it is the language of a personality wherein Christ has dethroned self in His own favor...And this holy intimacy, with its action in thanks and petition, is all the while ‘through Jesus Christ,’ the Mediator. The man knows God as my ‘God’ and deals with Him as such, never out of that Beloved Son who is equally one with the believer and with the Father, no alien medium, but the living point of unity.” Just in proportion as that is realised in the soul, just in proportion as faith be mixed with the declarations of the Word thereon, will there be liberty and freedom, holy “boldness,” as we draw near the Throne. Only thus will the Christian enjoy his birthright and live up to his blood-bought privilege; and only thus will God be honored by the praise and thanksgiving which must issue from such an one.

Fourth, *the subjects* of Paul’s thanksgiving: “for you all.” This will appear strange to the natural man, who is wrapped up so much in self. The carnal mind is quite incapable of appreciating the motives which actuate and the principles which regulate those who are spiritual. Here is the apostle thanking God for those

whom he had never met! They were not the fruits of his own labors, yet he rejoices over them. How that condemns the narrow-minded bigotry and sectarian exclusiveness which has brought such a blight upon Christendom. Though these saints at Rome were not his own sons in the Gospel, though he had never met them in the flesh, and as far as we know received any communication from them, yet he praises God for them. It was because of what *He* had wrought in them, because they were trees of His planting, the products of His “husbandry” (1 Cor. 3:9). This too is for our instruction: do not expect the assurance of “my God” unless you have a love unto and pray for “all saints” (Eph. 6:18).

Fifth, *the occasion* of his thanksgiving: “that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” This good tidings was spread abroad by travelers from Rome, the capital, telling of the humble reliance of the saints there on the Lord Jesus and their loving allegiance to Him. Wherever the apostle went this blessed information was given him. It was not only that these people had believed the Gospel, but that their faith was of such a character as to be everywhere spoken of, and Paul’s thanksgiving for them was the recognition and acknowledgment that He was the Giver of their faith. His notification of the same was not to induce complacency, but to quicken them to answer to the testimony borne to them and the expectations awakened thereby. Again we would remark, how blessed to behold the apostle praising God for what His grace had wrought in others. What an insight it does give us into his character. What a spirit of love unto the brethren was here revealed. What gratitude and devotion unto his Master. What an example for the servant of Christ today when tidings are received of the fruits of the Spirit in distant places.

Ere passing on to the next verse let us seek to make application unto ourselves of what has been before us. It was not the doubting and unbelief of these Roman saints, but their faith which was noised abroad. Is *our* faith known to others and talked about? Does it evoke praise and thanksgiving unto God? Theirs was no formal and lifeless faith, but a vigorous and fruitful one, which compelled others to take notice of. It was a faith which transformed their character and conduct. Lest it be thought we have read into our verse more than is there, we refer the reader to 16:19—“your *obedience* is come abroad to all.” The two declarations are to be placed side by side, for the one explains and amplifies the other. If our faith be not productive of obedience, such as others will take note of, there is something seriously wrong with us. We regard, then, the word “faith” in verse 8 as a generic expression for the graces of the Spirit, but the employment of this specific term was probably a prophetic rebuke of Romanism, in which the chief thing lacking is saving faith!

“For God is my Witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers” (v. 9). “For God is my Witness”: the opening “For” signifies, One above knows how much you are on my heart. This was an act of worship, a due acknowledgment of God’s omniscience. It was a reverent appeal to Him as the Searcher of hearts (cf. 2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20). “Whom I serve”: am at His entire disposal, subject to His orders. “With my spirit”: not hypocritically, from greed or formally; but from the very depths of my being—willingly, heartily, joyously. “In the Gospel of His Son” is the counterpart of “a servant of Jesus Christ...separated unto the Gospel of God” (v. 1). “That without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers” made known his constancy. His rejoicing over and praying for them was no evanescent spasm but an enduring thing. That his “without ceasing” was no exaggeration he had called upon God as his Witness. Though in a flourishing condition, they still needed praying for.

We cannot do the saints a greater kindness or exercise our love for them in a more practical and effective way than by praying for them. Yet we do not regard the verses before us as establishing a precedent for Christians or ministers to *proclaim abroad* their praying. To parade our piety is but a species of pharisaism. Praying is not a thing to advertise; as it is a secret exercise before God it should—as a rule—be kept secret from men. True, there are exceptions: as when believers are in trouble or isolated it is a comfort for them to know they are being remembered before the Throne. Paul’s mentioning of his praying was to inform the saints that his not having visited them (v. 13) was due to no indifference on his part, to assure them they had a constant place in his affections, and pave the way for his coming to them by acquainting them of his deep solicitude for them.

“Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you” (v. 10). His love for them made him desirous of meeting them, and he prays that God would make this possible. Let it be duly noted that he refused to take matters into his own hands and act upon an inward urge. Instead, he subordinates his own longings and impulses to the will of Him he served. This is very striking and blessed. Paul did not consider what many would regard as “the Spirit’s prompting” a sufficient warrant: he must first be assured—by His providences—that this journey was ordered by his Master. Accordingly he spread his case before God, committing the matter to His decision and pleasure.

Observe that there was no “claiming,” still less demanding, but an humble and submissive “request”—“if possible” or “if it may be.” This was an acknowledgment that God is the Orderer of all events: Romans 11:36.

His “now at length” shows that he was exercised about the timing of this journey and visit. “To every-thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Eccl. 3:1). It is of great practical importance for us to heed that fact, for it means the difference between success or failure in our undertakings. Unless we “rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him” (Ps. 37:7) only confusion and trouble will ensue. We agree with Charles Hodge that the “prosperous journey” signified “that his circumstances should be so favorably ordered that he might be able to execute his long-cherished purpose of visiting Rome.” It is blessed to note that a little later, yea before this epistle was completed, he was given Divine assurance of his request being granted: Romans 15:28, 29. The “journey” itself is described in Acts 27 and 28: after a most trying and hazardous voyage, he arrived at Rome a prisoner in chains! Yet see Acts 28:30, 31 for the measure of liberty accorded him.

“For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established” (v. 11). This is not a part of his prayer, yet it is intimately connected with it, for it makes known what prompted his “request” or the reason why he was so desirous of seeing them. His was the “longing” of spiritual affection, as a comparison with Philippians 2:26 and 2 Timothy 1:4 shows, where the same Greek word occurs. It tells how strong was his desire to visit them, and how real and commendable his subjection to the will of God. We see here the heart of an under-shepherd with his burning zeal, yet at the same time his blessed submission to the chief Shepherd. It was not a pleasure trip or to obtain variety in his labors, but to be made a blessing to these saints which Paul sought. Though their faith was well spoken of, yet he wished them to be established, strengthened, settled (1 Peter 5:10). To expound to them the Way more perfectly, to add to their spiritual light and joy, to open to them more fully the unsearchable riches of Christ was his object. Pastors, be not content with seeing sinners converted: seek their growth and establishment.

“That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me” (v. 12). This was to avoid giving offence, lest they should feel he was reflecting upon their immaturity. “Shall we call this a sentence of fine tact: beautifully conciliatory and endearing? Yes, but it is also perfectly sincere. True tact is not only the skill of sympathetic love, but not the less genuine in its thought because that thought seeks to please and to win. He is glad to show himself as his disciples’ brotherly friend: but then he first *is* such, and enjoys the character, and has continually found and felt his own soul made glad and strengthened by the witness for the Lord which far less gifted believers bore, as he and they talked together” (H. Moule). It is beautiful to see Paul employing the passive form: “that ye may be established” (v. 11)—not “that I may establish you;” he hides himself by expressing the result. Equally gracious is his “that I may be comforted together with you”—contact with kindred minds refreshes, and “he that watereth [others] shall be watered also himself” (Prov. 11:25). —AWP

THE MISSION AND MIRACLES OF ELISHA

14. The Tenth Miracle

The healing of Naaman is the best known one of all the wonders wrought through Elisha, for it has been made the subject of numerous sermons in the past, supplying as it does a very striking typical picture of salvation. Not in all its varied aspects—for salvation is many-sided—but as portraying the condition of him who is made its subject, his dire need because of the terrible malady of which he was the victim, the sovereign grace which met with him, the requirements he had to comply with, his self-will therein, and how his reluctance was overcome. Yet there is not a little in this incident which is offensive to our supercilious age, inclining present-day preachers to leave it alone, so that much that has been said about it in the past will be more or less new unto the present generation. As it has pleased the Holy Spirit to enter into much more detail upon the attendant circumstances of this miracle, this will require us to give it a fuller consideration.

It is their *typical* import which renders the Old Testament Scriptures of such interest to us upon whom the ends of the ages are come: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning” (Rom. 15:4). That which is set before us more abstractly in the epistles is rendered simpler of understanding by means of the concrete and personal illustrations supplied under the previous dispensations, when figures and symbols were employed more freely. Noah and his family in the ark preserved from the flood which swept away the world of the ungodly, the Hebrews finding security under the blood of the Pascal lamb when the angel of death slew all the firstborn of the Egyptians, healing being conveyed by faith’s look at the brazen serpent on the pole, the cities of refuge affording asylum to the manslayer who fled thither for refuge from the avenger of blood, are so many examples of simple yet graphic prefigurations of different aspects of the redemption which is found in Christ Jesus. Another is before us here in 2 Kings 5.

Before taking up the spiritual meaning of what is recorded of Naaman, there is one thing mentioned about him deserves separate notice, and we will look at it now so that our main line of thought may not be broken into later on. In the opening verse of our chapter it is stated that Naaman was “a great man with his master and honorable because by him the Lord had given deliverance [‘victory’] unto Syria.” This teaches us that there can be no success in any sphere of life unless God gives it, for “the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23), still less to insure their outcome. “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it [as was made evident when God brought to nought the lofty ambitions of those erecting the tower of Babel!], except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain” (Ps. 127:1)—as Belshazzar discovered, when the Medes surprised and overcame his sentinels and captured Babylon.

Not only can there be no success in any human undertaking unless the Lord is pleased to prosper the same, but He exercises His own sovereignty in the instruments or agents employed in the carrying out of His purposes, whether it be in the communicating of blessings or the execution of judgments. It is therefore to be duly observed that it was not because Naaman was a good man that the Lord caused his military efforts to thrive; so far from it, he was an idolator, a worshiper of Rimmon. Moreover, not only was he a stranger to God spiritually but he was a leper, and therefore ceremonially unclean, shut out by the Mosaic law. From which we may learn that when the Most High is pleased to do so, He makes use of the wicked as well as the righteous—a truth which needs pressing on the attention of the world today. Temporal success is far from being an evidence that the blessing of God rests upon either the person or the nation enjoying the same. All men are in God’s hands to employ as and where He pleases—as truly so in the political and military realms as in the churches.

First, *its subject*. Six things (the number of man) are here recorded about Naaman. 1. He was “captain of the host of the king of Syria.” In modern language this would be, Commander-in-chief of the king’s army. Whether or not he had risen from the ranks we cannot be sure, though the reference to his “valor” suggests that he had been promoted from a lower office. Whether that be so or no, he now occupied a position of prominence, being at the summit of his profession. 2. He was “a great man with his master.” It has been by no means always the case that the head of the military forces was greatly esteemed by his master. History records many instances where the reigning monarch has been jealous of the popularity enjoyed by the general, fearful in some cases that he would use his powerful influence against the interests of the throne. But it was quite otherwise in this case, for as the sequel goes on to show, the king of Syria was

warmly devoted to the person of his military chieftain. 3. "And honorable." Far from the king's slighting Naaman and keeping him in the background, he stood high in the royal favor. Naaman had furthered the interests of his kingdom, securing notable victories for his forces, and his master was not slow to show his appreciation and reward his valorous general. The brilliant exploits of many a brave officer have passed unnoticed by the powers that be: but not so here. 4. His military success is here directly ascribed to God, for our passage goes on to say "by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria." The blessing of Heaven had attended him and crowned his efforts, and therein he was favored above many. Not that this intimated he personally enjoyed the approbation of God, but that Divine providence made use of him in accomplishing His will. 5. He was naturally endowed with qualities which are highly esteemed among men, being possessed of great bravery and fortitude, for we are told, "he was also a mighty man in valor"—daring and fearless—and thus well equipped for his calling.

It might well be asked, What more could any man desire more? Did he not possess everything which is most highly prized by the children of this world. Was he not what they would designate "the darling of fortune," having all that the human heart could wish. He had, as the votaries of mammon express it, "made good in life." He occupied a most enviable position. He was possessed of those traits which were admired by his fellows. He had served his country well and stood high in the king's regard and favor. Even so there was a dark cloud on his horizon. There was something which not only thoroughly spoiled the present for him, but took away all hope for the future. For, 6. "he was a *leper*." Here was the tragic exception. Here was that which cast its awful shadow over every thing else. He was the victim of a loathsome and incurable disease. He was a pitiful and repulsive object, with no prospect whatever of any improvement in his condition.

Yes, my reader, the highly-privileged and honored Naaman was a leper, and as such he portrayed what *you* are, and what *I* am by nature. God's Word does not flatter man: it lays him in the dust—which is one reason why it is so unpalatable unto the great majority of people. It is the Word of truth, and therefore instead of painting flattering pictures of human nature, it represents things as they actually are. Instead of lauding man it abases him. Instead of speaking of the dignity and nobility of human nature, it declares it to be *leprous*—sinful, corrupt, depraved, defiled. Instead of eulogising human progress, it insists that "every man at his best estate is altogether vanity" (Ps. 39:5). And when the Holy Scriptures define man's attitude toward and relationship with God, they insist that "there is none righteous, no not one, there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:10,11). They declare that we are His enemies by our wicked works (Col. 1:21), and that consequently we are under the condemnation and curse of God's law, and that His holy wrath abideth on us (John 3:36).

The Word of Truth declares that by nature all of us are spiritual lepers, foul and filthy, unfit for the Divine presence: "being alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18). Ah, my reader: you may occupy a good position in this world, even an eminent station in the affairs of this life; you may have "made good" in your avocation and wrought praiseworthy achievements judged by human standards: you may be "honorable" in the sight of your fellows, but how do you appear in the eyes of *God*—a leper, one whom His law pronounces unclean, one who is utterly unfit for His holy presence. *That* is the first outstanding thing; the dominant lesson taught by our present passage. As it was with Naaman, so it is with you: a vast difference between his circumstances and his condition. There, was the horrible and tragic exception: "a great man—but a *leper*"! There was a worm gnawing at his vitals: a deathbed at his feast, a ghastly thing which cast its baneful shadow over all his fair prospects.

We would not be faithful to our calling were we to glide over that in God's Word which is distasteful to proud flesh and blood. Nor would we be faithful to our readers if we glossed over their frightful and fatal natural condition. It is in their souls' interests they should face this humiliating and unpleasant fact: that in God's sight they are spiritual lepers. But we must individualise it. Hast thou, my reader, realised this fact in thine *own case*? Hast thou seen thyself in God's light? Art thou aware that thy soul is suffering from a disease that neither you nor any human being can cure? *It is so*, whether you realise it or not. The Scriptures declare that from the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head there is no soundness in thee, yea, that in the sight of the Holy One, thou art a mass of "wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores" (Isa. 1:6). Only as you penitently accept that Divine verdict is there any hope for you.

All disease is both the fruit and the evidence of sin, as was plainly intimated unto Israel. Under the Levitical law God might well have required separate purifications for every form of disease. But He did not, and thereby He displayed His tenderness and mercy, for such a multiplicity of ceremonial observances to have been required would have constituted an intolerable burden. He therefore singled out one disease to be a standing object-lesson, and *that* such an one could not fail to be a fit representation and most effective

symbol of sin. This disease was white leprosy, described with much minuteness of detail in Leviticus 13 and 14. Leprosy, then, was not only a real but a typical disease, adumbrating in a most solemn and striking manner that fearful malady sin, with which we are infected from the centre to the circumference of our beings. While it be true that the type is only intelligible in the light of its antitype, the shadow in the presence of its substance, yet the former is often an aid to the understanding of the latter.

That the disease of leprosy was *designed* to convey a representation of the malady of sin appears from these considerations. First, the ceremonial purification whereby the stain of leprosy was cleansed pointed to the Lord Jesus as making atonement for the cleansing of His people. Second, it was not a physician but the high priest who was the person specifically appointed to deal with the leper. Third, there was no prescribed remedy for it: it could only be cured by a direct miracle. Fourth, the leper was cut off from the dwelling place of God and the tabernacle of His congregation, being put "outside the camp." Thus it will be seen from these circumstances that leprosy was removed from the catalogue of ordinary diseases, and had stamped upon it a peculiar and typical character. It was a visible sign of how God regarded the sinner: as one unsuited to the presence of Himself and His people. How unspeakably blessed then, to discover that, though not the first He performed, yet the first individual miracle of Christ's recorded in the New Testament is His healing of the leper (Matt. 8:2-4).

For the particular benefit of young preachers and for the general instruction of all we will close this article with an outline. 1. Leprosy has an *insignificant beginning*. To the non-observant eye it is almost imperceptible. It starts as "a rising, a scab, or bright spot" (Lev. 13:2). It is so trivial that usually no attention is paid to it. Little or no warning is given of the fearful havoc it will work. Was it not thus with the entrance of sin into this world? To the natural man the eating of the forbidden fruit by our first parents appears a very small matter, altogether incommensurate with the awful effects it has produced. The unregenerate discern not that sin is deserving of and exposes them to eternal destruction. They regard it as a trifle, unduly magnified by preachers.

2. Leprosy is *inherited*. It is a communicable disease. It poisons the blood, and so is readily transmitted from parent to child. It is so with sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). None has escaped this dreadful entail. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5) is equally true of every member of Adam's race. None is born spiritually pure: depravity is communicated in every instance from sire to son, from mother to maid. Human nature was corrupted at its fountain head and therefore all the streams issuing therefrom are polluted.

3. Leprosy *works insidiously* and almost imperceptibly, for it is a disease which is attended by little pain: only in its later stages, when its horrible effects discover themselves, is it unmistakably manifest. And thus it is with that most awful of all maladies. Sin is subtle and sly, so that for the most part its subjects are quite unconscious of its workings. Hence we read of "the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). It is not until the Spirit convicts, that one is made aware of the awfulness and extent of sin, and begins to feel "the plague of his own heart" (1 Kings 8:38). Yes, it is not until a person is born again that he learns his very nature is depraved. Only as the sinner grows old in sin does he discover what a fearful hold his lusts have upon him.

4. Leprosy *spreads* with deadly rapidity. Though it begins with certain spots in the skin which are small at first, they gradually increase in size: slowly but surely the whole body is affected. The corruption extends inwardly while it spreads outwardly, vitiating even the bones and marrow. Like a locust on the twig of a tree, it continues eating its way through the flesh, till nothing but the skeleton is left. This is what sin has done in man—it has corrupted every part of his being, so that he is totally depraved. No faculty, no member of his complex constitution has escaped defilement. Heart, mind, will, conscience—spirit and soul and body—are equally poisoned. "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18).

5. Leprosy is *highly infectious*. Inherited inwardly, contagious outwardly. The leper communicates his horrible disease to others wherever he goes. That is why he was quarantined under the Mosaic Law, and when he saw anyone approaching he was required to give warning by crying, "Unclean, unclean." The analogy continues to hold good. Sin is a malady which is not only inherited by nature, but it is developed by association with the wicked. "Evil communications *corrupt* good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). That is why the righteous are bidden, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it [as a plague], pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Prov. 4:14-15)—such repetition bespeaks our danger and intimates how slow we are to be warned against it. "Shun profane and vain babblings...their word will *eat* as doth a *canker*" (2 Tim. 2:16,17).

6. Leprosy is *peculiarly loathsome*. There is nothing more repellent to the eye than to look upon one on whom this awful disease has obtained firm hold. Except with the most callous, despite one's pity, he or she is obliged to turn away from such a nauseating sight with a shudder. Under Judaism there was no physician who ministered to the leper, and hence it is said of his putrefying sores that "they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. 1:6). The leper may well appropriate to himself the language of Job, "All my inward [or 'intimate'] friends abhorred me, and they whom I love are turned against me" (19:19). All of which is a figure of how infinitely more repellent is the sinner in the sight of Him who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13).

7. Leprosy is a *state of living death*. First the joints become relaxed, then dislocated, and then an eye falls out, or the fingers and toes are shed, and even limbs fall off, until the whole body becomes a horrible mess of dissolution and decay. It is a state of daily and progressive death. As one has said, "The leper is a walking sepulcher." And this is precisely what sin is: a state of spiritual death—a living on the natural side of existence, but dead to all things spiritual. Thus we find an apostle declaring "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6). The natural man is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1): alive sinward and worldward but dead Godward.

8. Leprosy was *dealt with by banishment*. No leper was allowed to remain in the congregation of Israel. The terms of the Mosaic law were most explicit: "he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be" (Lev. 13:46). In the centre of the camp was Jehovah's abode and around His tabernacle were grouped His covenant people. From them the leper was excluded. How rigidly that was enforced may be seen from the fact that even Miriam the sister of Moses (Num. 12:10-15), and Uzziah the king (2 Kings 15:5) were not treated as exceptions. The leper was deprived of all political and ecclesiastical privileges, dealt with as one dead, excluded from fellowship. It is a visible sign of how God regarded the sinner, for sin shuts out from His presence: see Isaiah 59:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

9. Leprosy makes its victim *an object of shame*. It could not be otherwise. Robbing its subject of the bloom of health, replacing it with that which is hideous. Excluding him from God and His people, placing him outside the pale of decency. Consequently the leper was required to carry about with him every mark of humiliation and distress. The law specified that "his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean" (Lev. 13:45). What a spectacle! What a picture of abject misery! What a solemn portrayal of the natural man! Sin has marred the features of God's image, in whose likeness man was originally made, and stamped upon him the marks of the devil.

10. Leprosy is *incurable* so far as man is concerned. One really stricken with this disease was beyond all human aid. The outcome was inevitably fatal. Medical science was helpless before its advance. In like manner sin is beyond human cure; it can neither be eradicated nor ameliorated. No power of will or effort of mind can cope with it. Neither legislation nor reformation is of any avail. Education and culture are equally impotent. Sooner can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots than those do good who are accustomed to do evil (Jer. 13:23).

But what is beyond the power of man is possible with God. Where the science of the ages stands helpless the Savior manifests His sufficiency. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Heb. 7:25). To the leper He said, "I will, be thou clean, and immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Matt. 8:3). Blessed, thrice blessed is that! In view of the ten points above, how profoundly thankful every Christian should be that "the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son *cleanseth* us from *all* sin" (1 John 1:7).

—AWP

N.B. This magazine is still being sent to at least three families of those who heard the editor preach for four hours and three quarters on "The Healing of Naaman" in Philadelphia, USA December 31st, 1925.

DOCTRINE OF SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE

11. Conclusion

It now remains for us to gather up a few loose ends, to summarise what has been before us, make a practical application of the whole, and our present task is completed. Not that we have said anything like all that could be said thereon; yet we have sought to set before the reader the principal aspects of this subject and to preserve a due balance between the Divine and human sides of it—God's operations in connection therewith and the Christian's concurrence therein. Much of the opposition which has been raised against what is termed "the dangerous tendency" of this truth arose from a defective view of the same, through failure to apprehend that the perseverance of the saints exhibited in the Scriptures is their *continuance in faith and holiness*: that the One who has made infallible promise they shall reach the desired goal has also decreed they shall tread the one path which leads to it, that the means as well as the end are ordained by Him, and that He moves them to make diligent use of those means and blesses and makes effectual their labor in the same.

That for which we have contended throughout these chapters is steadfastness in holiness, constancy in believing, and in bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. Saving faith is something more than an isolated act: it is a spiritual dynamic, a principle of action, which continues to operate in those who are the favored subjects of it. This is brought out very clearly and decisively in the great Faith chapter. In Hebrews 11 the Holy Spirit sets before us the faith of Abel, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, and after describing various exercises and fruits of the same, declares "these all died in faith" (v. 13), not one of them apostatised from the same. The "faith" spoken of, as the context shows, was both a justifying and sanctifying one, and those who had received the same from God not only lived by it but died in it. Theirs was a faith which wore and lasted, which overcame obstacles and triumphed over difficulties, which endured to the end. True, the patriarchs had to wrestle against their natural unbelief, and, as the inspired records show, more than once they were tripped up by the same, yet they continued fighting and emerged conquerors.

The Christian is required to continue as he began. He is to daily own his sins to God and he is daily to renew the same acts of faith and trust in Christ and His blood which he exercised at the first. Instead of counting upon some past experience, he is to maintain a present living on Christ. If he continues to cast himself on the Redeemer, putting his salvation wholly in His hands, then He will not, cannot, fail him. But in order to cast myself upon Christ I must be *near* Him; I cannot do so while following Him "afar off." And to be near Him, I must be in separation from all that is contrary to Him. Communion is based upon an obedient walk (John 15:10): the one cannot be without the other. And for the maintenance of this, I must continue to "show the *same* diligence" I did when first convicted of my lost estate, when I perceived that sin was my worst enemy, that I was a rebel against God and His wrath upon me, and when I fled to Christ for refuge, surrendering myself to His lordship and trusting entirely to the sufficiency of His sacrifice to save me from my sins — their dominion, their pollution, and their guilt.

"Show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end" (Heb. 6:11). The selfsame earnestness and pains which actuated my heart and regulated my acts when I first sought Christ must be continued unto the end of my earthly course. This means persevering in a holy life, in the things which are appointed by and are pleasing to God, and unto this the servants of God are to be constantly urging the saints. "Ministerial exhortation unto duty is needful unto those who are sincere in the practice of it, that they may abide and continue therein" (J. Owen). In no other way can the "full assurance of hope" (a confident expectation of the issue or outcome) be Scripturally maintained. The Christian has to be constant in giving "the same diligence" to the things of God and the needs of his soul as he did at the outset. "He said, *to the end*, that they might know they had not reached the goal, and were therefore to think of further progress. He mentioned diligence that they might know they were not to sit down idly, but to strive in earnest." And who think you, my reader, was the author of that quotation? None other than John Calvin! How grievously has Calvinism been perverted and misrepresented.

"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12). The apostle here warns against the vice which is the antithesis of the virtue previously enjoined, for slothfulness is the opposite of diligence. The indolence dehorted is in each of us by nature, for spiritual laxity is not something peculiar to those of a lazy disposition. The evil principle of the "flesh" remains in every Christian and that principle hates and therefore is opposed to the things of God. But the flesh must be resisted and the desires of the "spirit" or principle of grace heeded. When conscious of this indisposition unto practical holiness, this native enmity against the same, the believer must pray with re-

newed earnestness “draw me, we will run after Thee” (Song of Sol. 1:4), “Order my steps in Thy Word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (Ps. 119: 133). It is this which distinguishes the true child of God from the empty professor: his wrestling with the Lord in secret to enable him to press forward in the race set before him.

“But followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” The immediate reference is to the patriarchs who, by continuing steadfast in the faith, persevering in hope amid all the trials to which they were subjected, had no entrance into the promised blessings. Their faith was far more than a notional one: it was influential and practical, causing them to live as “strangers and pilgrims” in this scene (see Heb. 11:13). The word for “patience” here is usually rendered “longsuffering.” It is a grace which makes its possessor refuse to be daunted by the difficulties of the way or be so discouraged by the trials and oppositions encountered as to desert the course or forsake the path of duty. It is just such faith and patience which are required of the saint in every age, for there never has been and never will be any journeying to Heaven on “flowery beds of ease.” If the continued exercise of such graces was required of the patriarchs—persons who were so high in the love and favor of God—then let not us imagine they may be dispensed with in *our* case. The things promised are not obtained “*for* faith and patience,” but they are entered into “through” them.

Assurance of final perseverance neither renders needless wariness and care (1 Cor. 10:12), nor the unwearied use of the appointed means of grace (Gal. 6:9). We must distinguish sharply between confidence in Christ and a weakening of the security of the flesh. The teaching that carnal security and presumption is no bar to eternal glory is a doctrine of the Devil. David prayed “Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end” (Ps. 119:33). Upon it Spurgeon said, “The end of which David speaks is the end of life, or the fullness of obedience. He trusted in grace to make him faithful to the utmost, never drawing a line and saying to obedience ‘Hitherto shalt thou go but no further.’ The end of our keeping the Law will come only when we cease to breathe: no good man will think of marking a date and saying, ‘It is enough, I may now relax my watch, and live after the manner of men.’ As Christ loves us to the end so must we serve Him to the end. The end of Divine teaching is that we may serve to the end” (Treasury of David, Vol. 6). O for more of this well-balanced teaching.

When faith and the spirit of obedience are inoperative the features of the new birth are under a cloud, and when we have no evidence of regeneration we lack any warrant to entertain the assurance of eternal happiness. The man who gives free rein to the flesh and takes his fill of the world gives the lie to his profession that he is journeying to Heaven. It is the glory of the Gospel that while it announces mercy unto the chief of sinners, yet if any be encouraged by this to persist in a course of evil-doing it pronounces his doom. The Gospel encourages hope, but it also promotes holiness; it imparts peace, but it also inculcates godly piety; it cherishes confidence, yet not by looking back to conversion but forward to the desired haven. It justifies the expectation of preservation, but only as we persevere in the path of duty. While it declares emphatically that the believer’s continuance in and maintenance of his faith depend wholly on something extraneous to himself or his present case, yet with equal clearness it insists that the believer’s perseverance is carried on and perfected by his use of all the appointed means.

It is freely granted that many of the objections which are made against this subject apply most pertinently to the Antinomian perversion of it, for hyper-Calvinists have been guilty of presenting this truth in such an unguarded and one-sided manner as to virtually set a premium on loose walking. They have dwelt to such an extent upon the Divine operations as to quite crowd out human responsibility, picturing the Christian as entirely passive. Others who were quite unqualified to write on such a theme have given much occasion to the enemies of the Truth by their crudities, representing the security of the believer as a mechanical thing, divorcing the end from the means, ignoring the safe-guards by which God Himself has hedged about this doctrine, and prating about “once saved, always saved” no matter what the daily walk may be. Nevertheless such abuses do not warrant anyone in repudiating the doctrine itself and opposing the teaching of Scripture thereon, for there is nothing in the Word of God which has the slightest tendency to make light of sin or countenances loose living, but rather everything to the contrary.

When expressing his hatred of the truth of the eternal security of Christ’s sheep, John Wesley exclaimed “How pleasing is this to flesh and blood,” which is the very thing it is *not*. Such a doctrine can never be agreeable to fallen human nature. Depraved man is essentially proud, and hence any scheme of perseverance accomplished by the strength of man’s own will power is pleasing to the vanity of his mind; but a perseverance dependent upon the faithfulness and power of God, a perseverance which is not the result of any human sufficiency but rather of the merits and intercession of Christ, is most unpalatable unto the self-righteous Pharisee. Only the one who has been given to feel the prevailing power of indwelling sin,

who has discovered that his own will and resolutions are wholly incompetent to cope with the corruptions of his heart, who has proved by painful experience that he is completely "without strength" and that apart from Christ he can do nothing, will truly rejoice that none can pluck him out of the Redeemer's hand. As only the consciously sick will welcome the Physician, so none but those who realise their own helplessness will really find the doctrine of Divine preservation acceptable to them.

Moreover, *the duties inculcated* by this doctrine are most repugnant to flesh and blood. Subjection to Christ's authority and the daily taking of His yoke upon us is a requirement very far from welcome to those who wish to please themselves and follow their own devices. The standard of piety, the spirituality of God's Law, the nature of holiness, the insistence that we must keep ourselves unspotted from this world, are directly contrary to the inclinations of the natural man. That we must discipline our affections, regulate our thoughts, mortify our carnal appetites, cut off a right hand and pluck out a right eye, are certainly not good news to the unregenerate, especially when God insists that such mortification is never to be remitted but continued until mortality be swallowed up of life. No, it is impossible that fallen man will ever be pleased with a doctrine of perseverance in *denying self*, taking up his cross daily and following a holy Christ who is despised and rejected by this world. Thus it will abundantly appear from all that has been said, how baseless and pointless is the Arminian objection that the preaching of this doctrine encourages laxity and makes for licentiousness.

How can it be supposed that the proclamation of this blessed truth will lead to carelessness and carnality when we lay it down as a fundamental maxim that no one has any shadow of reason to consider himself interested in the blessing of perseverance except as he has and gives clear evidence that he is inwardly conformed to God and outwardly obedient to His commands? Yet it must be allowed, no matter how carefully and proportionately the doctrine of Scripture be set forth by God's servant, there will always be those ready to wrest to their own destruction. If the Lord Jesus was falsely charged with "perverting the nation" (Luke 23:2), His ministers must not expect immunity from similar criminations. If the apostle Paul was slanderously reported of teaching "Let us do evil, that good may come" (Rom. 3:8), we must not be surprised if the enemies of God should falsify our assertions and draw erroneous inferences from them. Yet this must not deter us from proclaiming all the counsel of God or keeping back anything that would be profitable to His people (Acts 20:27,20).

And now to make practical application of all that has been before us. 1. How earnest should sinners be of becoming Christians. In Christ alone is salvation and safety to be found. Security of person and of estate is the principal concern of men in this world, but security of soul has little or no place in the thoughts of the majority. How fearful to be in imminent danger of death and eternal punishment, and how alarming the condition of those indifferent to their everlasting welfare. Where there is an underground shelter which is out of range of artillery and below the reach of falling bombs, how eagerly will the sane turn thither when the siren sounds. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe" (Prov. 18:10). O let every reader who has not yet done so make haste into his closet, fall upon his knees and rise not till he has committed himself wholly unto Christ for time and eternity. Halt no longer between two opinions. The wrath of God is upon thee, and there is but one way of escape: then flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel (Heb. 6:18). Christ stands ready to receive you if will throw down your weapons of warfare.

2. How diligently you should examine whether or no you are in Christ, the place of eternal security. You should *know* whether or not you have complied with the requirements of the Gospel, whether or not you have closed with Christ's gracious offer therein, whether spiritual life has come to your soul, whether you have been made a new creature in Christ. These things may be known with definite certainty. Put these questions to your soul. Had I sincere resolution to forsake my wicked way when I came to Christ? Did I relinquish all dependence upon my own works? Did I come to Him empty-handed, resting on His promise "him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out"? Then you may be assured on the infallible Word of God that Christ received you, and you are most grievously insulting Him if you doubt it. Do you value Christ above all the world? Do you desire to be conformed more and more to His holy image? Is it your earnest endeavor to please Him in all things, and is it your greatest grief and confession to Him when you have displeased Him? Then these are the sure marks of every one who is a member of His mystical Body.

3. How jealously we should watch over and seek to protect this tree of God's planting, from the winds of false doctrine and the pests which would fain destroy it. If we are to do so then we must give due attention to that injunction, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). We must make conscience of everything which is harmful to godliness. We must walk in separation from the world and have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." We must feed daily upon the

Word of God, for otherwise growth is impossible. We must have regular recourse to the throne of grace, not only to obtain pardoning mercy for the sins committed but to find grace to help for present needs. We must make constant use of the shield of faith for there is no other defense against the fiery darts of Satan. A good beginning is not sufficient: we must press forward unto the things before. A small leak will eventually sink a ship if it be not attended to: many a noble vessel now lies wrecked upon the rocks.

4. How we should beware of wresting this doctrine. Let none encourage themselves in carelessness and fleshly indulgence through presuming upon their security in Christ. It is those who "hear" (heed) His voice and that "follow" Him to whom He has made promise "they shall never perish" (John 10:27,28). The ones of whom the Lord has declared "They shall not depart from Me" are those to whom He said "I will put My fear in their hearts" (Jer. 32:40), but He gives no such assurance to those who trifle with Him. God has promised a victory to His people, but that very promise implies a warfare: victories are not gained by neglect and sloth. When Divine grace brings salvation to a soul it teaches him to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and to "live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12), and if it is not so teaching me, then I am a stranger to saving grace. There is nothing which has so much forwarded the Arminian error of apostasy as the scandalous lives of professing Christians: see that your life gives the lie to it.

5. How we must ascribe all the glory unto God. If thou hast stood firm while others have been swept away, if thou hast held on thy way when many who accompanied thee at the beginning have forsaken the paths of righteousness, if thou hast thrived when others have withered, it is due entirely to the distinguishing mercy and power of God. "Who maketh thee to differ, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive" (1 Cor. 4:7): thou hast no cause whatever to boast. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil" (2 Thess. 3:3): if the Lord, then not myself. It is true we "will" and do, but it is God who worketh both in us (Phil. 2:13). Our sufficiency is of Him and not of ourselves, and due acknowledgment should be made of this; and it *will be* by real saints. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for thy mercy, for Thy truth's sake" (Ps. 115:1).

6. How we should magnify the grace of God. The mind is incompetent to perceive how much we are beholden to the Lord for His interest in and care of us. As His providence is virtually a continual creation, an upholding of all things by His 'power, without which they would lapse back again into nonentity: so the Christian's preservation is like a continual regeneration, a maintenance of the new creation by the operations of the Spirit and the bestowing fresh supplies of grace. It was the realisation of this fact that moved David to acknowledge of God, "Which holdeth our soul in life and suffereth not our feet to be moved" (Ps. 66:9). As Charnock well said, "It is a standing miracle in the world that all the floods of temptation shall not be able to quench this little heavenly spark in the heart, that it shall be preserved from being smothered by the streams of sin which arise in us, that a little smoking flax shall burn in spite of all the buckets of water which are poured upon it." Thus God perfects His strength in our weakness. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for His goodness, for His mercy endureth forever" (Ps. 106:1).

7. How compassionate we should be unto weaker brethren. The more thou art mindful of the Lord's upholding hand, the more compassionate wilt thou be unto those with feeble knees. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Call to mind how patiently the Lord hast borne with thee. Remember how ignorant thou wast but a short time ago, and expect not too much from babes in Christ. Has not the Lord often recovered thee when thou didst wander? Have not thy brethren still occasion to bear with many blemishes in thee? If so, wilt thou be hyper-critical and censorious toward them! Despise not small grace in any, but seek to encourage, to counsel, to help. Christ does not break the bruised reed, nor must we. —AWP

SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

2. *Its Root*

Before attempting to define and describe what the spiritual growth of a Christian consists of we should first show what it is that is capable of growth, for spiritual growth necessarily supposes the presence of spiritual life: only a regenerated person can grow. Progress in the Christian life is impossible unless I be a Christian. We must therefore begin by explaining what a Christian is. To many of our readers this may appear quite superfluous, but in such a day as this, wherein spiritual counterfeits and delusions abound on every side, when so many are deceived on the all-important matter, and because this magazine is read by such widely-different classes, we deem it necessary to follow this course. We dare not take for granted that all our readers are Christians in the Scriptural sense of that term, and may it please the Lord to use what we are about to write to give light to some who are yet in darkness. Moreover, it may be the means of enabling some real Christians, now confused, to see the way of the Lord more clearly. Nor will it be altogether profitless, we hope, even to those more fully established in the faith.

Broadly speaking there are three kinds of "Christians": preacher-made, self-made, and God-made ones. In the former are included not only those who were "sprinkled" in infancy and thereby made members of a "church" (though not admitted to all its privileges), but those who have reached the age of accountability and are induced by some high-pressure "evangelist" to "make a profession." This high-pressure business is in different forms and in varying degrees, from appeals to the emotions to mass hypnotism whereby crowds are induced to "come forward." Under it countless thousands whose consciences were never searched and who had no sense of their lost condition before God were persuaded to "do the manly thing," "enlist under the banner of Christ," "unite with God's people in their crusade against the devil." Such converts are like mushrooms: they spring up in a night and survive but a short time, having no root. Similar too are the vast majority produced under what is called "Personal work," which consists of a species of individual "button-holing," and is conducted along the lines used by commercial travelers seeking to make a "forced sale."

The "second" class is made up of those who have been warned against what has just been described above, and fearful of being deluded by such religious hucksters they determined to "settle the matter" directly with God in the privacy of their own room or some secluded spot. They had been given to understand that God loves everybody, that Christ died for the whole human race, and that nothing is required of them but faith in the Gospel. By saving faith they suppose that a mere intellectual assent to or acceptance of such statements as are found in John 3:16; Romans 10:13 is all that is intended. It matters not that John 2:23, 24 declares that "many *believed* in His name...but Jesus did not commit Himself unto them," that "many believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42,43)—which shows how much their "believing" was worth. Imagining that the natural man is capable of "receiving Christ as a personal Saviour" they make the attempt, doubt not their success, go on their way rejoicing, and none can shake their assurance that they are now real Christians.

"No man can come unto Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him" (John 6:44). Here is a declaration of Christ's which has not received even mental assent by the vast majority in Christendom. It is far too flesh-abasing to meet with acceptance from those who wish to think that the settling of a man's eternal destiny lies entirely within his own power. That fallen man is wholly at the disposal of God is thoroughly unpalatable to an unhumiliated heart. To come to Christ is a spiritual act and not a natural one, and since the unregenerate are dead in sins they are quite incapable of any spiritual exercises. Coming to Christ is the effect of the soul's being made to feel its desperate need of Him, of the understanding's being enlightened to perceive His suitability for a lost sinner, of the affections being drawn out so as to desire Him. But how can one whose natural mind is "enmity against God" have any desire for His Son?

God-made Christians are a miracle of grace, the products of Divine workmanship (Eph. 2:10). They are a Divine creation, brought into existence by supernatural operations. By the new birth we are capacitated for communion with the Triune Jehovah, for it is the spring of new sensibilities and activities. It is not our old nature made better and excited into spiritual acts, but instead, something is communicated which was not there before. That "something" partakes of the same nature as its Begetter: "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6), and as He is holy so that which He produces is holy. It is the God of all grace who brings us "from death unto life," and therefore it is a principle of grace which He imparts to the soul, and it disposes unto fruits which are well pleasing unto Him. Regeneration is not a protracted process, but

an instantaneous thing, to which nothing can be added nor from it anything taken away (Eccl. 3:14). It is the product of a Divine fiat: God speaks and it is done, and the subject of it becomes immediately a "new creature."

Regeneration is not the outcome of any clerical magic nor does the individual experiencing it supply ought thereto: he is the passive and unconscious recipient of it. Said Truth incarnate: "Which were born not of blood [heredity makes no contribution thereto, for God has regenerated heathens whose ancestors have for centuries been gross idolators] nor of the will of the flesh [for prior to this Divine quickening the will of that person was inveterately opposed to God] nor of the will of [a] man [the preacher was incapable of regenerating himself, much less others] but of God" (John 1:13)—by His sovereign and all-mighty power. And again Christ declared, "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof [its effects are quite manifest] but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth [its causation and operation are entirely above human ken, a mystery no finite intelligence can solve] so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8)—not in certain exceptional cases, but in *all* who experience the same. Such Divine declarations are as far removed from most of the religious teaching of the day as light is from darkness.

The word "Christian" means "an *anointed* one," as the Lord Jesus is "The Anointed" or "The Christ." That was one of the titles accorded Him in the Old Testament: "The kings of the earth have set themselves and the rulers taken counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed" or "Christ" (Ps. 2:2 and cf. Acts 2:26,27). He is thus designated because "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:38), for induction into His office and enduement for the discharge thereof. That office has three branches, for He was to act as Prophet, Priest and Potentate. And in the Old Testament we find this foreshadowed in the anointing of Israel's prophets (1 Kings 19:16), their priests (Lev. 8:30) and their kings (1 Sam. 10:1; 2 Sam. 2:4). Accordingly it was upon entrance into His public ministry the Lord Jesus was "anointed," for at His baptism "the heavens were opened unto Him" and there was seen "the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him," and the Father's voice was heard saying "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16,17). The Spirit of God had come upon others before that, but never as He now came upon the incarnate Son, "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3:34), for being the Holy One there was nothing whatever in Him to oppose the Spirit or grieve Him, but everything to the contrary.

But it was not for Himself alone that Christ received the Spirit, but to share with and communicate unto His people. Hence in another of the Old Testament types we read that "The precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard, that ran down to the skirts of his garments" (Ps. 133:2). Though all Israel's priests were anointed, none but the high priest was so upon the *head* (Lev. 8:12). This foreshadowed the Saviour being anointed not only as our great High Priest but also as the Head of His church, and the running down of the sacred unguent to the skirts prefigured the communicating of the Spirit to all the members, even the lowliest, of His mystical Body. "Now He who...hath anointed us is God, who hath sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22). "Of his [Christ's] fulness have all we received" (John 1:16).

When the apostles "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" on the day of Pentecost, and some mocked, Peter declared "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" and concluded by affirming that Jesus had been by the right hand of God exalted and "having received of the Father...*He* hath shed forth *this*" (Acts 2:33). A "Christian" then is an anointed one because he has received the Holy Spirit from Christ "the Anointed." And hence it is written "But ye have an Unction [or "anointing"] from the Holy One," that is, from Christ; and again, "the Anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you" (1 John 2:20,27), for just as we read of "the Spirit descending and *remaining* on Him" (John 1:33) so He abides with us "forever" (John 14:16).

This is the inseparable accompaniment of the new birth. The regenerated soul is not only made the recipient of a new life, but the Holy Spirit is communicated to him, and by the Spirit he is then vitally united to Christ, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). The Spirit comes to indwell so that his body is made His temple. It is by this anointing or inhabitation the regenerate person is sanctified or set apart unto God, consecrated to Him, and given a place in that "holy priesthood" which is qualified "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Thereby the saint is sharply distinguished from the world, for "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). The Spirit is the identifying mark or seal: as it was by the Spirit's descent on Christ that John recognised Him (John 1:33) and "Him hath God the Father *sealed*" (John 6:27), so believers are "sealed with that Holy Spirit." (Eph. 1:13)

But since the individual concerned in regeneration is entirely passive and at the moment unconscious of what is taking place, the question arises, how is a soul to ascertain whether or no he has been Divinely quickened? At first sight it might appear that no satisfactory answer can be forthcoming, yet a little reflection should show that this must be far from being the case. Such a miracle of grace wrought within a person cannot long be imperceptible to him. If spiritual life be imparted unto one dead in sins its presence must soon become manifest. This is indeed the case. The new birth becomes apparent by the effects it produces, namely, spiritual desires and spiritual exercises. As the natural infant clings instinctively to its mother, so the spiritual babe turns unto the One who gave it being. The authority of God is felt in the conscience, the holiness of God is perceived by the enlightened understanding, desires after Him stir within the soul. His wondrous grace is now faintly perceived by the renewed heart. There is a poignant consciousness of that which is opposed to the glory of God, a sense of our sinfulness such as was not experienced formerly.

The natural man [albeit he is as a fallen creature by the first birth] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). By no efforts of his own, by no university education, by no course of religious instruction can he obtain any spiritual or vital knowledge of spiritual things. They are utterly beyond the range of his faculties. Self-love blinds him: self-pleasing chains him to the things of time and sense. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. He may obtain a notional knowledge of them, but until a miracle of grace takes place in his soul he cannot have any spiritual acquaintance with them. Fishes could sooner live on dry ground or birds exist beneath the waves than an unregenerate person enter into a vital and experimental acquaintance with the things of God.

The first effect of the spiritual life in the soul is that its recipient is convicted of its impurity and guilt. The conscience is quickened and there is a piercing realisation of both personal pollution and criminality. The illumined mind sees something of the awful malignity of sin, as being in its very nature contrary to the holiness of God, and in its essence nothing but high-handed rebellion against Him. From that arises an abhorrence of it as a most vile and loathsome thing. The demerit of sin is seen, so that the soul is made to feel it has grievously provoked the Most High, exposing him to Divine wrath. Made aware of the plague of his heart, knowing himself to be justly liable to the awful vengeance of the Almighty, his mouth is stopped, he has not a word to say in self-extenuation, he confesses himself to be guilty before Him; and henceforth that which most deeply concerns him is, What must I do to be saved? in what way may I escape the doom of the Law?

The second effect of the spiritual life in the soul is that its recipient becomes aware of the suitability of Christ unto such a vile wretch as he now discovers himself to be. The glorious Gospel now has an entirely new meaning for him. He requires no urging to listen to its message: it is heavenly music in his ears, "good news from a far Country (Prov. 25:25). Nay, he now searches the Scriptures for himself to make sure that such a Gospel is not too good to be true. As he reads therein of who the Saviour is and what He did, of the Divine incarnation and His death on the cross, he is awed as never before. As he learns that it was for sinners, for the ungodly, for enemies that Christ shed His blood, hope is awakened within his heart and he is kept from being overwhelmed by his burden of guilt and from sinking into abject despair. Desires of an interest in Christ spring up within his soul, and he is resolved to look for salvation in none other. He is convinced that pardon and security are to be found in Christ alone if so be that He will show him favor. He searches now to discover what Christ's requirements are.

A Christian is not only one "anointed" by the Spirit, but he is also one who is a *disciple* of Christ (see Matt. 28:19 margin and Acts 11:26), that is, a learner and follower of Christ. His terms of discipleship are made known in Luke 14:26-33. Those terms a regenerate soul is enabled to comply with. Convicted of his lost condition, having learned that Christ is the appointed and all-sufficient Saviour for sinners, he now throws down the weapons of his rebellion, repudiates his idols, relinquishes his love of and friendship with the world, surrenders himself to the Lordship of Christ, takes His yoke upon him, and thereby finds rest unto his soul; trusting in the efficacy of His atoning blood, the burden of guilt is removed, and henceforth his dominant desire and endeavor is to please and glorify his Saviour. Thus *regeneration* issues in and evidences itself by *conversion*, and genuine conversion makes one a disciple of Christ, following the example He has left us. —AWP

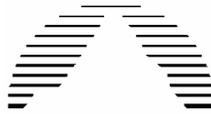
CONTENTS

Our Righteous Redeemer	3
The Prayers of the Apostles.....	5
<i>2. Romans 1:8-12</i>	
The Mission and Miracles of Elisha.....	9
<i>14. The Tenth Miracle</i>	
Doctrine of Saints' Perseverance	13
<i>11. Conclusion</i>	
Spiritual Growth or Christian Progress	17
<i>2. Its Root</i>	

Arthur W. Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886, and born again by God's Spirit in 1908. He studied briefly at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago before his pastoral work in Colorado, California, Kentucky, and South Carolina, USA, and in Sydney, Australia. In 1934, he returned to his native England, taking his final residence on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, in 1940, where he remained until his death in 1952.

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.

Chapel Library is currently reprinting the monthly issues in sequence, mailing quarterly to subscribers in the USA as the Lord enables.



CHAPEL LIBRARY

2603 W. Wright St. • Pensacola, FL 32505
 850 438-6666 • fax: 850 438-0227
 chapel@mountzion.org • www.mountzion.org
A ministry of Mt. Zion Bible Church