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STUDIES
IN THE
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“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

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST

The *general office* with which our Redeemer was invested by His Father is that of *Mediator* between God and men. To discharge that great office, it was necessary that He become incarnate, that He should take into union with His divine person a holy and perfect humanity. The manner in which He was fitted for the discharge of His office was by His “anointing,” by receiving the Holy Spirit without measure. The character of His mediatorial office involved the threefold functions of the prophet, priest, and king, which was typed out in Old Testament times by the anointing of prophets, priests, and kings—none other being formally and officially anointed. These three functions are not three separate offices, but are the varied activities of the one office of Mediator. Nor are they separate functions capable of successive and isolated performance. “They are rather like the several functions of the one living human body—as of the lungs in inhalation, as of the heart in circulation, and of the brain and spinal column in innervation. They are functions distinct, yet, interdependent and so, together constitute one life. So the functions of prophet, priest, and king mutually imply one another. Christ is always a prophetic Priest, a priestly Prophet, and He is always a royal Priest and priestly King, and together they accomplish one redemption, to which they are equally essential” (Archibald A Hodge, 1823-1886).

The exercise of this threefold function of the mediatorial office was requisite for the complete deliverance of Christ’s people by the circumstances in which the Fall had placed them. In other words, the moral condition, in which they lay as sinners, makes it evident that not one of the three branches of His mediatorial office could be dispensed with. His people were immersed in ignorance, guilt, pollution, and bondage. “Their ignorance is removed by the discharge of His prophetic office, their guilt by His priestly, and their pollution and bondage by His kingly office. As a Prophet, He dispels the darkness of their

understandings. As a Priest, He atones for their sins. As a King, He delivers them from the bondage of depravity. He reveals God to us as a Prophet. He brings us near to God as a Priest. He renews us after the image of God as King” (John Dick, 1764-1833). Therefore are we told that God has made Christ to be unto us “wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30).

Coming now more directly to the prophetic office of Christ, or, more accurately, the prophetic function of His mediatorship, a “prophet” is one who speaks for another. See Exodus 7:1 and compare Exodus 4:14-16. In spiritual concerns, a “prophet” is one who speaks to men from God. Hence, he must be a “seer” (1Sa 9:9), one who discerns the needs of men and who knows the mind of God, and, hence, is qualified to speak in God’s name. Thus, a “prophet” is one who speaks in an eminent and extraordinary manner. He speaks by divine inspiration, whether the subject relates to the past, the present, or the future. When the term is applied to Christ, it is used in its utmost latitude, to denote that He is the great Messenger of God, the Revealer of His counsels, the full and final Manifestation of the divine character, so that He could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Joh 14:9).

Of old, God declared unto Moses, “I will raise them up a *Prophet* from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Deu 18:18-19). This was one of the great Messianic predictions. It announced that the supreme Spokesman of God should be of Israel, according to the flesh. That He should be like unto Moses, the typical mediator. That He would deliver the whole message of God, and that they who despised Him would do so at their imminent peril.

In all things, Christ has the pre-eminence. As Prophet, He far excels all other prophets. First, unto each of them was communicated only a fraction of heavenly knowledge. But of the Mediator, it is written, “For it pleased the Father that in him should *all* fulness dwell” (Col 1:19). Second, they received the Spirit only in measure—He, “without measure” (Joh 3:34). Third, they were unable to fully understand their own message (1Pe 1:11). Christ had a perfect comprehension of the whole truth of God. Fourth, they could not add one word, with the same authority and infallibility, to what they had spoken or written. But He, having “*all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3) stored up within Himself, did at all times and places give forth the mind and will of God as He would, so that what He spoke had its whole authority from *His* speaking it, and not from an agreement unto anything previously revealed. Finally, Christ was not simply the Messenger, but in His own person was also the Message itself. “The law was *given by* Moses, but grace and truth *came by* [were perfectly embodied in and personified by] Jesus Christ” (Joh 1:17). He was Himself all that He spake (Joh 8:25).

“When contemplating Jesus Christ simply as a divine person, we must consider Him as the uncreated source of all intelligence and wisdom. He is ‘the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world’ (Joh 1:9). In His mediatorial character, however, He speaks not properly in His own name, but in the name of Him who gave Him His commission, and brings to us the Father’s message. Hence, we say that He was invested with the prophetic office, implying that He acted a subordinate part, and by the authority of

Another. What has now been stated is conformable to His own declarations of which the following are a specimen. 'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me' (Joh 7:16). 'For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak' (Joh 12:49) (John Dick).

The *exercise* of Christ's prophetic function may be considered in three distinct periods. The first, from the Fall to His birth. For, although He was not incarnate, He was the appointed Saviour of His people, and, as far as was consistent with His present state, He acted the part of a mediator. The assumption of our nature was not indispensably necessary to prepare Him for giving instruction to men, although every gracious communication to His people pre-supposed that event as afterwards to take place, and was made in the view of it. The theophanies, or appearances of a divine person in human form, who delivered commands and promises to the patriarchs, anticipated and adumbrated the divine incarnation.

The second period extended from the birth of Christ, or more properly, from His baptism, when He entered upon His public ministry, to His death. During this period, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, "declared" Him unto men with His own lips (Joh 1:18). The eternal *Word* had become flesh to reveal the invisible God. He was the "brightness [or "outshining"] of his glory" (Heb 1:3), for in Christ incarnate is God alone fully manifested (1Ti 3:16). The "Wonderful, Counsellor" had now been born among men (Isa 9:6). The "messenger of the covenant" had come suddenly to His temple (Mal 3:1). God's great "Apostle" (Heb 3:1) had been sent unto men. The people themselves acknowledged Him as such, saying, "A great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people" (Luk 7:16). "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that *prophet* that should come into the world" (Joh 6:14). "Many of the people therefore...said, Of a truth this is *the Prophet*" (Joh 7:40).

The third period extends from the ascension of Christ, or rather from the day of Pentecost, when He poured out the Holy Spirit upon His apostles, to the end of the world. But this period may be sub-divided into two portions, according to the difference in the mode of administration. In the first, He instructed the Church by *extraordinary* means. The apostles were inspired by Christ and fitted by the Spirit to deliver unto the world the revelations made to them. "When he ascended upon high, he...gave gifts unto men...and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets" (Eph 4:8, 11). Thus, there was no difference in respect of authority between the doctrine of the apostles and that delivered by Christ Himself. They are equally *His Word*, and to be received with the same submission of mind, and the same undoubting confidence.

The last period of the ministry of Christ as Prophet reaches from the close of divine revelation until the end of time. During this interval, He exercises His office by *ordinary* means, that is, by the Scriptures, which men are required to read and understand, by His ministers, who are appointed to expound and apply them, and by His Spirit, through whose agency the understanding is enlightened, the affections inflamed, the will moved to action, the soul fed and built up, the life reformed and transformed. Therefore, do we find the Scriptures representing Christ as *still* addressing us from on High. "If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb 12:25). Whatever knowledge of God and His will, of

the purpose and power of His grace, of the realization of the world to come, is found among men, has been derived from the prophetic ministry of the Lord Jesus.

“As there is but one sun in the heavens, from which light has flowed to irradiate every region of the earth, throughout the successive generations of mankind, so, our Redeemer is the one source of all the spiritual wisdom which has enlightened men from the beginning of the world in whatever form it has been communicated—whether as a record of the past, or a prediction of the future, a disclosure of mysteries which reason could not discover, or an authoritative publication of the will of the Supreme. And, hence, originates the *unity* of revelation, the harmony that *binds together* the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures, the *identity* in respect of substance, of the religions of the antediluvians and the men of the present age. For, great as the difference seems to be upon a superficial view, it is reduced to this single point, that the germ contained in the first notices of it has now developed itself, and yields fruits in abundance” (John Dick, from whom the four preceding paragraphs are also condensed).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

51. Christian Perseverance (10:23-24)

The verses which are now to be before us are a continuation of those which we pondered in our last article, the whole forming a practical application to the doctrine which the apostle had been expounding in the body of this epistle. In Hebrews 10:17-21, a summary is given of the inestimable blessings and privileges which Christ has secured for His people, namely, their sins and iniquities being blotted out from before the face of the Judge of all (Heb 10:17-18), the title to approach unto God as acceptable worshippers (Heb 10:19-21), and the divine provision for their spiritual maintenance—a great Priest over the house of God (Heb 10:21). Then, in Hebrews 10:22-24, the duties and responsibilities of Christians are briefly epitomized, and that, in such terms as we may the better perceive the intimate connection between the results secured by the great Oblation and the corresponding obligations on its beneficiaries.

The passage we are now engaged with is a hortatory one. As we pointed out in our last, the method which is generally followed by the Holy Spirit is to first display the riches of divine grace, and, then, to set forth the response which becomes its objects. So it is here. All that is found in Hebrews 10:22-24 looks back to and derives its force from the, “Therefore,” at the beginning of verse 19. There is a threefold privilege named—Divine grace has given freedom unto all Christians to approach the heavenly mercy-seat (Heb 10:19). It has bestowed this title through Christ’s having “consecrated” for them the way into God’s presence (Heb 10:20). And this blessing is permanent, because there abides a great Priest to mediate for them (Heb 10:21). Agreeing thereto, there is a threefold responsibility resting upon the saint, set forth thus, “Let us draw near” (Heb 10:22). “Let

us hold fast the profession of our faith” (Heb 10:23). “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love” (Heb 10:24).

The first part of this threefold exhortation matches the first blessing named in the preceding verses. Because the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ has made a perfect and effectual atonement for all the sins of His people, (thereby removing the one great legal barrier which excluded them from the presence of the thrice Holy One), let them freely “draw near” unto their reconciled God, without fear or doubting. The second part of this exhortation agrees with the second great blessing specified. Since Christ has “consecrated for us” a new and living way in which to walk, having left us an example that we should follow His steps, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering” (Heb 10:23). The third member of the composite exhortation corresponds to the third privilege enumerated. Since we have a great Priest over the house of God, “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb 10:24), and thus, conduct ourselves becomingly as in His house.

The order in the three parts of this exhortation calls for our closest attention. The first treats of our relation to God—the worshipping of Him in spirit and in truth, and in order to this, the maintaining of a good conscience and the separating of ourselves from all that pollutes. The second deals with our conduct before men in the world—the refusal to be poisoned by their unbelief and lawlessness, and this by a steady perseverance in the path of duty. The third defines our responsibility toward fellow-Christians—the mortifying of a selfish spirit, by keeping steadily in view the highest welfare of our brethren and sisters, seeking to encourage them by a godly example, and thus, stirring them up unto holy diligence and zeal both Godward and manward. Thus, we may see how very comprehensive is the scope of this exhortation, and admire its beautiful arrangement. How much we often miss through failing to carefully note the *connection* of Scripture!

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)” (Heb 10:23). There is some uncertainty as to the Greek here. Some manuscripts having, “faith,” others, “hope.” Both the Revised Version and Bagster’s Interlinear have “the confession of our [the] hope.” It seems to us that the Authorized Version is to be preferred. For while it is true that if we adopt the alternative, we then have “faith” in verse 22, “hope” in verse 23, and “love” in verse 24, yet this is more than offset by the weighty fact that *perseverance in the faith* is the theme which is steadily followed by the apostle, not only throughout the remainder of this tenth chapter, but also throughout the eleventh. We shall, therefore, adhere to our present version, excepting that “confession” is preferable to “profession.”

“Let us hold fast the profession of faith without wavering” (Heb 10:23). The duty here pressed is the same as that which the apostle has spoken of in each parenthesis in his argument (compare Heb 2:1-3; 3:6 to 4:12; 5:11 to 6:20)—the doctrinal section giving force and power unto it. “Faith is here taken in both the principal acceptations of it, namely, that faith whereby we believe, and the faith or doctrine which we do believe. Of both which, we make the same profession—of one, as the inward principle, of the other, as the outward rule. This solemn profession of our faith is two-fold—initial, and by the way of continuation in all the acts and duties required thereunto. The first is a solemn giving up

of ourselves unto Christ, in a professed subjection unto the Gospel, *and* the ordinances of divine worship therein contained” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

“Let us hold fast the profession of faith without wavering” (Heb 10:23). Three questions here call for consideration. Namely, first, what is meant by “the confession of our faith”? Second, what is signified by “holding it fast”? Third, what is denoted by holding it fast “without wavering”? As the theme here treated of is of such vital importance, and as it is dealt with so very unsatisfactorily by many present-day preachers, we will endeavor to exercise double care as the Spirit is pleased to enable us.

The “confession of our faith” is that solemn acknowledgment which is made by a person when he publicly claims to be a Christian. It is the avowal that he has renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, for Christ. It is the declaration that he disowns his own wisdom, righteousness, and will, and receives the Lord Jesus as his Prophet, Priest, and King. His Prophet to instruct him in the will of God. His Priest to meet for him the claims of God. His King to administer in and over him the government of God. It is the owning that he hates sin and desires to be delivered from its power and penalty. That he loves holiness and longs to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. It is the claiming that he has thrown down the weapons of his warfare against God, and has now completely surrendered to His just demands upon him. It is the testifications that he is prepared to deny self, take up his cross daily, and follow that example which Christ has left him as to how to *live for God* in this world. In a word, it is the publishing abroad that he has from his very heart “received Christ Jesus *the Lord*” (Col 2:6). And let it be said plainly and emphatically, that no one acknowledging *less* than this is scripturally entitled to be regarded as a Christian.

“The apostle spends the whole remainder of the epistle in the pressing and confirming of *this* exhortation, on a compliance wherewith the *eternal* condition of our souls *doth depend*. And this he doth, partly by declaring the means whereby we may be helped in the discharge of this duty—partly by denouncing the eternal ruin and sure destruction that will follow the neglect of it—and partly by encouragements from their own former experiences, and the strength of our faith—and partly by evidencing unto us, in a multitude of examples, how we may overcome the difficulty that would occur unto us in this way, with other various cogent reasonings, as we shall see, if God pleaseth, in our progress” (John Owen).

To “*hold fast* the confession of our faith” means to continue in and press forward along the path we profess to have entered, and that, notwithstanding, all the threats of persecutors, sophistical reasonings of false teachers, and allurements of the world. Your very safety depends upon this, for if you deny the faith, you are “worse than an infidel” (1Ti 5:8) who has never professed it. God plainly warns us that, if after we have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are again entangled therein and overcome, then, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 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 2:20-21). It is one thing to *make* “confession of faith,” it is quite another to “hold fast” the same. Multitudes do the former, exceedingly few the latter. It is easy to avow myself a Christian, but it is most difficult indeed to *live* the life of one.

Concerning the force of the Greek word rendered “hold fast,” John Owen stated that there is included in the sense of it, “First, a supposition of great difficulty, with danger and opposition against this holding the profession of our faith. Second, the putting forth of the utmost of our strength and endeavors in the defence of it. Third, a constant perseverance in it, denoted by its being termed ‘keep’ in 1 Corinthians 15:2—possess it with constancy.” If our readers could only realize the mighty power and inveterate enmity of those enemies who are seeking to destroy them, none would deem such language too strong. Sin within is ever seeking to vanquish the Christian. The world without is constantly endeavoring to draw him away from the path of godliness. Our adversary the devil is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That wonderful allegory of Bunyan’s, by no means overdrew the picture when he represented the pilgrim as being menaced by mighty giants and a dreadful Apollyon, which must either be slain by him, or himself be destroyed by them.

Sad indeed is it to witness so many young professing Christians just starting out on their arduous journey to heaven, being told that the words, “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” applies not to them, but only to the Jews. And that, while unfaithfulness on their part will forfeit some “millennial” crown, yet, so long as they have accepted Christ as their personal Saviour, no matter how they might indulge the flesh or fraternize with the world, heaven itself cannot be missed. Little wonder that there is now such a deplorably low standard of Christian living among those who listen to such soul-ruinous error. Not so did teachers of the past, who firmly held the eternal security of Christ’s redeemed, pervert that blessed truth. No, they preserved the balance by insisting that God only preserved His people *in the path of obedience* to Him, and that they who forsake that path make it evident that *they* are *not* His people, no matter what their profession, and no matter what past “experience” they had.

To illustrate what we have in mind, an article appearing in a recent issue of a periodical, on the subject of the security of a Christian, begins thus: “The person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who died for all sin on the cross, and has accepted Him as his own personal Saviour, is saved. And more, can never again, under any circumstances or conditions whatsoever, no matter what he may do or not do, be lost.” Such an unqualified, unguarded, unbalanced statement as that is misleading, and dangerous to the highest degree. The more so, as nothing that follows in the article in any wise modifies it. But more—Stated thus, it is unscriptural. God’s Word says, “Whose house are we, *if* we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the *end*” (Heb 3:6). And again, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Rom 8:13). That is, die eternally, suffer the “second death,” for “life” and “death” throughout the epistle of the Romans is *eternal*.

Such a statement as the above (made thoroughly in good faith, we doubt not, yet by one who is the unwitting victim of a school of extremists) leaves completely out of sight the Christian’s *responsibility*. Yea, altogether repudiates it. Side by side with the blessed truth of divine preservation, the Scriptures uniformly put the solemn truth of Christian perseverance. Are the Lord’s people told that they are, “*Kept by* the power of God through faith” (1Pe 1:5)? So are they also exhorted to, “*Keep thy heart* with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). “*Keep himself* unspotted from the world” (Jam 1:27).

“*Keep yourselves* from idols” (1Jo 5:21). “*Keep yourselves* in the love of God” (Jude 1:21). And it is not honest to quote one class of these texts and *not* quote, with *equal* diligence and emphasis, the other.

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” The one-sided teaching of a certain school today renders such an exhortation as this, as not only superfluous, but meaningless. If my *only* concern (as so many are now affirming) is to trust in the finished work of Christ, and rely upon the promise of God to take me to heaven, if I have committed my soul and its eternal interests into the hands of God, so that it is now only *His* responsibility to guard and preserve me, then, it is quite unnecessary to bid me guard myself. How absurd are the reasonings of men, once they depart from the truth! As well might I argue that, because I have committed my body into the hands of God, and am counting upon Him to keep me in health, that, therefore, no matter how I neglect the laws of health, no matter what I eat or do not eat, He will infallibly preserve me from sickness and death. Not so. If I drink poison, I shall come to an untimely grave. Likewise, if I live after the flesh, I shall die.

The apostles believed in no *mechanical* salvation. They busied themselves in “*confirming* the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them *to continue* in the faith” (Act 14:22). According to the lopsided logic of many teachers today, it is quite *un-*necessary to exhort Christians to “continue in the faith.” They *will* do so. But be not wise above what is written, and deem not yourselves to be more consistent than the apostles. They “*exhorted* them all, that with purpose of heart they would *cleave unto* the Lord (Act 11:23). Yea, “*persuaded* them to continue in the grace of God” (Act 13:43). The beloved Paul held no such views that, because his converts had been genuinely saved, there was, therefore, no need for him to be any further concerned about their *eternal* welfare. Rather did he send Timothy, “to know your faith, *lest* by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be *in vain*” (1Th 3:5). So Peter warned the saints, “Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2Pe 3:17).

Should we be asked, “Then, do you no longer believe in the absolute and eternal security of the saints?” Our answer is, we do, as it is set forth in Holy Writ. But we most certainly do not believe in that wretched perversion of it which has now become so current and popular. The Christian preservation set forth in God’s Word is not merely a remaining on earth for some time after faith and regeneration have been produced, and then being admitted, *as a matter of course*, to heaven, *without a regard* to the moral history of the intervening period. No, Christian perseverance is a continuing in faith and holiness, a remaining steadfast in believing and in bringing forth all the fruits of righteousness. It is persisting in that course which *the converted* one has entered. A perseverance unto the end in the exercise of faith and in the practice of godliness. Men who are influenced more by selfish considerations of their own safety and security, than they are with God’s commands and precepts, His honour and glory, are not Christians at all.

The *balance* between divine preservation and human perseverance was well presented by John Owen when he wrote, “It is true our persistency in Christ doth not, as to the issue and event, depend absolutely on our own diligence. The unalterableness of our union with Christ, on the account of the faithfulness of the covenant of grace, is that which doth and shall eventually secure it. But yet *our own* diligent endeavor is such an *indispensable*

means for that end, as that without it, it will *not* be brought about. Diligence and endeavor in this matter are like Paul's mariners, when he was shipwrecked at Melita. God had before given him the lives of all that sailed with him in the ship (Act 27:24), and he 'believed that it should be even as God had told him.' So now the preservation of their lives depended absolutely on the faithfulness and power of God. *But yet*, when the mariners began to fly out of the ship, Paul tells the centurion that, unless the men stayed, they could not be saved (Act 27:31). But what need he think of ship-men, when God had promised and taken upon Himself the preservation of them all? He knew full well that *He* would preserve them, but *yet* that He would do so *by* the use of means.

"If we are in Christ, God hath given us the lives of our souls, and hath taken upon Himself, in His covenant, the preservation of them. But *yet* we may say, with reference unto the *means* that He hath appointed, when storms and trials arise, *unless we use* our diligent endeavours, *we* cannot be saved. Hence, are the many cautions which are given not only in this epistle, wherein they abound, but in other places of Scripture also, that we should take heed of apostasy and falling away. As 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall' (1Co 10:12). 'Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown' (Rev 3:11)...consider what it is to 'abide in Christ.' What watchfulness, what diligence, what endeavour, are required thereunto. Men would have it to be a plant that needs neither watering, manuring, nor pruning, but one which will strive alone of itself. Is it any wonder if we see so many either decaying or unthrifty professors? And so many that are utterly turned off from their first engagements!" (John Owen, Vol. 25, pages 171-173).

From the last two sentences quoted above, we may perceive that the same evil against which we are here contending—a *carnal* security, which Scripture *nowhere* warrants—had an existence in the palmy days of the Puritans. Verily, there is no new thing under the sun! Nearly three hundred years ago, that faithful teacher and prince of expositors had to protest against the one-sided perversion of the precious truth of the divine preservation of the saints. But no wonder! The devil plainly revealed his methods when he pressed upon Christ the divine promise that God had given His angels charge to "bear thee up" (Mat 4:6), but the Saviour refused to recklessly ignore the requirements of self-preservation! From John Calvin's comments upon John 8:31, we extract the following, "If, therefore, we wish that Christ should reckon us to be His disciples, we must endeavour to persevere."

Scripture, not logic, is our rule of faith, and not one or two statements taken out of their contexts, but the whole analogy of faith. Error is truth perverted, truth distorted, truth out of proportion. To short-sighted human reason, there appears to be a clash between divine justice and divine mercy, between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, between law and grace, between faith and good works. But he, who is really taught of the Spirit, is enabled to discern their perfect consistency. "As *sorrowful*, yet always *rejoicing*" (2Co 6:10) is a puzzling paradox to the carnal mind. To read that the Son makes His people "free," and yet, that He requires them to, "take his *yoke*" upon them, is an enigma unto many. To "*rejoice with trembling*" (Psa 2:11) seems a contradiction in terms to some carping minds. No less contradictory appears God's promise to *keep* His people, and His requiring to *keep themselves* under pain of eternal damnation. Yet, the last mentioned are just as *consistent* as are the other things referred to throughout this paragraph.

“For he is faithful that promised” (Heb 10:23). At first glance, it is not very easy perhaps to perceive the precise relation of these words to the preceding exhortation. That they are added by way of encouragement seems fairly obvious, for the more that we spiritually ponder the veracity of the Promiser, the more will our faith be strengthened. The more we realize that we have to do with One who cannot lie, the greater confidence shall we have in His Word. Instead of being unduly occupied with the difficulties of the way, we need to look off unto Him, who has so graciously given us His “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4) to cheer and gladden us. Yet, this hardly explains the immediate connection between the two parts of this verse, nor does it answer the question as to whether or not any *particular* promise is here in view.

“For he is faithful that promised” (Heb 10:23). Perhaps the bearing which these words have upon the preceding injunction has been brought out as well by Albert Barnes (1798-1870) as any. “To induce them to hold fast their profession, the apostle adds this additional consideration. God, who had promised eternal life to them, was faithful to all that He had said. The argument here is, (1) That since *God* is so faithful to us, we ought to be faithful to Him. (2) The fact that *He* is faithful is an *encouragement* to us. We are dependent on Him for grace to hold fast our profession. If He were to prove unfaithful, we should have no strength to do it. But this He never does, and we may be assured that, *all* that He has promised, He will perform. To the service of *such* a God, therefore, we should adhere without wavering.”

If we compare Hebrews 4:1 and 6:15, light is cast upon *what* specific “promise” is here contemplated. In the former, we read, “Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” In the latter, we are told, “And so, after he [Abraham] had patiently endured [persevered] he obtained the promise.” It is to be most particularly noted that, all through this epistle, “salvation” is viewed as a *future* thing. *This* is an aspect of salvation (a vitally important one, too) which is mostly omitted from present-day preaching and teaching. In the Hebrews (as likewise in the epistles of Peter), the saints are contemplated as being yet in the wilderness, which is the place of testing and of danger. It is only those who diligently heed the solemn warning of Hebrews 3:12, who win through, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb 10:24). The opening, “And,” serves two purposes. It is a plain indication that the contents of this verse are closely related to what has just been before us. It is a pointed intimation that we ought to be as considerate and careful about the spiritual edification of other saints as we are of our own. Thus, there are two things here which claim our consideration—the precise nature of the duty enjoined, and the connection between it and the exhortation of Hebrews 10:23.

“And let us consider one another” (Heb 10:24). There are no fewer than eleven Greek words used in the New Testament which are all rendered by our one English term, “consider.” Four of them being simple verbs, and seven of them compounds for the purpose of particular emphasis. The first signifies the serious observing of a matter—Acts 15:6. The second, a careful deliberation—Hebrews 7:4. The third, to narrowly spy or investigate as a watchman—Galatians 6:1. The fourth, to turn a matter over in the mind—2

Timothy 2:7. The first simple verb is compounded in Acts 12:12, and means to seriously consult with one's self about a matter. The second simple verb is compounded in Hebrews 13:7, and means to diligently review a thing. The fourth simple verb is compounded in Acts 11:6, and means to thoroughly weigh a matter so as to come to a full knowledge of it. This is the one used in our present text. In Mark 6:52 is a different compound. The disciples failed to compare things together. In Hebrews 12:3, another compound signifies to reckon up—all that Christ suffered. In John 11:50 is a similar compound—to reckon thoroughly. In Matthew 6:28, "consider the lilies" means to learn thoroughly so as to be instructed thereby. The practical lesson to be learned from all this is that the things of God call for our utmost attention.

"And let us consider one another" (Heb 10:24). Let us diligently bear in mind, and continually have in view, the good of our fellow-pilgrims. The term, "consider," is very emphatic, being the same as in Hebrews 3:1, where we are bidden to, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus." Here, it signifies a conscientious care and circumspection over the spiritual estate and welfare of the other Christians. They are brethren and sisters in Christ, members of the same family. A tie far nearer and dearer than any earthly one unites you to them and them to you. "Consider" not only their blessed relation to you, but also their circumstances, their trials, their temptations, their infirmities, their needs. Seek grace to be of service, of help, of blessing to them. Remember that they have their conflicts too, their discouragements, their falls. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb 12:12).

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb 10:24). Here is expressed the chief design, or end, of our consideration for one another. It is to provoke, or stir up, unto the performance of duties, to strengthen zeal, to inflame affections, to excite unto godly living. We are to provoke one another by means of a godly example, by suitable exhortations, by unselfish acts of kindness. We are to fire one another "unto love," which is not a mere sentiment or natural affability, but a holy principle of action, which seeks the highest good of its object. Christian love is righteous, and never winks at sin. It is faithful, which shrinks not from warning or rebuking where such is necessary. "And good works" is to be the issue, the fruit, of godly love. "And this is love, that we walk after His commandments" (2Jo 1:6).

The relation between this exhortation in Hebrews 10:24 and the one in verse 23 is very intimate. Love and good works are both the effects and evidences of the sincere confession of saving faith, and, therefore, a diligent attendance unto them is an essential means of constancy in our confession. Christian perseverance is nothing less than a continuance in practical godliness, in the path of obedience to Christ, and love unto His brethren. Therefore are we called upon to watch over one another with a view to steadfastness in the faith and fruitfulness in our lives.

No Christian liveth unto himself (Rom 14:7). Each one of us is either a help or a hindrance, a blessing or a curse unto those we associate with. *Which* is it? The Lord stir up both writer and reader to a more unselfish and loving concern for the spiritual good of those who are fellow-members of the same Body.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

3. *His Entering Saul's Service*

In our last article, we contemplated David's anointing. In our present study, an entirely different experience in his varied career is before us. The two halves of 1 Samuel 16 present a series of striking contrasts. In the former, we behold David called to occupy the throne. In the latter, he is seen entering the place of service. There, we see the Spirit of the Lord coming upon David (1Sa 16:13), here, we behold the Spirit of the Lord departing from Saul (1Sa 16:14). In the one, David is anointed with the holy oil (1Sa 16:13). In the other, Saul is troubled with an evil spirit (1Sa 16:14). Samuel was "mourning" (1Sa 16:1). Saul is "refreshed" (1Sa 16:23). Samuel approached Jesse with a heifer for sacrifice (1Sa 16:2). Jesse sends David to Saul with bread, wine, and a kid for feasting (1Sa 16:20). David was acceptable in God's sight (1Sa 16:12). Here, he found favour in Saul's eyes (1Sa 16:22). Before he was tending the sheep (1Sa 16:11), now he is playing the harp in the palace (1Sa 16:23).

God did not set David upon the throne immediately. After his "anointing," came a season of testing. The coming of the Spirit upon him was followed by his having to face the great Enemy. Thus it was with David's Son and Lord, the One whom, in so many respects, he foreshadowed. After the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him at His baptism, Christ was tempted of the devil for forty days. So here—the next thing we read of is David's being sent to calm Saul who was terrified by an evil spirit, and shortly after that, he goes forth to meet Goliath—figure of Satan. The principle which is here illustrated is one that we do well to take to heart. Patience has to be tested, humility manifested, faith strengthened, before we are ready to enter into God's best for us. We must use rightly what God has given us, if we desire Him to give us more.

"But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him" (1Sa 16:14). Exceedingly solemn is this, the more so when we consider that which precedes it. In 1 Samuel 15:1-3, the Lord had, through Samuel, given a definite commission unto Saul to "utterly destroy Amalek, and all that they had." Instead of so doing, he compromised. "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them" (1Sa 15:9). When faced by God's faithful prophet, the king's excuse was "The people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD" (1Sa 16:15). Then it was that Samuel said, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and in sacrifices, as in *obeying* the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is *better* than sacrifice, to hearken than the fat of rams" (1Sa 16:22).

Saul had openly defied the Lord by deliberately disobeying His plain commandment. Wherefore, the prophet said unto him, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou has rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1Sa 15:23). And now, we come to the dreadful sequel. "The Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him" (1Sa 16:14). Having forsaken God, God forsook him. Rightly did Matthew Henry (1662-1714) say upon this verse, "They that drive the good Spirit away from them

do, of course, become a prey to the evil spirit. If God and His grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us.”

“But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him” (1Sa 16:14). Great care needs to be taken against our reading into these words what is really not in them. Otherwise, we shall make one part of Scripture contradict another. The Holy Spirit had never been given to Saul as the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification. But, He had been given to him as a Spirit of prophecy (See 1Sa 10:10 and contrast 1Sa 28:6), and as a Spirit of wisdom for temporal rule, thus fitting him for the discharge of his royal duties. In like manner, when we read that, “God gave him *another* heart” (1Sa 10:9). This must not be confounded with “a new heart” (Eze 36:26)—the “another heart” was not in a moral and spiritual sense, but only in a way of wisdom for civil government, prudence to rule, courage to fight against his enemies, fortitude against difficulties and discouragements.

It is a serious mistake to suppose that because the Holy Spirit has not come as the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification unto many professors, that, therefore, He has not come to them at all. Many *are* “made partakers of the Holy Spirit” as the Spirit of “enlightenment” (Heb 6:4), or spiritual aspirations (Num 24:2; 23:10 etc.), of deliverance from the “pollutions of the world” (2Pe 2:20), who are never brought from death unto life. There are common operations of the Spirit as well as special, and it behooves all of us to very seriously and very diligently examine our hearts and lives for the purpose of discovering whether or not the Holy Spirit indwells us as a *Sanctifier*, subduing the flesh, delivering from worldliness, and conforming to the image of Christ. “When men grieve and quench the Spirit by wilful sin, He departs, and will not strive” (Matthew Henry).

The servants of Saul were uneasy over the king’s condition, realizing that an evil spirit from God was tormenting him. They, therefore, suggested that a man who had skill in playing the harp should be sought out, saying, “And it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well” (1Sa 16:16). Such is the best counsel which poor worldlings have to offer unto those in trouble. As Matthew Henry says, “How much better friends had they been to him, if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the Lord, to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him, and intercede with God for him. Then might he not only have had some present relief, but the good Spirit would have returned.”

How many whose consciences have convicted them of their careless, sinful, godless ways, and who have been startled by the presence of an eternity in hell, have been ruined forever by following a course of drowning the concerns of the soul by regaling and delighting the senses of the body. “Eat, drink, and be merry” (Ecc 8:15) is the motto of the world, and every effort is made to stifle all anxiety about the near prospect of a time arriving when, instead of being able to go on so doing, not even a drop of water will be available to ease their unbearable sufferings. Let the younger readers seriously ponder this, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment” (Ecc 11:9).

The suggestion made by his servants appealed to Saul, and he gave his consent. Accordingly, one of them told him, “Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite,

that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him" (1Sa 16:18). A high character is here accorded David, as one well fitted for the strange part he was to play. Not only was his person suited for the court, not only was he skilled upon the harp, but he was known for his courage and wisdom. The terming of him, "a mighty valiant man," intimates that his single-handed victory over the lion and the bear (1Sa 17:37) had already been noised abroad. Finally, it was known that "the LORD is with him." How this illustrates and demonstrates the fact that one who has received the Spirit, as the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification, gives clear evidence of it to others! Where a miracle of grace has been wrought in the heart, the fruits of it will soon be unmistakably manifested to all around. Very searching is this. Can those with whom we come into daily contact *see* that "the Lord is with" the writer and the reader? O to let our light "so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat 5:16).

"Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep" (1Sa 16:19). Little did Saul think that, in giving this order, he was inviting to his palace the very one of whom Samuel had said, "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, better than thou" (1Sa 15:28)! How marvelously does God, working behind the scenes, bring His own purpose to pass! Verily "Man's goings are of the LORD," and well may we say "How can a man then understand his own way?" (Pro 20:24). Yet, while we are quite incapable of analyzing either the philosophy or psychology of it, let us admire and stand in awe before Him of whom it is written, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are *all things*: to whom be glory forever." Amen (Rom 11:36).

"Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, send me David thy son, which is with the sheep" (1Sa 16:19). What a *testing* for David was this! He, who had been anointed unto an office wherein he would command and rule over others, was now called on to serve. Lovely is it to mark his response. There was no unwillingness, no delay. He promptly complied with his father's wishes. It was also a testing of his courage. Might not Saul have learned his secret, and now have designs upon his life? Might not this invitation to the palace cover a subtle plot to destroy him! Ah, "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Psa 34:7), and where God is truly feared, the fear of man disappears.

"And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul" (1Sa 16:20). What a beautiful typical picture is here presented to us. It was the dire need of poor Saul which moved Jesse to send forth his anointed son. So it was a world lying in sin unto which the Father sent His Beloved. Behold David richly laden with presents for the king. Jesse sent him forth not with weapons of warfare in his hands, but with tokens of his good will. So the Father sent forth His Son, "not to condemn the world" (Joh 3:17), but on an errand of grace and mercy unto it.

"And David came to Saul" (1Sa 16:12). Yes, at his father's bidding, he freely left his home. Though the anointing oil was upon him, he went forth not to be ministered unto, but to minister. How blessedly this foreshadowed Him of whom it is written, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death..." (Phi 2:6-8) O that writer and reader may be so filled with His Spirit, that not only shall we uncomplainingly, but joyfully, perform our Father's bidding.

"And David came to Saul" (1Sa 16:12). Admire, again, the wondrous working of God. David had been called to reign over Israel, but the time had not yet arrived for him to occupy the throne. An unsophisticated shepherd-boy needed training. Observe, then, how the providence of God ordered it that, for a season, he should dwell in the royal court. Thus, having full opportunity to note its ways, observe its corruptions, and discover its needs. And, mark it well, this was brought about *without* any scheming or effort either on his own part or of that of his friends. An evil spirit from the Lord troubled the king. His courtiers were exercised, and proposed a plan to him. Their plan met with Saul's approval. David was mentioned as the one who should be sent for. The king assented. Jesse raised no demurs. David was made willing, and thus, working secretly but surely, God's purpose was accomplished. It is only the eye of faith that looks above the ordinary happenings of daily life and sees the divine hand ordering and shaping them for the accomplishment of God's counsels and the good of His people.

An important principle is here illustrated. When God has designed that any Christian should enter *His* service, His providence concurs with His grace to prepare and qualify him for it, and often it is by means of God's providences that the discerning heart perceives the divine will. God opened the door into the palace without David having to force or even so much as knock upon it. When *we* assume the initiative, take things into our own hands, and attempt to hew a path for ourselves, we are acting in the energy of the flesh. "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass....Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him" (Psa 37:5-7). Obedience to these exhortations is not easy to flesh and blood, yet, they must be complied with if we are not to miss God's best. The more we appropriate and act upon such divine precepts, the more clearly will the hand of God be seen when it intervenes on our behalf. The feverish activities of natural zeal only raise a cloud of dust which conceals from us the beauties of divine providence.

"And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight" (1Sa 16:21-22). Here, too, we may perceive and admire the secret workings of God's providence. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: *He* turneth it whithersoever He will" (Pro 21:1). It was the divine purpose, and for David's good, that he should spend a season at the court. Therefore did the Lord incline Saul's heart toward him. How often we lose sight of this fact. How apt we are to attribute the favour and kindness of people toward us to anything rather than to the Lord! O my reader, if God has given you favour in the eyes of your congregation, or your employer, or your customers, give Him the glory and the thanks for it.

"And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1Sa 16:23). Here, we see the readiness of David to perform every task which God allotted him. In this, he evidenced his moral fitness for the important role he was yet to fill. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many

things” (Mat 25:21), expresses an important principle in the government of God, and one which we do well to take to heart. If I am careless in fulfilling my duties as a Sunday school teacher, I must not be surprised if God never calls me to the ministry. And if I am unfaithful in teaching and disciplining my own children, I must not be surprised if God withholds His power and blessing when I seek to teach the children of others.

The power of David’s harp to quieten the spirit of Saul and to temporarily drive away the demon, ought not to be attributed either to the skill of the player or to the charm of music. Instead, it must be ascribed alone to the Lord, who was pleased to *bless* this means to these ends. The instrument, be it weak or strong, likely or unlikely, is utterly powerless in and of itself. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but there will be no increase unless *God gives it*. In view of 1 Samuel 17:55-56, some have concluded that what has been before us, in the closing verses of chapter 16, is placed out of its chronological order. But there is no need to resort to such a supposition. Moreover, 1 Samuel 17:15 plainly refutes it. How long David remained in the palace we know not, but probably for quite some time. After which, he returned again unto his humbler duties in the sheepfold.

SAVING FAITH

“He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). These are the words of Christ, the risen Christ, and are the last that He uttered ere He left this earth. None more important were ever spoken to the sons of men. They call for our most diligent attention. They are of greatest possible consequence, for in them are set forth the terms of eternal happiness or misery, life and death, and the conditions of both. Faith is the principal saving grace, and unbelief the chief damning sin. The law which threatens death for every sin, has already passed sentence of condemnation upon all, because all have sinned. This sentence is so peremptory that it admits of but one exception—all shall be executed if they believe not.

The condition of life as made known by Christ in Mark 16:16 is double—the principal one, faith—the accessory one, baptism. Accessory, we term it, because it is not absolutely necessary to life, as faith is. Proof of this is found in the fact of the omission in the second half of the verse. It is *not*, “He that is not baptized shall be damned,” but “He that believeth not.” Faith is so indispensable that, though one be baptized, yet believeth not, he shall be damned. As we have said above, the sinner is already condemned. The sword of divine justice is drawn even now, and waits only to strike the fatal blow. Nothing can divert it but saving faith in Christ. My reader, continuance in unbelief makes hell as certain as though you were already in it. While you remain in unbelief, you are “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).

Now, if believing be so necessary, and unbelief so dangerous and fatal, it deeply concerns us to *know* what it is to believe. It behooves each one of us to make the most diligent and thorough inquiry as to the nature of saving faith. The more so, because all faith does not save. Yea, all faith in Christ does not save. Multitudes are deceived upon this

vital matter. Thousands of those, who sincerely believe that they have received Christ as their personal Saviour and are resting on His finished work, are building upon a foundation of sand. Vast numbers, who have not a doubt but that God *has* accepted them in the Beloved, and are eternally secure in Christ, will only be awakened from their pleasant dreamings, when the cold hand of death lays hold of them, and then, it will be too late. Unspeakably solemn is this. Reader, will *that* be your fate? Others, just as sure that they were saved as you are, are now in hell.

I. Its Counterfeits

There are those who have a faith which is so like to that which is saving, as they themselves may take it to be the very same, and others, too, may deem it sufficient. Yea, even others who have the spirit of discernment. Simon Magus is a case in point. Of him, it is written, "Then Simon himself *believed* also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip" (Act 8:13). Such a faith had he, and so expressed it, that Philip took him to be a genuine Christian, and admitted him to those privileges which are peculiar to them. Yet, a little later, the apostle Peter said to him, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God....I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity" (Act 8:21, 23).

A man may believe *all* the truth contained in Scripture, so far as he is acquainted with it, and he may be familiar with far more than are many genuine Christians. He may have studied the Bible for a longer time, and so his faith may grasp much which they have not yet reached. As his knowledge may be more extensive, so his faith may be more comprehensive. In this kind of faith, he may go as far as the apostle Paul did, when he said, "This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing *all* things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Act 24:14). But this is no proof that his faith is saving. An example to the contrary is seen in Agrippa. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou *believest*" (Act 26:27).

Call the above a mere historical faith if you will, yet, Scripture also teaches that people may possess a faith which is more than the product of mere nature, which is of the Holy Spirit, and yet, which is a *non-saving* one. This faith which we now allude to has two ingredients, which neither education nor self-effort can produce—spiritual light and a divine power moving the mind to assent. Now, a man may have both illumination and inclination from heaven, and yet not be regenerated. We have a solemn proof of this in Hebrews 6:4-6. There we read of a company of apostates, concerning whom it is said, "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Yet, of *these* we are told that they were "enlightened," and had "tasted of the heavenly gift," which means they not only perceived it, but were inclined toward and embraced it, and both, because they were "partakers of the Holy Spirit."

People may have a divine faith, not only in its originating power, but also in its foundation. The ground of their faith may be the divine testimony, upon which they rest with unshaken confidence. They may give credit to what they believe, not only because it

appears reasonable or ever certain, but because they are fully persuaded it is the Word of Him who cannot lie. To believe the Scriptures, on the ground of their being *God's* Word, is a divine faith. Such a faith had the nation of Israel after their wondrous exodus from Egypt and deliverance from the Red Sea. Of them, it is recorded, "The people feared the LORD, and *believed* the LORD, and his servant Moses" (Exo 14:31). Yet, of the great majority of them, it is said, "Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest" (Heb 3:17-18).

It is indeed searching and solemn to make a close study of Scripture upon this point, and discover how much is said of unsaved people in a way of having faith in the Lord. In Jeremiah 13:11, we find God saying, "For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to *cleave* unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD," and to "cleave" unto God is the same as to "trust" Him. See 2 Kings 18:5-6. Yet, of that very same generation God said, "This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing" (Jer 13:10).

The term "stay" is another word denoting firm trust. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall *stay* upon the LORD" (Isa 10:20)). "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is *stayed* on thee" (Isa 26:3). And yet, we find a class of whom it is recorded, "They call themselves of the holy city, and *stay themselves upon* the God of Israel" (Isa 48:2). Who would doubt that *this* was a saving faith! Ah, let us not be too hasty in jumping to conclusions. Of this same people, God said, "Thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass" (Isa 48:4).

Again, the term "lean" is used to denote not only trust, but dependency on the Lord. Of the Spouse, it is said, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, *leaning upon* her Beloved?" (Song 8:5). Can it be possible that *such* an expression as this is applied to those who are *unsaved*? Yes, it is, and by none other than God Himself. "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that *abhor* judgment, and *pervert all* equity....The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us" (Mic 3:9, 11). So thousands of carnal and worldly people are leaning upon Christ to uphold them, so that they cannot fall into hell, and are confident that no such "evil" can befall *them*. Yet is their confidence a horrible presumption.

To *rest upon* a divine promise with implicit confidence, and that in the face of great discouragement and danger, is surely something which we would not expect to find predicated of a people who were unsaved. Ah, truth *is* stranger than fiction. This very thing is depicted in God's unerring Word. When Sennacherib and his great army besieged the cities of Judah, Hezekiah said, "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God" (2Ch 32:7-8). And, we are told that, "The people *rested themselves upon* the words of Hezekiah." Hezekiah had spoken the words of God, and for the people to rest upon them was to rest on

God Himself. Yet, less than fifteen years after, this same people did “worse than the heathen” (2Ch 33:9). Thus, resting upon a promise of God is not, of itself, any proof of regeneration.

To *rely upon* God, on the ground of His “covenant,” was far more than resting upon a divine promise. Yet, unregenerate men may do even this. A case in point is found in Abijah, king of Judah. It is indeed striking to read and weight what he said in 2 Chronicles 13, when Jeroboam and his hosts came up against him. First, he reminded all Israel that the Lord God had given the kingdom to David and his sons forever “by a *covenant* of salt” (2Ch 13:5). Next, he denounced the sins of his adversary (2Ch 13:6-9). Then, he affirmed the Lord to be “our God” and that He was “with him and his people” (2Ch 13:10-12). But Jeroboam heeded not, but forced the battle upon them. “Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter” (2Ch 13:17), “because they *relied upon* the LORD God of their fathers” (2Ch 13:18). Yet, of this same Abijah, it is said, “He walked in all the sins of his father,” etc. (1Ki 15:3). Unregenerate men may rely upon God, depend upon Christ, rest on His promise, and plead His covenant.

“The people of Nineveh [who were heathen] *believed* God” (Jon 3:5). This is striking, for the God of heaven was a stranger to them, and His prophet a man whom they knew not—why then should they trust his message? Moreover, it was not a promise, but a threatening, which they believed. How much easier then is it for a people, now living under the Gospel, to apply to themselves a promise, than the heathen a terrible threat! “In applying a threatening, we are like to meet with more opposition, both from within and from without. From within, for a threatening is like a bitter pill, the bitterness of death is in it. No wonder if that hardly goes down. From without, too, for Satan will be ready to raise opposition. He is afraid to have men startled, lest the sense of their misery denounced in the threatening should rouse them up to seek how they may make an escape. He is more sure of them while they are secure, and will labour to keep them off the threatening, lest it should awaken them from dreams of peace and happiness, while they are sleeping in his very jaws.

“But now, in applying a promise, an unregenerate man ordinarily meets with no opposition. Not from within, for the promise is all sweetness. The promise of pardon and life is the very marrow, the quintessence of the Gospel. No wonder if they be ready to swallow it down greedily. And Satan will be so far from opposing, that he will rather encourage and assist one who has no interest in the promise, *to* apply it. For this, he knows, will be the way to fix and settle them in their natural condition. A promise misapplied will be a *seal upon the sepulchre*, making them sure in the grave of sin, wherein they lay dead and rotting. Therefore, if unregenerate men may apply a threatening, which is in these respects more difficult, as appears they may by the case of the Ninevites, why may then not be apt to apply [appropriate] a Gospel promise, when they are not like to meet with such difficulty and opposition?” (David Clarkson, 1621-1686, for sometime co-pastor with John Owen, to whom we are indebted for much of the above).

Another most solemn example of those having faith, but not a saving one, is seen in the stony-ground hearers, of whom Christ said, “which for a while *believed*” (Luk 8:13). Concerning this class, the Lord declared that they hear the Word and “with joy receive it” (Mat 13:20). How many such have we met and known. Happy souls with radiant faces,

exuberant spirits, full of zeal that others, too, may enter into the bliss which they have found. How difficult it is to distinguish such from genuine Christians—the good-ground hearers. The difference is not apparent. No, it lies *beneath* the surface. They have “no *root* in themselves” (Mat 13:21). Deep digging has to be done to discover this fact! Have you searched yourself narrowly, my reader, to ascertain whether or no “the root of the matter” (Job 19:28) be in you?

But let us refer now to another case which seems still more incredible. There are those who are willing to take Christ as their Saviour, yet, who are most reluctant to submit to Him as their Lord, to be at His command, to be governed by His laws. Yet, there are some unregenerate persons who acknowledge Christ as their Lord. Here is the Scripture proof for our assertion, “Many will say to me in that day, *Lord, Lord*, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:22-23) There is a *large* class (“many”) who profess subjection to Christ as Lord, and who do many mighty works in His name. Thus, a people who can even show you their faith by their works, and yet, it is not a saving one!

It is impossible to say how far a non-saving faith may go, and how very closely it may resemble that faith which is saving. Saving faith has Christ for its object. So has a non-saving faith (Joh 2:23-25). Saving faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit. So also is a non-saving faith (Heb 6:4). Saving faith is produced by the Word of God. So also is a non-saving (Mat 13:20-21). Saving faith will make a man prepare for the coming of the Lord. So also will a non-saving. Of both the foolish and wise virgins, it is written, “Then *all* those virgins arose, and *trimmed* their lamps” (Mat 25:7). Saving faith is accompanied with joy. So also is a non-saving (Mat 13:20).

Perhaps some readers are ready to say, all of this is very unsettling, and if really heeded, most distressing. May God in His mercy grant that this article may have just these very effects on many who read it. O if you value your soul, dismiss it not lightly. If there be such a thing (and there is) as a faith in Christ which does not save, then, how easy it is to be *deceived* about *my* faith! It is not without reason that the Holy Spirit has so plainly cautioned us at this very point. “A deceived heart hath turned him aside” (Isa 44:20). “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee” (Oba 1:3). “Take heed that *ye be* not deceived” (Luk 21:8). “For, if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal 6:3). At no point does Satan use his cunning and power more tenaciously, and more successfully, than in getting people to believe that they have a saving faith when they have not.

The devil deceives more souls by this one thing than by all his other devices put together. Take this present article as an illustration. How many a Satan-blinded soul will read it and then say, “It does not apply to *me*. I know that *my* faith *is* a saving one!” It is in this way that the devil turns aside the sharp point of God’s convicting Word, and secures his captives in their unbelief. He works in them a sense of false security, by persuading them that they *are* safe within the ark, and induces them to ignore the threatenings of the Word and appropriate only its comforting promises. He dissuades them from heeding that most salutary exhortation, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; *prove* your own selves” (2Co 13:5). O my reader, heed that word now.

In closing this first article, we will endeavour to point out some of the particulars in which this non-saving faith is defective, and wherein it comes short of a faith which does save. First, with many it is because they are willing for Christ to save them from hell, but are not willing for Him to save them from *self*. They want to be delivered from the wrath to come, but they wish to retain their self-will and self-pleasing. But He will not be dictated unto. You must be saved on *His* terms, or not at all. When Christ *saves*, He saves from *sin*—from its power and pollution, and, therefore, from its guilt. And the very essence of sin is the determination to have my *own* way (Isa 53:6). Where Christ saves, He subdues this spirit of self-will, and implants a genuine, a powerful, a lasting desire and determination to please Him.

Again, many are never saved because they wish to divide Christ. They want to take Him as a Saviour, but are unwilling to subject themselves unto Him as their Lord. Or, if they are prepared to own Him as Lord, it is not as an *absolute* Lord. But this cannot be. Christ will be either Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all. But, the vast majority of professing Christians would have Christ's sovereignty limited at certain points. It must not entrench too far upon the liberty which some worldly lust or carnal interest demands. His peace they covet, but His "yoke" is unwelcome. Of all such, Christ will yet say, "But those mine enemies, *which would not* that I should *reign over them*, bring hither and slay before me" (Luk 19:27).

Again, there are multitudes which are quite ready for Christ to justify them, but not to sanctify. Some kind of, some degree of, sanctification, they will tolerate, but to be sanctified *wholly*, their "whole spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23), they have no relish for. For their hearts to be sanctified, for pride and covetousness to be subdued, would be too much like the plucking out of a right eye. For the constant mortification of all their members, they have no taste. For Christ to come to them as a Refiner, to burn up their lusts, consume their dross, to utterly dissolve their old frame of nature, to melt their souls, so as to make them run in a new mould, they like not. To utterly deny self, and take up their cross daily is a task from which they shrink with abhorrence.

Again, many are willing for Christ to officiate as their Priest, but not for Him to legislate as their King. Ask them, in a general way, if they are ready to do whatsoever Christ requires of them, and they will answer in the affirmative, emphatically, and with confidence. But come to particulars, apply to each one of them those specific commandments and precepts of the Lord which *they* are ignoring, and they will at once cry out, "Legalism!" or, "We cannot be perfect in everything." Name nine duties and perhaps they are performing them, but mention a tenth, and it at once makes them angry, for you have come too close home to their case. After much persuasion, Naaman was induced to bathe in the Jordan, but he was unwilling to abandon the house of Rimmon (2Ki 5:18). Herod heard John gladly and did "many things" (Mar 6:20), but when he referred to Herodias, he touched him to the quick. Many are willing to give up their theatre-going and card-parties, who refuse to go forth unto Christ outside the camp. Others are willing to go outside the camp, yet refuse to *deny* their fleshly and worldly lusts. Reader, if there is a *reserve* in your obedience, you are on the way to hell. Our next article will take up the nature of saving faith.

PRAYER

Prayer is an ordinance of God, and that to be used both in public and in private. Yea, such an ordinance as brings those that have the spirit of supplication into great familiarity with God, and is also so prevalent an action, that it getteth of God, both for the person that prayeth, and for them that are prayed for, great things. It is the opener of the heart of God, and a means by which the soul, though empty, is filled. By prayer, the Christian can open his heart to God, as to a friend, and obtain fresh testimony of God's friendship to him. I might spend many words in distinguishing between public and private prayer, as also between that in the heart, and that with the vocal voice. Something also might be spoken to distinguish between the gifts and graces of prayer. But as eschewing this method, my business shall be at this time only to show you the very heart of prayer, without which, all your lifting up both of hands, and eyes, and voices, will be to no purpose at all.

I. What Prayer Is

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the Church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.

1. For the first of these, it is a sincere pouring out of the soul to God. Sincerity is such a grace as runs through all the graces of God in us, and through all the actings of a Christian, and hath the sway in them too, or else their actings are not anything regarded of God, and so of and in prayer, of which particularly David speaks, when he mentions prayer. "I cried unto the LORD with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me" (Psa 66:17-18). Part of the exercise of prayer is *sincerity*, without which God looks not upon it as prayer in a good sense. "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). The want of this made the Lord reject their prayers in Hosea 7:14, where He saith, "They have not cried unto me with their heart, [that is, in sincerity], when they howled upon their beds:" But for a pretense, for a show, in hypocrisy, to be seen of men, and applauded for the same, they pray. Sincerity was that which Christ commended in Nathaniel when he was under the fig tree, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is *no guile*" (Joh 1:47). Probably, this good man was pouring out of his soul to God in prayer under the fig tree, and that in a sincere and unfeigned spirit before the Lord. The prayer that hath *this* in it, as one of the principal ingredients, is the prayer that God looks at. "The prayer of the *upright* is his delight."

And why must sincerity be one of the essentials of prayer which is accepted of God, but because sincerity carries the soul in all simplicity to open its heart to God, and to tell Him the case plainly, without equivocation—to condemn itself plainly, without dissembling—to cry to God heartily, without complimenting. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock

unaccustomed to the yoke.” Sincerity is the same in a corner alone, as it is before the face of all the world. It knows not how to wear two masks, one for an appearance before men, and another for a short snatch in a corner. But it must have God, and be with Him in the duty of prayer. It is not a lip-labour that it doth regard, for it is the heart that God looks at, and that from which prayer comes, if it be that prayer which is accompanied with sincerity.

2. It is a sincere and *sensible* pouring out of the heart or soul. It is not, as many take it to be, even a few babbling, prating, complimentary expressions, but a sensible feeling there is in the heart. Prayer hath in it a sensibleness of divers feelings. Sometimes a sense of sin, sometimes of mercy received, sometimes of a readiness of God to give mercy, etc.

(1) A sense of the want of mercy, by reason of the danger of sin. The soul, I say, feels, and from feeling, sighs, groans, and breaks at the heart. For right prayer bubbleth out of the flesh by reason of some heavy burden that lieth upon it. David roars, cries, weeps, faints at heart, fails at the eyes, loseth his moisture, etc. Hezekiah mourns like a dove. Ephraim bemoans himself. Peter weeps bitterly. Christ hath strong crying and tears—and all this from a sense of the justice of God, the guilt of sin, the pains of hell and destruction. “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of LORD” (Psa 116:3-4). And in another place, “My sore ran in the night” (Psa 77:2). Again, “I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long” (Psa 38:6). In all these instances, and in hundreds more that might be named, you may see that prayer carrieth in it a sensible, feeling disposition, and that first, from a sense of sin.

(2) Sometimes there is a sweet sense of mercy received, encouraging, comforting, strengthening, and enlivening, enlightening mercy, etc. Thus, David pours out his soul, to bless and praise and admire the great God for His loving kindness to such poor vile wretches. “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed as the eagles” (Psa 103:1-5). And thus is the prayer of saints sometimes turned into praise and thanksgiving, and yet are prayers still. This is a mystery; God’s people pray with their praises, as it is written, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6). A sensible thanksgiving for mercy received, is a mighty prayer in the sight of God. It prevails with Him unspeakably.

(3) In prayer, there is sometimes in the soul a sense of mercy to be received. This again sets the soul all on a flame. “Thou, O LORD of hosts, [said David] hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray unto thee” (2Sa 7:27). This provoked Jacob, David, Daniel, with others, even a sense of mercies to be received, which caused them, not by fits and starts, nor yet in a foolish frothy way to bubble over a few words written in a paper, but, mightily, fervently, and continually, to groan out their conditions before the Lord, as being sensible. Sensible, I say, of their wants, their misery, and the willingness of God to show mercy.

3. Prayer is a sincere, sensible, and *affectionate* pouring out of the soul unto God. O! the heat, strength, life, vigour, and affection that is in right prayer! “As the hart panteth

after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God (Psa 42:1). I have longed for thy precepts (Psa 119:40); I have longed after thy salvation (Psa 119:1774). My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God (Psa 84:2). My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times" (Psa 119:20). Mark ye here, "my soul longeth." It longeth, etc.! O what affection is here discovered in prayer! The like you have in Daniel, "O LORD, hear; O LORD, forgive; O LORD, hearken and do; defer not, for thy own sake, O my God" (Dan 9:19). Every syllable carrieth a mighty vehemency in it. This is called the "fervent," or the working prayer by James. And so again, "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly," or had His affections more and more drawn out after God for His helping hand. O! how wide are the most of men with their prayers from this prayer, that is prayer, in God's sight! Alas! The greatest part of men make no conscience at all of the duty. And, as for them that do, it is to be feared that many of them are very great strangers to a sincere, sensible, and affectionate pouring out their hearts or souls to God, but even content themselves with a little lip-labour and bodily exercise, mumbling over a few imaginary prayers. When the affections are indeed engaged in prayer, then, the whole man is engaged, and that in such sort, that the soul will spend itself to nothing, as it were, rather than it will go without that good desire, even communion and solace with Christ. And hence, it is that the saints have spent their strength, and lost their lives, rather than go without the blessing.

All this is too evident by the ignorance, profaneness, and spirit of envy that reigns in the hearts of those men that are so hot for the forms, and not the power of praying. Scarce one of forty among them know what it is to be born again, to have communion with the Father through the Son, to feel the power of grace sanctifying their hearts. But for all their prayers, they still live abominable lives, full of malice, envy, deceit, persecuting of the dear children of God. O what a dreadful after-clap is coming upon them! which all their hypocritical assembling themselves together, with all their prayers, shall never be able to help them against, or shelter them from.

It is a pouring out of the heart or soul. There is, in prayer, an unbosoming of a man's self, an opening of the heart to God, an affectionate pouring out of the soul in requests, sighs, and groans. "All my desires are before thee [said David]; my groanings are not hid from thee (Psa 38:9). My soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God (Psa 42:2) ? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me" (Psa 42:4) Mark, "I pour out my soul." It is an expression signifying that in prayer there goeth the very life and strength to God. As in another place, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him" (Psa 62:8). This is the prayer to which the promise is made, for the delivering of a poor creature out of thralldom.

This showeth also the excellency of the spirit of prayer. It is the great God to which it retires. "When shall I come and appear before God" (Psa 42:2)? And it argueth, that the soul that thus prayeth indeed, sees an emptiness in all things under heaven, that in God alone there is rest and satisfaction for the soul. "In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear to me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort...For thou art my rock and my fortress" (Psa 71:1-3). Many in a wording way speak

of God, but right prayers make God his hope, stay, and all. Right prayers see nothing substantial, and worth the looking after, but God.

4. It is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart to God, *through Christ*. This “through Christ” must needs be added, or else it is to be questioned whether it be prayer, though in appearance it be never so eminent and eloquent. Christ is the way through whom the soul hath admittance to God, and without whom it is impossible that so much as one desire should come into the ears of the Lord of hosts. “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it” (Joh 14:14). This was Daniel’s way in praying for the people of God. He did it in the name of Christ. “Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, *for the LORD’S sake*” (Dan 9:17). But now, it is not every one that maketh mention of Christ’s name in prayer, that doth indeed and in truth, effectually pray to God. This coming to God through Christ is the hardest part that is found in prayer. A man may more easily be sensible of His works, aye, and sincerely to desire mercy, and yet, not be able to come to God by Christ. The man that comes to God by Christ must first have the knowledge of Him. “LORD, [saith Moses] show me now thy way, that I may know thee” (Exo 33:13).

This Christ, none but the Father can reveal. And to come through Christ, is for the soul to be enabled of God to shroud itself under the shadow of the Lord Jesus, as a man shroudeth himself under a thing for safeguard. Hence, it is that David so often terms Christ his shield, buckler, fortress, rock of defence, etc. Not only because by Him he overcame his enemies, but because through Him, he found favour with God the Father. The man, then, that comes to God through Christ must have faith, by which he puts on Christ, and in Him appears before God. Now, he that hath faith is joined to Christ and made a member of Him, and therefore, he, *as* a member of Christ, comes to God, so that God looks on that man as a member of Christ’s body, united to Him by election and conversion. So that now, he comes to God in Christ’s merits, in His blood, righteousness, victory, intercession, and so stands before Him accepted in the Beloved.

5. Prayer is a pouring out of the heart to God through Christ *by the strength of the Spirit*. For these things do so depend one upon another, that it is impossible that it should be prayer, without these be a joint concurrence of them. For though it be never so famous, yet, without these things, it is only such prayer as is rejected of God. For without a sincere, sensible, affectionate, pouring out of the heart to God, it is but lip-labour. And, if it be not through Christ, it falleth far short of ever sounding well in the ears of God. So also, if it be not in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, it is but like the strange fire offered by the sons of Aaron. But, I shall speak more to this under the second head, and therefore, in the meantime, merely say that, that which is not petitioned through the teaching and assistance of the Spirit, it is not possible that it should be according to the will of God.

6. Prayer is a pouring out of the heart to God, through Christ, in the strength of the Spirit, *for such things as God hath promised*. Prayer must be within the compass of God’s Word. It is blasphemy, or at best, vain babbling, when the petition is beside the Book. David, therefore, in his prayers, kept his eye on the Word of God. “My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken me according to thy word” (Psa 119:25,). “My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen me according to thy word” (Psa 119:28,). “Remember thy word unto thy

servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope” (Psa 119:49). Indeed, the Holy Spirit doth not immediately quicken and stir up the heart of the Christian without, but by, in, and through, the Word. By bringing that to the heart and by opening of that, whereby the man is provoked to go to the Lord, and to tell Him how it is with him, and also to argue and supplicate according to the Word. Thus it was with Daniel, that mighty prophet of the Lord. He, understanding by the Scriptures, that the captivity of Israel was near at hand, made his prayer to God, “I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the LORD God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth” (Dan 9:2-3).

So that I say, as the Spirit is the helper and governor of the soul when it prayeth according to the will of God, so He guideth by and according to the Word of God and His promise. Hence, it is that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself did make a stop, although His life lay at stake for it, “I could now pray to my Father, and He should give me more than twelve legions of angels; but how then should the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Mat 26:53-54). As one should say, were there but a word for it in Scripture, I should soon be out of the hands of mine enemies, I should be helped by angels, but the Scripture will not warrant this kind of praying, for that saith otherwise. The Spirit, by the Word, directs as well in the manner, as in the matter, of praying.

7. Prayer must be *with submission in faith to the will of God*. It is required of us that we say, “Thy will be done,” as Christ hath taught. Therefore, the people of the Lord, in all humility, are to lay themselves and their prayers, and all that they have, at the foot of their God, to be disposed of by Him as He, in His heavenly wisdom, seeth best. Yet not doubting, but God will answer the desire of His people that way which shall be most for His glory and their advantage. When the saints, therefore, do pray with submission to the will of God, it doth not argue that they are to doubt or question God’s love and kindness to them. But, because they are at all times not so wise, but that sometimes Satan may get advantage by tempting them to pray for that which, if they had it, would neither prove to God’s glory nor His people’s good. Yet, this is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petition that we ask Him, that is, if we ask in the spirit of grace and supplication (John Bunyan, 1628-1688, to be continued, D.V.).

THE CURE FOR DESPONDENCY

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?” (Psa 42:5). When the Psalmist gave utterance to these words, his spirit was dejected and his heart was heavy within him. In the checkered career of David, there was not a little which was calculated to sadden and depress. The cruel persecutions of Saul, who hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains, the treachery of his trusted friend, Ahithophel, the perfidy of Absalom, and the remembrance of his own sins, were enough to overwhelm the stoutest.

And David was a man of like passions with us. He was not always upon the mountain-top of joy, but sometimes spent seasons in the slough of despond and the gorge of gloom.

But David did not give way to despair, nor succumb to his sorrows. He did not lie down like a stricken beast and do nought but fill the air with his howlings. No, he acted like a rational creature, and like a man, looked his troubles squarely in the face. But he did more, he made diligent inquiry, he challenged himself, he sought to discover the cause of his despondency. He asked, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" He desired to know the reason for such depression. This is often the first step toward recovery from dejection of spirit. Repining and murmuring get us nowhere. Fretting and wringing our hands bring no relief either temporally or spiritually. There needs to be self-interrogation, self-examination, self-condemnation.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" We need to seriously take ourselves to task. We need to fearlessly face a few plain questions. What is the good of giving way to despair? What possible gain can it bring me? To sit and sulk is not "redeeming the time" (Eph 5:16). To mope and mourn will not mend matters. Then, let each despondent one call his soul to account, and inquire what adequate cause could be assigned for peevishness and fretting. "We may have great cause to mourn for sin, and to pray against prevailing impiety, but, our great dejection, even under the severest outward afflictions or inward trials, springs from unbelief and a rebellious will. We should, therefore, strive and pray against it." (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Cannot you discover the real answer without asking counsel from others? Is it not true that, deep down in your heart, you already know, or at least suspect, the root of your present trouble? Are you "cast down" because of distressing circumstances which your own folly has brought you into? Then, acknowledge with the Psalmist, "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psa 119:75). Is it because of some sin, some course of self-will, some sowing to the flesh, that you are now of the flesh reaping corruption? Then, *confess* the same to God and plead the promise found in Proverbs 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them *shall* have mercy." Or are you grieved because Providence has not smiled upon *you* so sweetly as it has on some of your neighbors? Then, heed that injunction, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity" (Psa 37:1).

Perhaps the cases suggested above do not exactly fit that of some of our readers. Not a few may say, "My soul is cast down and my heart is heavy because my finances are at so low an ebb, and the outlook is so dark." That is indeed a painful trial, and one which mere nature often sinks under. But, dear friend, there is a cure for despondency even when *so* occasioned. He who declares, "The cattle upon a thousand hills are mine" (Psa 50:10), still lives and reigns! Cannot He who fed two million Israelites in the wilderness for forty years, minister to you and your family? Cannot He who sustained Elijah in the time of famine, keep you from starving? "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?! (Mat 6:30).

Returning to our opening text, let us observe how that David not only succumbed not to his sorrows, interrogated his soul, and rebuked his unbelief, but he also preached to

himself. "Hope thou in God!" Ah, *that* is what the despondent needs to do. Nothing else will bring real relief to the heart. The immediate outlook may be dark, but the divine promises are bright. The creature may fail you, but the Creator will not, if you truly put your trust in Him. The world may be at its wits' end, but the Christian needs not be so. There is One who is "a very present help in trouble" (Psa 46:1), and He never deserts those who really make Him their refuge. The writer has proved this, many, many a time, and so may the reader. The fact is that present conditions afford a grand opportunity for learning the sufficiency of divine grace. Faith cannot be exercised when everything needed is at hand to sight.

"Hope thou in God." In His *mercy*—you have sinned, sinned grievously in the past, and now you are receiving your just deserts. True, but if you will penitently confess your sins, there is abundant mercy with the Lord to blot them all out (Isa 55:7). In His *power*—every door may be shut against you, every channel of help be closed fast, but nothing is too hard for the Almighty! In His *faithfulness*—men may have deceived you, broken their promises, and now desert you in the hour of need. But He, who cannot lie, is to be depended upon. O doubt not *His* promises. In His *love*—"Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (Joh 13:1).

"For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance" (Psa 42:5). Such is ever the blessed assurance of those who truly hope *in God*. They know that, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psa 34:19). God has told them that, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa 30:5). So, Christian reader, when the fiery trial had done its work, and your *bonds* are burned off (Dan 3:25), you will thank Him for the trials which are now so unpleasant. Then, hopefully, anticipate the future. Count upon God, and He will not fail you.

Let each Christian reader, who is not now passing through deep waters, join with the writer in fervent prayer to God, that He will graciously sanctify the "present distress" unto the spiritual good of His own people, and mercifully supply their temporal needs.

SOUND THE ALARM

"Dear Brother Pink: We are members of the _____ Baptist Church, and our pastor is a very good preacher, sound, and preaches *all* the truth, including God's sovereignty in salvation. The Sunday school is much given to social activities, such as the church sponsoring a baseball team, and many social gatherings in the church with much to eat, and Sunday school drives for membership. I was an elder, and refused to act again, on the ground that it is unscriptural to indulge in such things. I also had a class in Sunday school, but, on account of so much social doings, was led to resign same....I do not wish to grieve the Holy Spirit, and want to know from a Scriptural standpoint whether or not I have taken the right stand. I feel that the church-house was dedicated to our Lord, and do not think that eating and social gatherings have any place there. The pastor justifies his position by, 'in eating and drinking do all to the glory of God.'"

The above letter is a very recent one, and while we continue to receive such inquiries, we believe it to be our God-appointed duty to go on sounding the alarm. We replied to this Brother by saying, we were thankful to learn he had resigned from the diaconate and given up his class in the Sunday school, and urged him to have his name taken off the church-register and cease from attending its services, pressing upon him such Scriptures as Exodus 23:2, Revelation 18:4, etc. We told him that his pastor would be far less dangerous if he ceased preaching the Truth, and instead, spent his time in the pulpit by reading from Mark Twain. If such pastors would only put off their religious masks, honest souls would know where to place them. But alas, they will not. Such wolves will continue to masquerade in sheep's clothing.

But how terribly Satan must have succeeded in pulling the wool over peoples' eyes, when, merely because the pastor preaches "orthodox sermons," they will retain their membership in "churches" (?) where the Lord of glory is so blatantly insulted. Think of a pastor daring to justify such heathenish practices as turning a building set apart for divine worship into a restaurant and show-house by quoting 1 Corinthians 10:31! What a proof that he is a blind leader of the blind! No man indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God would so wickedly pervert His Word. One verse of Scripture is quite sufficient to expose the false application made of 1 Corinthians 10:31, namely, "What? Have ye not *houses* to eat and to drink in, or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not" (1Co 11:22).

Our object in referring to the above case is to warn, admonish, and intreat others who are yet members of such "churches" to immediately sever all connection with them. We doubt not that many of the readers of this magazine are yet found in similar associations as the above-mentioned Brother. To such, we would faithfully and lovingly point out, you are dishonouring Christ, you are disobeying the plain commandments of God, you are endangering your own soul. There is no third alternative. To have fellowship with anything which does not honour Christ, *must* be to *dishonour* Him. To deliberately ignore such a plain word as, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: *from such turn away*" (2Ti 3:5), is to disobey God. To partake of the sins of such a worldly "church" is to court a receiving of her "plagues" from God (Rev 18:4).

So many will reply to the above by saying, "But what are we to do? Other churches are the same. If we leave the one where we now are and unite with another, we shall find it no better." True, that is almost universally the case today. Things are far, far worse than many real Christians will acknowledge. Many writers and preachers imagine they are performing a helpful service by gathering data to show that the world is getting worse and worse—that all forms of crime are on the increase, that communism is undermining the foundations of government, and that the masses are seething with discontent. But they would spend their strength to much better effect, if they strove to set before their people a personal example of self-denial and practical godliness, and sought to purge their churches of worldly attractions and unregenerate members. If an ungrieved Spirit were again at work in the churches, conditions would soon improve in the world.

It is not that we are urging our readers to come out from imperfect churches. There has never been a perfect church on this earth, and never will be. But there is a vast difference between an imperfect church and a hypocritical and counterfeit church. There is a vast

difference between a little company of real saints, who, though full of infirmities and failures, are, nevertheless, desirous of pleasing the Lord in *all* things, and who are prayerfully *striving* so to do, and a large number of thinly-veneered worldlings, where the *only* difference between them and honest worldlings is that, the former cloak their self-pleasing and fleshly lives under a profession of the holy name of Christ, while the latter sail under their true colours. There is a vast difference between a church which pretends to stand for the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and one which acknowledges (walks in) “the truth *which is after godliness*” (Ti 1:1).

Not a few are now seeking to shelter behind the state of the Corinthian church. When it is pointed out that God’s Word requires His people to separate themselves from all that is openly dishonouring to Him, to “have *no* fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph 5:11), some will reply, “Look at the sad state the Corinthian church was in, yet the apostle did not exhort the real Christians there to forsake it!” Our first reply is, we are making an evil use of God’s Word when we seek to pit one portion of it against another; 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17 [and] 2 Timothy 3:5, etc., must not be negated by reasonings. But secondly, let it be very carefully observed and duly noted that the Corinthian church *heeded* the apostle’s admonitions. It was because of its condition that he addressed to them the first epistle. The *response* which they made to it is plainly stated in *Second* Corinthians 7:8-12! From a church which *heeds* the admonitions of God’s servants, *corrects* what is wrong, and *sorrows* with a godly repentance, we counsel none to depart.

The fact is that those who are turning a deaf ear today unto such commands as Acts 2:40, 1 Timothy 6:5, Hebrews 13:13, and seek to excuse their disobedience by the state of the Corinthian church, belong to “churches” (?) *entirely different from* that New Testament assembly. What resemblance is there between a semi-worldly and semi-religious organization, and that Corinthian church which maintained a godly discipline (2Co 2:6-10)? Does any real Christian suppose that if the apostle Paul were on earth today, he would write to these modern clubs (which call themselves Christian churches), “Forasmuch as ye are *manifestly declared to be* the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart” (2Co 3:3), or, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2Co 13:11)?

In order to avoid all ambiguity, let us define the character of those “churches” (?) from which all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity should come out. We will not attempt to give a full list, but mention only the more glaring cases. First, where a majority of the members are obviously unregenerate (2Ti 3:5). Scripture forbids us being “unequally yoked together” (2Co 6:14), and throws upon us the responsibility of individually deciding, by means of the Word, where such would be the case. Second, where any of the fundamentals of the Faith are repudiated in the pulpit (Rom 16:17). It is an awful sin for any Christian to support error. Third, where Christ is dishonoured and His Spirit quenched by employing worldly means to attract and hold worldly people (Joh 17:16). Nothing is more dishonouring to our Lord than linking His holy name with that which He hates. Fourth, where a Scriptural discipline is not being maintained. It is no place for a child of God to be in where little or no attempt is made to deal with members whose daily walk is manifestly a libel upon the cause of Christ.

Perhaps someone may ask, "But am I not forbidden to set up myself as a judge of other people?" Certainly, you are so forbidden. I am first to judge myself, unsparingly, by the Word (1Co 11:31), confessing to God every deviation from it and seeking grace to conform all the details of my life to its holy precepts. Then, (and not till then) it is my privilege and duty to *measure* everything I come into contact with by that same unerring Word. And, if I am truly in subjection to it, it will not be at all difficult for me to discover all that is opposed to it. Certainly, it is not God's will that any of His children should be *deceived* and imposed upon by hypocrites, nor need they be. Certainly He does not wish me to love as brethren and sisters in Christ those who are the children of the devil. Yet, I must do so if I cannot distinguish one from the other!

Suppose I am a young Christian about to be engaged to a girl that is an out and out worldling, and someone calls my attention to 2 Corinthians 6:14. If I answered by saying, "Oh, but I must not judge her!" would I not be reducing that verse to a meaningless absurdity? Or, suppose I am contemplating going into a business partnership with a man who goes to church every Sunday, but to movies, dances, and card parties every other night of the week. And a faithful servant of God reminds me of 2 Corinthians 6:14. If I answered, "But I have no right to judge him," would I not be guilty of wicked equivocation? Certainly, I would. Then, why brand me as a Pharisee, and denounce me as guilty of exercising an "holier than thou" spirit, if I act on the same principle in connection with the *church-yoke*? I *must* measure professing Christians by the Word if I am to obey 2 Timothy 3:5.

And what remains for us to add, but this—Beloved brethren and sister in Christ, cry unto God that He will so deepen His work of grace in your hearts that the honour and glory of His Son shall regulate you in all things. Ask Him for grace to separate from all that dishonours Him. You will never regret it. The Lord has promised, "Them that honour me, I will honour" (1Sa 2:30). When you have obeyed 2 Corinthians 6:17 and Hebrews 13:13, God will *confirm* your decision. As a sister in New Zealand has just written, "I did not know how dreadful things were in the church until I came out."

