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STUDIES
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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

HID

Numerous are the passages which contain the word, “hid,” and quite varied are their character. Some are of historical interest, others of deep practical importance. There are evil hidings and good ones. Among the former may be mentioned Adam and Eve, hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord (Gen 3:8), Moses hiding the Egyptian in the sand (Exo 2:12), Achan’s hiding of the stolen booty under the ground of his tent (Jos 7:21-22), the servant’s hiding of his talent (Mat 25:18), the Gospel hid to them that are lost by the devil’s blinding their minds (2Co 4:3-4), the wicked hiding in the dens and rocks of the mountains when the great day of wrath of the Lamb comes, desiring to be hid from His face (Rev 6:15-17). Among the latter, we think of the hiding of the babe Moses (Exo 2:3), Moses hiding his face when JEHOVAH appeared unto him at the burning bush (Exo 3:6), the hiding of the two Hebrew spies by Rahab (Jos 2:4-6), which was credited to her account (Jos 6:17), Obadiah hiding the prophets in a cave from the vengeance of Jezebel (1Ki 18:4, 13, and cf. Psa 83:3), the hiding of Joash, the king’s son, for six years in the house of God from the murderous design of Athaliah (2Ki 11:2). Then, there was also the Saviour’s mysterious hiding of Himself from those who were determined to slay Him (Joh 8:59).

Passing by many statements of less importance, let us consider some which relate to the Redeemer. “Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me” (Isa 49:1-2). Here, we have *the hidden Christ*. From the verses that follow, it is quite clear that this is one of the great Messianic prophecies. Most appropriately, it takes the form of a clamant call to the Gentiles to hear the good news which He proclaims. From all eternity, it had been divinely decreed that the Beloved of the Father should become incarnate, and engage in a mission

of mercy unto lost sinners. But, before sin entered the world, that remained a secret hid in God. In the judgment pronounced upon the serpent, announcement was made of the woman's Seed who should bruise his head. Later, other declarations were given concerning His person, His advent, and His work. Yet, even to the favoured Israelites, Christ was hidden behind the types and shadows, concealed though revealed by the ceremonial law.

For four thousand years, Christ was *hid* from human eyes, waiting for the "fulness of time" to come, when He should be "made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal 4:4). Previously called and commissioned by the triune God for His vast undertaking, He was then named before His mother gave Him birth, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins," the angel said unto Joseph (Mat 1:21). "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword" (Isa 49:2), tells of His being qualified and endowed for His grand mission. "Furnished with everything necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of darkness, to conquer Satan, and to reduce God's revolted subjects to their allegiance by His Word, that is the two-edged sword (Heb 4:12) which comes out of His mouth (Rev 19:15). The convictions of the Word are the arrows that shall be sharp in the hearts of sinners, Psalm 45:5" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me" (Isa 49:2), speaks of divine *protection*—His being supernaturally preserved from contamination by sin at His incarnation, through the power of the Highest overshadowing His mother (Luk 1:35), and of His being hid in Egypt during His infancy from the rage of Herod. "In his quiver hath he hid me," probably refers to the long-undisclosed secret that by Christ the Gentiles should be made fellow heirs and of the same body as redeemed Jews (Rom 16:25-26; Eph 3:4-8).

"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa 32:1-2). The first part of this chapter describes the character and prosperity of a kingdom upon which the divine favour rests. It is one that is blessed with righteous and just rulers, who use their power not in tyranny for selfish ends, but in benevolence for the public good. Under their benign administration, their subjects are sheltered from many evils and become the recipients of many privileges. But, ultimately, this passage must be regarded as Messianic. Christ is pre-eminently the righteous King, and His government supremely benign. The long-hidden One has come forth at His incarnation into open manifestation. He, who is God the Son, became Man and provided a sure and safe *hiding place for poor sinners* who flee to Him for refuge. In Him, there is effectual shelter from the curse of the Law, from the wrath of God, from the enmity of Satan, and from the dominion of sin. In Him are to be found rest of soul, comfort, refreshment, satisfaction, eternal security. He is the God-man, now crowned with glory and honour, a Priest upon His throne, the antitypical Melchizedek, not only King of kings, but "King of saints" (Rev 15:3), reigning in and over their hearts.

"And a man" or "that man," namely, the Messiah of the previous verse (Isa 32:1), "shall be as an hiding place," because He Himself endured the full storm in the stead of those who flee to Him for shelter. As John Owen (1616-1683) pointed out, "Here are four pressures and troubles mentioned whereunto we may be exposed, and unto all of them is the Man in the promise, the Lord Jesus Christ, suited as a supply from them or against

them.” First, the “wind,” in respect of which Christ is a “hiding place.” That is what one would desire when in imminent danger of being blown from a height by a fierce gale. In Matthew 7:25, we have, under the figure of winds beating upon a foundationless house, a representation of graceless professors being overthrown by powerful temptations. Second, a “tempest,” whereunto Christ is a “covert,” or place which offers protection, as the lee shore or harbour does to the storm-tossed mariner. The “tempest” is the wrath of God against sin (Psa 11:6), from which Christ alone delivers (1Th 1:10). Third, “drought,” which produces parched and barren ground, and which is a divine judgment upon a land for sin (Hag 1:11). In reference thereto, Christ is “as rivers of waters,” which is an emblem of the graces and consolations of the Spirit, which proceed from Him as their meritorious source. Fourth, weariness from journeying and working in great heat, from which there is shelter and shade by Christ—rest and new strength accorded to continue on our way.

“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). Those treasures are “hid” or laid up for safe custody—like the crown jewels in the Tower of London. This it is which fits Christ to be “the wonderful Counsellor,” the great Prophet of His Church. Even His enemies “marveled” and were nonplussed (Mat 22:22) at His wisdom. Those treasures are available *for* His people to draw upon. They are stored up in Him as the Head, for the use and benefit of His members. Everything needful for their instruction is obtainable from Him; but they are “hid” *from* the proud and those who are wise in their own conceits.

“Your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). First, Christ hid in the eternal counsels of God. Second, openly manifested and offering Himself as a hiding-place from God’s wrath. Third, the Depository of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge for His people to draw upon. Fourth, the Fountain from which proceeds our life and which is invisible unto sight and sense. That life is hid in Christ both in the sense of obscurity and of security. First, the life of *justification* is so. “For ye are dead,” better “ye died,” i.e. legally, when your Substitute died. “And your life” in law, is hid in Christ, consisting of His perfect obedience imputed, “In the Lord have I righteousness” (Isa 45:24). Second, the believer’s life of *grace* is hid in Christ, for the new man is born and nourished from above, fed by the “hidden manna” on high (Rev 2:17). That life proceeds from union with Him, who is the Life, and it is hid because maintained by an invisible power. It is hid, too, under the veil of our natural life. The Christian lives in a body as do the unregenerate, but they cannot cognize the springs and motives of his actions, “Judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1Pe 4:6), in the secret place of the Most High, in private prayer (Mat 6:6). “The world knoweth us not” (1Jo 3:1).

The *real* “life” of the Christian is one of *faith* (Gal 2:20; Heb 10:38), which is imperceptible to sight and sense, and, therefore, it is, in the main, hid from its possessor also—obscured by his infirmities. The spark of grace is often covered with the ashes of corruption. So, too, when Satan sifts, the chaff is uppermost, and the wheat is not seen. “It doth not yet *appear* what we shall be” (1Jo 3:2), but, “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also *appear* with him in glory” (Col 3:4), which tells us that the Christian’s life of *glory* is not yet revealed. But, it is certain, for his life of justification, grace, and glory is “hid with Christ” in point of eternal security. It is not in his own

keeping. It cannot be lost, for it is “hid with Christ in God” by indissoluble union—through Christ, he is one with the Father (Joh 17:21)!

THE POWER OF GOD

“Twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God” (Psa 62:11). In our first article upon this glorious theme, we practically confined our attention to the omnipotence of God as it is seen in and through the old creation. Here, we propose to contemplate the exercise of His might in and on the new creation. That God’s people are much slower to perceive the latter than the former is plain from Ephesians 1:19, where the apostle prayed that the saints might know “*what* is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.” Very striking indeed is this. When Paul speaks of the divine power in creation, he mentions, “His power and Godhead” (Rom 1:20), but when he treats of the work of grace and salvation, he calls it, “exceeding greatness of his power.”

God proportions His power to the nature of His work. The casting out of demons is ascribed to His “finger” (Luk 11:20); His delivering of Israel from Egypt to His “hand” (Exo 13:9); but when the Lord saves a sinner, it is His “holy *arm*” which gets Him the victory (Psa 98:1). It is to be duly noted that the language of Ephesians 1:19 is so couched as to take in the *whole* work of divine grace in and upon the elect. It is not restrained to the past—“who have believed according to,” nor to the time to come—“the power that shall work in you”. But, instead, it is “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward *who believe*.” It is the “effectual working” of God’s might from the first moment of illumination and conviction till their sanctification and glorification.

So dense is the darkness which has now fallen upon the people (Isa 60:2), that the vast majority of those even in the “churches” deem it by no means a hard thing to become a Christian. They seem to think it is almost as easy to purify a man’s heart (Jam 4:8) as it is to wash his hands. That it is as simple a matter to admit the light of divine truth into the soul as it is the morning sun into our chambers by opening the shutters. That it is no more difficult to turn the heart from evil to good, from the world to God, from sin to Christ, than to turn a ship round by the help of the helm. And this, in the face of Christ’s emphatic statement, “With men this is impossible” (Mat 19:26).

To mortify the lusts of the flesh (Col 3:5), to be crucified daily to sin (Luk 9:23), to be meek and gentle, patient and kind—in a word, *to be Christ-like*—is a task altogether beyond our powers. It is one on which we would never venture, or, having ventured on, would soon abandon, but that God is pleased to perfect His strength in our weakness, and is “mighty to save” (Isa 63:1). That this may be the more clearly evident to us, we shall now consider some of the features of God’s powerful operations in the saving of His people.

1. *In Regeneration*

Little as real Christians may realize it, a far greater power is put forth by God in the new creation than in the old, in refashioning the soul and conforming it to the image of Christ than in the original making it. There is a greater distance between sin and righteousness, corruption and grace, depravity and holiness, than there is between nothing and something, or nonentity and being. And the greater the distance there is, the greater the power in producing something. The miracle is greater according as the *change* is greater. As it is a more signal display of power to change a dead man to life than a sick man to health, so it is a far more wonderful performance to change unbelief to faith and enmity to love, than simply to create out of nothing. There, we are told, "The gospel of Christ...is *the power of God* unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16).

The Gospel is the instrument which the Almighty uses when accomplishing the most wondrous and blessed of all His works, i.e. the picking up of wretched worms of the earth and making them "*meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12). When God formed man out of the dust of the ground, though the dust contributed nothing to the act whereby God made him, it had in it no principle *contrary* to His design. But, in turning the heart of a sinner toward Himself, there is not only the lack of any principle of assistance from him in this work, but the whole strength of his nature unites to combat the power of divine grace. When the Gospel is presented to the sinner, not only is his understanding completely ignorant of its glorious contents, but the will is utterly perverse against it. Not only is there no desire for Christ, but there is inveterate hostility against Him. Nothing but the almighty power of God can overcome the enmity of the carnal mind. To turn back the ocean from its course would not be such an act of power as to change the turbulent bent of man's wicked heart.

2. *In Convicting us of Sin*

"For ye were sometimes darkness" (Eph 5:8). Such was the Christian's fearful state before grace laid hold of him. He was not only *in* darkness, but he himself *was* "darkness." He was utterly devoid of a single ray of spiritual light. The "light of reason" of which men boast so much, and the "light of conscience" which others value so highly, were utterly worthless as far as giving any intelligence in the things of God was concerned. It was to this awful fact that Christ referred when He said, "If therefore the light that *is* in thee *be* darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Mat 6:23). Yes, *so* "great" is that darkness that men "call evil good, and good evil...put darkness for light, and light for darkness;...put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa 5:20). So "great" is that darkness that spiritual things are "foolishness" unto them (1Co 2:14). So "great" is that darkness that they are completely *ignorant of it* (Eph 4:18), and utterly blind to their actual state. Not only is the natural man unable to deliver himself from this darkness, but he has no desire whatever for such deliverance, for being spiritually dead, he has no consciousness of any *need for* deliverance.

It is because of their fearful state that, until the Holy Spirit actually regenerates, *all* who hear the Gospel are totally incapacitated for any *spiritual* understanding of it. The majority who hear it imagine that *they* are already saved, that they are real Christians, and

no arguments from the preacher, no power on earth, can ever convince them to the contrary. Tell them, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Pro 30:12), and it makes no more impression than does water on a duck's back. Warn them that, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luk 13:3), and they are no more moved than are the rocks by the ocean's spray. No, they suppose that they have nothing to repent of, and know not that *their* repentance needs "to be repented of" (2Co 7:10). They have far too high an opinion of their religious profession to allow that *they* are in any danger of hell. Thus, unless a mighty miracle of grace is wrought within them, unless divine power shatters their complacency, there is no hope at all for them.

For a soul to be *savingly convicted* of sin is a greater wonder than for a putrid fountain to send forth sweet waters. For a soul to be brought to realize that, "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," (Gen 6:5) requires the power of omnipotence to produce. By nature, man is independent, self-sufficient, self-confident. What a miracle of grace has been wrought when he now feels and owns his helplessness! By nature, a man thinks well of himself. What a miracle of grace has been wrought when he acknowledges, "in me...dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18)! By nature, men are "lovers of themselves" (2Ti 3:2). What a miracle of grace has been wrought when they *abhor* themselves (Job 42:6)! By nature, man thinks he is doing Christ a favour to espouse His Gospel and patronize His cause. What a miracle of grace has been wrought when he discovers that he is utterly unfit for *His* holy presence, and cries, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luk 5:8). By nature, man is proud of his own abilities, accomplishments, attainments. What a miracle of grace has been wrought when he can truthfully declare, "I count *all* things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus...and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phi 3:8).

3. In Casting Out the Devil

"The whole world lieth in wickedness" (1Jo 5:19), bewitched, fettered, helpless. As we go over the Gospel narratives, and read of different ones who were possessed of demons, thoughts of pity for the unhappy victims stir our minds, and when we behold the Saviour delivering these wretched creatures, we are full of wonderment and gladness. But does the Christian reader realize that we, too, were once in that same awful plight? Before conversion, we were the slaves of Satan, the devil wrought in us his will (Eph 2:2), and so we walked according to the prince of the power of the air. What ability had we to deliver ourselves? Less than we have to stop the rain from falling or the wind from blowing. A picture of man's helplessness to deliver himself from Satan's power is drawn by Christ in Luke 11:21, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." The "strong man" is Satan. His "goods" are the helpless captives.

But blessed be His name, "The Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1Jo 3:8). This, too, was pictured by Christ in the same parable, "But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoils" (Luk 11:22). Christ is mightier than Satan, He overcomes him in the day of His power (Psa 110:3), and emancipates "His own" who are bound (Isa 61:1). He still comes by His Spirit to "set at liberty them that are

bruised” (Luk 4:18), therefore is it said of God, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13). The Greek word for, “delivered,” signifies freeing by violence, a plucking or snatching out of a power that otherwise would not yield its prey.

4. *In Producing Repentance*

Man, without Christ, cannot repent, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance” (Act 5:31). Christ gave it as a “Prince,” and, therefore, to none but His subjects, those who are in His kingdom, in whom He rules. Nothing can draw men to repentance but the regenerating power of Christ, which He exercises at God’s right hand. For the acts of repentance are hatred of sin, sorrow for it, determination to forsake it, and earnest and constant endeavour after its death. But sin is so transcendently dear and delightful to a man out of Christ that nothing but an infinite power can draw him to these acts mentioned. Sin is more precious to an unregenerate soul than anything else in heaven or earth. It is dearer to him than liberty, for he gives himself up to it entirely, and becomes its servant and slave. It is dearer to him than health, strength, time, or riches, for he spends all these upon sin. It is dearer to him than his own soul. Shall a man lose his sins or his soul? Ninety-nine out of a hundred vote for the latter, and lose their souls on that account.

Sin is a man’s self. Just as “I” is the central letter of “sin,” so sin is the centre, the moving-power, the very life of self! Therefore did Christ say, “If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*” (Mat 16:24). Men are “lovers of their own selves” (2Ti 3:2), which is the same as saying that their hearts are wedded to sin. Man “drinketh iniquity like water” (Job 15:16). He cannot exist without it—he is ever thirsting for it—he must have his fill of it. Now, since man so dotes on sin, what is going to turn his delight into sorrow, his love for it into loathing of it? Nothing, but almighty power!

Here, then, we may mark the folly of those who cherish the delusion that they can repent whenever they get ready to do so. But evangelical repentance is not at the beck and call of the creature. It is the gift of God, “If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2Ti 2:25). Then, what insanity is it that persuades multitudes to defer the effort to repent till their death-beds? Do they imagine that, when they are so weak that they can no longer turn their bodies, they will have strength to turn their souls from sin? Far sooner could they turn themselves back to perfect physical health. What praise, then, is due to God if He has wrought a saving repentance in us.

5. *In Working Faith in His People*

Saving faith in Christ is not the simple matter that so many vainly imagine. Countless thousands suppose it is as easy to believe in the Lord Jesus as in Caesar or Napoleon, and the tragic thing is that hundreds of preachers are helping forward this lie. It is as easy to believe on Him as on them in a *natural*, historical, intellectual way, but not so in a spiritual and saving way. I may believe in all the heroes of the past, but such belief effects no change in my life! I may have unshaken confidence in the historicity of George Washington, but does my belief in him abate my love for the world and cause me to hate even the garment spotted by the flesh? A supernatural and saving faith in Christ purifies the life. Is *such* a faith easily attained? No, indeed! Listen to Christ Himself, “How can ye

believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (Joh 5:44). And again, we read, "They could not believe" (Joh 12:39).

Faith in Christ is receiving Him as He is offered or presented to us by God (Joh 1:12). Now, God presents Christ to us not only as Priest, but as King—not only as Saviour, but as "Prince" (Act 5:31)—note that "Prince" *precedes* "Saviour," as taking His "yoke" upon us goes before finding "rest" to our souls (Mat 11:29)! Are men as willing for Christ to rule as to save them? Do they pray as earnestly for purity as for pardon? Are they as anxious to be delivered from the *power* of sin as they are from the fires of hell? Do they desire holiness as much as they do heaven? Is the dominion of sin as dreadful to them as its wages? Does the filthiness of sin grieve them as much as the guilt and damnation of it? The man who divides what God has joined together when He offers Christ to us *has not* "received" Him at all.

Faith is the gift of God (Eph 2:8-9). It is wrought in the elect by "the operation of God" (Col 2:12). To bring a sinner from unbelief to saving faith in Christ is a miracle as great and as wondrous as was God's raising Christ from the dead (Eph 1:19-20). Unbelief is far, far more than entertaining an erroneous conception of God's way of salvation. It is a species of hatred against Him. So faith in Christ is far more than the mind assenting to all that is said of Him in the Scriptures. The demons do that (Jam 2:19), but it does not save them. Saving faith is not only the heart being weaned from every other object of confidence as the ground of my acceptance before God, but it is also the heart being weaned from every other object that competes with Him for my affections. Saving faith is that "which worketh by love" (Gal 5:6), a love which is evidenced by keeping His commandments (Joh 14:23). But by nature, all men hate His commandments. Therefore, where there is a believing heart which is devoted to Christ, esteeming Him high above self and the world, a mighty miracle of grace has been wrought in the soul.

6. *In Communicating a Sense of Pardon*

When a soul has been sorely wounded by the "arrows of the Almighty" (Job 6:4), when the ineffable light of the thrice holy God has shone into our dark hearts, revealing their unspeakable filthiness and corruption; when our innumerable iniquities have been made to stare us in the face, until the convicted sinner has been made to realize he is fit only for hell, and sees himself even now on the very brink of it; when he is brought to feel that he has provoked God so sorely that he greatly fears he has sinned beyond all possibility of forgiveness (and unless *your* soul has passed through such experiences, my readers, you have never been born again), then nothing but divine power can raise that soul out of abject despair and create in it a hope of mercy. To lift the stricken sinner above those dark waters that have so terrified him, to bestow the light of comfort as well as the light of conviction into a heart filled with worse than Egyptian darkness, is an act of Omnipotence. God only can heal the heart which He has wounded and speak peace to the raging tempest within.

Men may count up the promises of God and the arguments of peace till they are as old as Methuselah, but it will avail them nothing until a divine hand shall pour in "the balm of Gilead." The sinner is no more able to *apply to himself* the Word of divine comfort when he is under the terrors of God's law, and writhing beneath the strokes of God's convicting Spirit, than he is able to resurrect the mouldering bodies in our cemeteries. To "restore the

joy of salvation” was in David’s judgment an act of sovereign power equal to that of creating a clean heart (Psa 51:10). All the doctors of divinity put together are as incapable of healing a wounded spirit as are the physicians of medicine of animating a corpse. To silence a tempestuous conscience is a mightier performance than the Saviour’s stilling the stormy winds and raging waves, though it is not to be expected that any will grant the truth of this who are in themselves *strangers* to such an experience. As nothing but infinite power can remove the guilt of sin, so nothing but infinite power can remove the despairing sense of it.

7. *In Actually Converting a Soul*

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” (Jer 13:23). No, indeed, though he may paint or cover them over. So, one out of Christ may restrain the outward acts of sin, but he cannot *mortify* the inward principle of it. To turn water into wine was indeed a miracle, but to turn fire into water would be a greater one. To create a man out of the dust of the ground was a work of divine power, but to re-create a man so that a sinner becomes a saint, a lion is changed into a lamb, an enemy transformed into a friend, hatred is melted into love, is a far greater wonder of Omnipotence. The miracle of conversion, which is effected by the Spirit through the Gospel, is described thus, “For the weapons of our warfare [i.e. the preachers] are not carnal, but mighty *through God* to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2Co 10:4-5).

Well has it been said, “To dispossess a man, then, of his self-esteem and self-sufficiency, to make room for God in the heart where there was none but for sin, as dear to him as himself, to hurl down pride of nature, to make stout imaginations stoop to the cross, to make designs of self-advancement sink under a zeal for the glory of God and an overruling design for His honour, is not to be ascribed to any but to an outstretched arm wielding the sword of the Spirit. To have a heart full of the fear of God, that was just before filled with contempt of His wisdom; to have a hatred of his habitual lustings that had brought him in much sensitive pleasure; to loathe them; to live by faith in and *obedience* to the Redeemer, who before was so heartily under the dominion of Satan and self, is a triumphant act of infinite power that can ‘subdue all things’ to itself” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

8. *In Preserving His People*

“Who are kept *by the power of God* through faith...ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pe 1:5). “Kept *from what*? Ah, what mortal is capable of returning a full answer? A whole article might profitably be devoted to this one aspect of our subject. Kept from the dominion of sin, which still dwells within us. Kept from being drawn out of the narrow way by the enticements of the world. Kept from the horrible heresies, which ensnare thousands on every side. Kept from being overcome by Satan, who always seeks our destruction. Kept from departing from the living God, so that we do not make shipwreck of the faith. Kept from turning His grace into lasciviousness. Weak as water in ourselves, yet,

enabled to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. This “is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

Sin is a mighty monarch which none of his subjects can withstand. There was more in Adam while innocent to resist sin than in any other since, for sin has an ally within the fallen creature that is ever ready to betray him into temptation from without. But sin had no such advantage over Adam, nevertheless, it overwhelmed him. The non-elect angels were yet better able to withstand sin than Adam was, having a more excellent nature and being nearer to God, yet, sin prevailed against them and threw them out of heaven into hell. Then, what a *mighty* power is required to subdue it! Only He who “led captivity captive” can make His people more than conquerors.

“As the providence of God is a manifestation of His power in a continued creation, so the preservation of grace is a manifestation of His power in a continued regeneration. God’s strength abates and modifies the violence of temptations, His staff supports His people under them, His might defeats the power of Satan. The counterworkings of indwelling corruptions, the reluctancies of the flesh against the breathings of the Spirit, the fallacies of the senses, and the rovings of the mind would quickly stifle and quench grace, if it were not maintained by the same all-powerful blast that first inbreathed it. No less power is seen in perfecting it, than implanting it (2Pe 1:3)—No less in fulfilling the work of faith, than in ingrafting the word of faith (2Th 1:11)” (Stephen Charnock).

The preservation of God’s people in this world greatly glorifies the power of God. To preserve those with so many corruptions within, and so many temptations without, magnifies His ineffable might more than if He were to translate them to heaven the moment they believed. In a world of suffering and sorrow, to preserve the *faith* of His people amid so many and sore testings, trials, buffetings, disappointments, betrayals by friends and professed brethren in Christ, is infinitely more wonderful than if a man should succeed in carrying an unsheltered candle alight across an open moor when a hurricane was blowing. To the glory of God, the writer bears witness that, but for *omnipotent* grace, he had become an infidel years ago as the result of the treatment he had received from those who posed as preachers of the Gospel. Yes, for God to supply strength to His fainting people, and enable them to, “Hold the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb 3:14), is more marvelous than though He were to keep a fire burning in the midst of the ocean.

How the contemplation of the power of God should deepen our confidence and trust in Him, “Trust ye in the LORD for ever: *for* in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting *strength*” (Isa 26:4). The power of God was the ground of Abraham’s assurance (Heb 5:7). Oh, to bear constantly in mind that, “*God is able* to make all grace abound toward us” (2Co 9:8). Nothing is so calculated to calm the mind, still our fears, and fill us with peace, as faith’s appropriation of God’s sufficiency. “If God be for us, who *can* be against us?” (Rom 8:31). His infallible promise is, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10). He who brought a nation through the Red Sea without

any ships, and led them across the desert for forty years, where was neither bread nor water, still lives and reigns!

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

5. The Scriptures and Good Works

The truth of God may well be likened to a narrow path skirted on either side by a dangerous and destructive precipice. In other words, it lies between two gulfs of error. The aptness of this figure may be seen in our proneness to sway from one extreme to another. Only the Holy Spirit's enabling can cause us to preserve the balance, failure to do which, inevitably, leads to a fall into error. For "error" is not so much the denial of truth as the perversion of truth, the pitting of one part of it against another. The history of theology forcibly and solemnly illustrates this fact. One generation of men have rightly and earnestly contended for that aspect of truth which was most needed in their day. The next generation, instead of walking therein and moving forward, warred for it, intellectually, as the distinguishing mark of *their* party, and usually, in their defence of what was assaulted, have refused to listen to the balancing truth which often their opponents were insisting upon. The result being that they lost their sense of perspective and emphasized what they believed *out of its scriptural proportions*. Consequently, in the next generation, the true servant of God is called on almost to ignore what was so valuable in their eyes, and emphasize that which they had, if not altogether denied, almost completely lost sight of.

It has been said that, "Rays of light, whether they proceed from the sun, star, or candle, move in perfect straight lines; yet so inferior are our works to God's that the steadiest hand cannot draw a perfectly straight line; nor, with all his skill, has man ever been able to invent an instrument capable of doing a thing apparently so simple" (Thomas Guthrie, 1803-1873). Be this so or not, certain it is that men, left to themselves, have ever found it impossible to keep the even line of truth between what appear to be conflicting doctrines—such as the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, election by grace and the universal proclamation of the Gospel, the justifying faith of Paul and the justifying works of James. Only too often, where the absolute sovereignty of God has been insisted upon, it has been to the ignoring of man's accountability. And where unconditional election has been held fast, the unfettered preaching of the Gospel to the unsaved has been let slip. So, on the other hand, where human accountability has been upheld and an evangelical ministry been sustained, the sovereignty of God and the truth of election have generally been whittled down or completely ignored.

Many of our readers have witnessed examples which illustrate the truth of what has been said above, but few seem to realize that exactly the same difficulty is experienced when an attempt is made to show the precise relation between faith and good works. If, on the one hand, some have erred in attributing to good works a place which Scripture does not warrant, certain it is that, on the other hand, some have failed to give to good works the

province which Scripture assigns them. If, on the one side, it be serious error to ascribe our justification before God to any performances of ours, on the other side, they are equally guilty who deny that good works are necessary in order to our reaching heaven, and allow nothing more than that they are merely evidences or fruits of our justification. We are well aware that we are now (shall we say) treading on thin ice, and running a serious risk of ourselves being charged with heresy. Nevertheless we deem it expedient to seek divine aid in grappling with this difficulty, and then commit the issues thereof to God Himself.

In some quarters, the claims of faith, though not wholly denied, have been disparaged because of a zeal to magnify good works. In other circles, reputed as orthodox (and they are what we now have chiefly in mind), only too rarely are good works assigned their proper place, and far too infrequently are professing Christians urged with apostolic earnestness to maintain them. No doubt, this is due, at times, to a fear of undervaluing faith, and encouraging sinners in the fatal error of trusting to their own doings rather than to and in the righteousness of Christ. But no such apprehensions should hinder a preacher from declaring "all the counsel of God." If his theme be faith in Christ as the Saviour of the lost, let him fully set forth that truth without any modification, giving to this grace the place which the apostle gave it in his reply to the Philippian jailer (Act 16:31). But if his subject be good works, let him be no less faithful in keeping back nothing which Scripture says thereon. Let him not forget that divine command, "Affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Ti 3:8).

The last quoted Scripture is the most pertinent one for these days of looseness and laxity, of worthless profession, and empty boasting. This expression "good works" is found in the New Testament in the singular or plural number no less than thirty times. Yet, from the rarity with which many preachers, who are esteemed sound in the faith, use, emphasize, and enlarge upon them, many of their hearers would conclude that those words occur but once or twice in all the Bible. Speaking to the Jews on another subject, the Lord said, "What...God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mar 10:9). Now, in Ephesians 2:8-10, God has joined two most vital and blessed things together which ought never to be separated in our hearts and minds, yet, they are most frequently parted in the modern pulpit. How many sermons are preached from the first two of these verses, which so clearly declare salvation to be by grace through faith and not of works. Yet, how seldom are we reminded that the sentence begun in them is only completed in verse 10, where we are told, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

We began this series of articles by pointing out that the Word of God may be taken up from various motives and read with different designs, but that 11 Timothy 3:16-17 makes known for what these Scriptures are really "profitable," namely for doctrine or teaching, for reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, and all of these that, "The man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Having dwelt upon its teaching about God and Christ, its reproofs and corrections for sin, its instruction in connection with prayer, let us now consider how these furnish us unto "all good works." Here is another vital criterion by which an honest soul, with the help of the Holy Spirit, may ascertain whether or not his reading and study of the Word is really benefiting him.

1. We profit from the Word when we are thereby taught *the true place of good works*. “Many persons, in their eagerness to support orthodoxy as a system, speak of salvation by grace and faith in such a manner as to undervalue holiness and a life devoted to God. But there is no ground for this in the Holy Scriptures. The same Gospel that declares salvation to be freely by the grace of God through faith in the blood of Christ, and asserts, in the strongest terms, that sinners are justified by the righteousness of the Saviour imputed to them on their believing in Him, without any respect to works of law, also assures us, that without holiness no man shall see God; that believers are cleansed by the blood of atonement; that their hearts are purified by faith, which works by love, and overcomes the world; and that the grace that brings salvation to all men, teaches those who receive it, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Any fear that the doctrine of grace will suffer from the most strenuous inculcation of good works on a scriptural foundation, betrays an inadequate and greatly defective acquaintance with divine truth, and any tampering with the Scriptures in order to silence their testimony in favour of the fruits of righteousness, as *absolutely necessary* in the Christian, is a perversion and forgery with respect to the Word of God” (A. Carson).

But what force (ask some) has this ordination or command of God unto good works, when, notwithstanding it, though we fail to apply ourselves diligently unto obedience, we shall, nevertheless, be justified by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and so may be saved without them? Such a senseless objection proceeds from utter ignorance of the believer’s present state and relation unto God. To suppose that the hearts of the regenerate are not as much and as effectually influenced with the authority and commands of God unto obedience, as if they were given in order unto their justification, is to ignore what true faith is, and what are the arguments and motives whereby the minds of Christians are principally affected and constrained. Moreover, it is to lose sight of the inseparable connection which God has made between our justification and our sanctification. To suppose that one of these may be without the other is to overthrow the whole Gospel. The apostle deals with this very objection in Romans 6:1-3.

2. We profit from the Word when we are thereby taught the *absolute necessity of good works*. If it be written that, “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb 9:22) and, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb 11:6), the Scripture of truth also declares, “Follow peace with all men, and *holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). The life lived by the saints in heaven is but the completion and consummation of that life which, after regeneration, they live here on earth. The difference between the two is not one of kind, but of degree. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). If there has been no walking with God down here, there will be no dwelling with God up there. If there has been no real communion with Him in time, there will be none with Him in eternity. Death effects no vital change to the heart. True, at death the reminders of sin are for ever left behind by the saint, but no new nature is then imparted. If then, he did not hate sin and love holiness before death, he certainly will not do so afterwards.

No one really desires to go to hell, though there are few indeed who are willing to forsake that broad road which inevitably leads there. All would like to go to heaven, but who among the multitudes of professing Christians are really willing and determined to

walk that narrow way which alone leads thereto? It is at *this* point that we may discern the precise place which good works have in connection with salvation. They do not merit it, yet, they are inseparable from it. They do not procure a title to heaven, yet, they are among the *means* which God has appointed for His people's getting there. In no sense are good works the procuring cause of eternal life, but they are part of the means (as are the Spirit's work within us and repentance, faith, and obedience by us) conducing to it. God has appointed the way wherein we must walk in order to our arriving at the inheritance purchased for us by Christ. A life of daily obedience to God is that which alone gives actual *admission* to the enjoyment of what Christ has purchased for His people—admission now by faith, admission at death, or His return in full actuality.

3. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the design of good works*. This is clearly made known in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is worthy of our notice that this is the *first* occurrence of the expression, and, as is generally the case, the initial mention of a thing in Scripture intimates its consequent scope and usage. Here we learn that the disciples of Christ are to authenticate their Christian profession by the silent but vocal testimony of their lives (for "light" makes no noise in its "shining"), that men may see (not hear boastings about) their good works, and this, that their Father in heaven maybe glorified. Here, then, is their fundamental design—for the honour of God.

As the contents of Matthew 5:16 are so generally misunderstood and perverted, we add a further thought thereon. Only too commonly the "good works" are confounded with the "light" itself, yet, they are quite distinct, though inseparably connected. The "light" is our *testimony* for Christ, but of what value is this unless the life itself exemplifies it? The "good works" are not for the directing of attention to ourselves, but to Him who has wrought them in us. They are to be of such a character and quality that even the ungodly will know they proceed from some higher source than fallen human nature. Supernatural fruit requires a supernatural root, and as this is recognized, the Husbandman is glorified thereby. Equally significant is the *last* reference to "good works" in Scripture, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1Pe 2:12). Thus, the first and final allusions emphasize their design—to glorify God because of His works through His people in this world.

4. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the true nature of good works*. This is something concerning which the unregenerate are in entire ignorance. Judging merely from the external, estimating things only by human standards, they are quite incompetent to determine what works are good in God's esteem and what are not. Supposing that what men regard as good works God will approve of too, they remain in the darkness of their sin-blinded understandings. Nor can any convince them of their error, till the Holy Spirit quickens them into newness of life, bringing them out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Then it will appear that only those are good works which are done in obedience to the will of God (Rom 6:16), from a principle of love to Him (Heb 10:24), in the name of Christ (Col 3:17), and to the glory of God by Him (1Co 10:31).

The true nature of "good works" was perfectly exemplified by the Lord Jesus. All that He did was done out of obedience to His Father. He "pleased not himself" (Rom 15:3), but

ever performed the bidding of the One who had sent Him (John 6:38). He could say, "I do always those things that please him" (Joh 8:29). There were no limits to Christ's subjection to the Father's will. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phi 2:8). So, too, all that He did proceeded from love to the Father and love to His neighbour. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. Without love, compliance with the Law is naught but servile subjection, and that cannot be acceptable to Him who is love. Proof that all Christ's obedience flowed from love is found in His words, "*I delight to do thy will, O my God*" (Psa 40:8). So, also, all that Christ did had in view the glory of the Father, "Father, glorify *thy name*," (Joh 12:28) revealed the object constantly before Him.

5. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the true source of good works*. Unregenerate men are capable of performing works which in a natural and civil sense, though not in the spiritual sense, are good. They may do those things which, externally, as to matter and substance of them, are good, such as reading the Bible, attending the ministry of the Word, giving alms to the poor. Yet, the mainspring of such actions, their lack of godly motive, have no power to perform works in a *spiritual* manner, and, therefore, it is written, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom 3:12). Nor are they able to. They are "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7). Hence, even the ploughing of the wicked is sin (Pro 21:4). Nor are believers able to think a good thought or perform a good work of themselves (2Co 3:5). It is God who works in them "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phi 2:13).

When the Ethiopian can change his skin, and the leopard his spots, then may they also do good that are accustomed to do evil (Jer 13:23). Men may as soon expect to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles, as good fruit to grow upon, or good works to be performed by the unregenerate. We have, first, to be "Created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10), have His Spirit put within us (Gal 4:6), and His grace implanted in our hearts (Eph 4:7; 1Co 15:10), before there is any capacity for good works. Even then, we can do nothing apart from Christ (Joh 1:5). Often, we have a will to do that which is good, yet, how to perform it we know not (Rom 7:18). This drives us to our knees, begging God to make us "perfect in every good work," *working in* us "that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb 13:21). Thus, we are emptied of self-sufficiency, and brought to realize that all our springs are in God (Psa 87:7), and thus we discover that we can do all things through Christ strengthening us (Phi 4:13).

6. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the great importance of good works*. Condensing as far as possible, "good works" are of great importance because by them God is glorified (Mat 5:16), by them the mouths of those who speak against us are closed (1Pe2:12), by them we evidence the genuineness of our profession of faith (Jam 2:13-17). It is highly expedient that we "*adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour in *all things*" (Ti 2:10). Nothing brings more honour to Christ than those who bear His name *living* constantly (by His enablement) in a Christ-like way and spirit. It was not without reason that the same Spirit who caused the apostle to preface his statement concerning Christ's coming into this world to save sinners with, "This is a *faithful saying*," etc., also moved him to write, "This is a *faithful saying*...that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Ti 3:8). May we, indeed, be "zealous of good works" (Ti 2:14).

7. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the true scope of good works*. This is so comprehensive as to include the discharge of our duties in every relationship in which God has placed us. It is interesting and instructive to note the first “good works” in Holy Writ, namely, the anointing of the Saviour by Mary of Bethany (Mat 26:10; Mark 14:6). Indifferent either to the blame or praise of men, with eyes only for the “chiefest among ten thousand,” she lavished upon Him her precious ointment. Another woman, Dorcas (Act 9:36), is also mentioned as “full of good works.” After worship comes service, glorifying God among men and benefiting others.

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work” (Col 1:10). The bringing up (not “dragging” up!) of children, lodging (spiritual) strangers, washing the saints’ feet (ministering to their temporal comforts), and relieving the afflicted (1Ti 5:10) are spoken of as “good works.” Unless our reading and study of the Scriptures is making us better soldiers of Jesus Christ, better citizens of the country in which we sojourn, better members of our earthly homes (kinder, gentler, more unselfish), “thoroughly furnished unto *all* good works,” it is profiting us little or nothing.

THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST

Part I

For the sake of accuracy of thought, a distinction should be drawn between the condescension and the humiliation of Christ, though the majority of writers have confounded them. This distinction is clearly made by the Holy Spirit in Philippians 2:7, 9. First, He “made Himself of no reputation.” Second, He “humbled Himself.” The condescension of God the Son consisted in His assumption of our nature, the Word becoming flesh. His humiliation lay in the consequent abasement and sufferings which He endured in our nature. The assumption of human nature was not, of itself, a part of Christ’s humiliation, for He still retained it in His glorious exaltation. But for God the Son to take into union with Himself a created nature, animated dust, was an act of unparalleled and infinite condescension. May the Holy Spirit graciously awe us, and draw out our hearts in wonderment and worship, as we seek reverently to contemplate this holy mystery.

“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, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Phi 2:6, 9). These verses trace the path of the Mediator from highest glory to deepest humiliation, and back again to supremest honour. What a wondrous path was His! And how terrible that this divine description of His path should have been made the battle-ground of theological contention. At few points has the awful depravity of man’s heart been more horribly displayed than by the blasphemies which have been vented upon these verses. We shall not sully these pages

by mentioning them, but proceed, as the Holy Spirit enables, to a positive exposition of them.

A glance at the context (Phi 2:1, 5) will at once show that the practical design of the apostle was to exhort Christians unto spiritual fellowship among themselves—to be like-minded, to love one another, to be humble and lowly, to esteem others better than themselves. To enforce this, the example of Christ Jesus our Lord is proposed in the verses we are now to consider. We are bidden to have in us the same mind that was in Him—the mind, spirit, habit, of self-abnegation, the mind of self-sacrifice, and of obedience to God. We must humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God if we are to be exalted by Him in due time (1Pe 5:6). To set before us the example of Christ in its most vivid colours, in the most heart-affecting features, the Holy Spirit takes us back to the position which our Mediator occupied in a past eternity, shows us that supreme dignity and glory were His, and, then, reminds us of those unfathomable depths of condescension and humiliation into which He descended for our sakes.

“Who, being in the form of God” (Phi 2:6). First of all, this affirms the absolute Deity of the Son, for no mere creature, no matter how high in the scale of being, could ever be “in the form of God.” Three words are used concerning the Son’s relation to the Godhead. First, He subsists in the “form of God.” God is to be seen in Him alone. Second, He is “the *image* of the invisible God” (Col 1:15), which expression tells of His *manifestations* of God *unto us* (cf. 2Co 4:6). Third, He is the “brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb 1:3), or, more exactly, the “effulgency [outshining] of his glory and the exact expression of his substance” (Bagster’s Interlinear), which perhaps combines both of the concepts suggested by “form” and “image,” namely, that the whole nature of God is in Christ, and that, by Him, God is declared and expressed to us.

“Who, being,” or subsisting (it is hardly correct to speak of a divine person “existing.” He is self-existent, He always *was*) in “the form of God.” “Form” (the Greek word is only found elsewhere in the New Testament in Philippians 2:7 and Mark 16:12) is that which is apparent, and “the form of God” is an expression which seems to denote His visible glory, His displayed majesty, His manifested sovereignty. From eternity, the Son was clothed with all the insignia of Deity, adorned with all divine splendour. “The Word *was* God” (Joh 1:1).

“Thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phi 2:6). Almost every word in this verse has been made the occasion of contention. Making no pretensions to scholarship, the writer has sufficient confidence in the superintending providence of God to be satisfied that the translators of our Authorized Version were preserved from any serious mistake on a subject so vitally important. As the first clause of our verse refers to an objective delineation of the divine dignity of the Son, so this second clause affirms His subjective consciousness thereof. The word, “thought,” is the same (in the Greek) as “esteem” in verse 3, except that there the present tense is used, here the aorist, which indicates a definite point in time past. The word rendered, “robbery,” denotes not the spoil or prize, but *the act* of taking the spoil. The Son reckoned not equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit an act of usurpation.

“Thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” This is only the negative way of saying that Christ considered equality with God as that which justly and essentially pertained and

belonged to Him. It was His by indisputable right. Christ esteemed such equality as no invasion of another's prerogative, but regarded Himself as being entitled to all divine honours. Because He held the rank of one of the three co-eternal, co-essential and co-glorious persons of the Godhead, the Son reckoned that His full and perfect equality with the other two was His own unchallengeable portion. In this second clause of verse 6, there is no doubt a latent reference to Satan's fall. He, though "the anointed cherub" (Eze 28:14), was infinitely below God, yet did he grasp at an equality with Him. To this Isaiah 14:14 refers, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I *will be like* the most High."

However the Greek word for "robbery" be translated, it is evident that the emphatic and vital term of this clause is "equal," for if that signifies a real and proper equality, then the proof for the absolute deity of the Saviour is irrefragable. How, then, is the exact significance of this term to be determined? Not by having recourse to Homer, or any other heathen writer, but by discovering the meaning of its cognate. If we can fix the precise rendering of the adjective, then we may be sure of the adverb. Now, the adjective is found in Matthew 20:12; Luke 20:36; John 5:18; Acts 11:17; Revelation 21:16; and in each passage, the reference is not to a resemblance or likeness only, but to a *real* and proper equality! Thus, the force of this is parallel with, "I and my Father *are one*" (Joh 10:30).

"My Father is greater than I" (Joh 14:28) must not be allowed to negative John 10:30. There are *no* contradictions in Holy Writ. Each of these passages may be given its *full* force, without there being any conflict between them. The simple and sufficient way to discover their perfect consistency is to remember that Scripture exhibits our Saviour in *two* chief characters—as God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity—as Mediator, the God-man, the Word become flesh. In the former character, He is described as possessing all the perfections of Deity. In the latter, as the Servant of the Godhead. Speaking of Himself according to His essential being, He could unqualifiedly say, "I and my Father are one"—one in essence or nature. Speaking of Himself according to His mediatorial *office*, He could say, "My Father is greater than I"—not essentially, but economically.

Each expression that is used in Philippians 2:6 is expressly designed by the Holy Spirit to magnify the divine dignity of Christ's person. He is the possessor of a glory equal with God's. He possesses unquestioned right to that glory, deeming it no robbery to challenge it. His glory is not an accidental or phenomenal one, but a substantial and essential one, subsisting in the very "form of God." Between that which is infinite and that which is finite, that which is eternal and that which is temporal, He who is the Creator and that which is the creature, it is utterly impossible that there should be *any* equality. "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One" (Isa 40:25) is God's own challenge. Thus, for *any creature* to deem himself "equal with God" would be the highest robbery and supremest blasphemy of which any could ever be guilty.

"But made himself of no reputation" (Phi 2:7). The meaning of these words is explained in those which immediately follow. So far was the Son from tenaciously insisting upon His personal rights as a Member of the blessed Trinity, that He voluntarily relinquished them. He willingly set aside the magnificent distinctions of the Creator to appear in the form of a creature, yea, in the likeness of a fallen apostate. He abdicated His position of supremacy and entered that of servitude. Though equal in majesty and glory with God, He joyfully resigned Himself to the Father's will (Joh 6:38). Incomparable

condescension was this. He who was by inherent right in the form of God, suffered His glory to be eclipsed, His honour to be laid in the dust, and Himself to be humbled to a death most shameful.

“And took upon him the form of a servant” (Phi 2:7). In so doing, He did not cease to *be* all that He was before, but He assumed to Himself something He had not previously. There was no change in His divine nature, but the uniting to His divine person of a human nature. “He who is God, can no more be not God, that He who is not God, can be God” (John Owen, 1616-1683). None of Christ’s divine attributes were relinquished, for they are as inseparable from His divine person as heat is from fire, or weight is from substance. But His majestic glory was, for a season, obscured by the interposing veil of human flesh. Nor is our last statement negative by John 1:14, “We beheld his glory” (explained by Mat 16:17) is in contrast with the unregenerate masses before whom He appeared as “a root out of a dry ground,” having “no form nor comeliness” (Isa 53:2).

It was *God Himself* who was “manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). The One born in Bethlehem’s manger was “the mighty God” (Isa 9:6) and heralded as “Christ the Lord” (Luk 2:11). Let there be no uncertainty on this point. Had He been “emptied” of any of His personal excellency, had His divine attributes been laid aside, then His satisfaction or sacrifice *would not* have possessed *infinite* value. The *glory* of His person was not in the slightest degree set aside or diminished when He became incarnate, though it was (in measure) concealed by the lowly form of the servant which He had assumed. Christ was still “equal with God” when He descended to earth. It was “the Lord of glory” (1Co 2:8) whom men crucified!

“And took *upon* him the form of a servant.” *That* was the great condescension, yet is it not possible for us fully to grasp the infinitude of the Son’s stoop. If God “humbled himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth” (Psa 113:6), how much more so actually to *become* “flesh” and be found among the most lowly! He entered into an *office* which placed Him below God (Joh 14:28; 1Co 11:3). He was, for a season, “made lower than the angels” (Heb 2:7). He was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4). He was made lower than the ordinary condition of man, for He was “a reproach of men, and despised of the people” (Psa 22:6).

What point all this gives to, “Let this mind be *in you*, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi 2:5)! How earnestly should the Christian seek grace to be contented with the lowest place which God and men may assign him—to be ready to perform the meanest service—to be and do *anything* which brings glory to God! Let us be provoked unto humility and lowliness of mind, and thus follow the example which Christ has left us.

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 the 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. We term it accessory 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 have no hope and are “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 behoves each of us to make the most diligent and thorough inquiry as to the nature of saving faith. The more so because all faith in Christ 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 that God *has* accepted them in the Beloved, and that they 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.

1. *Its Counterfeits*

There are those who have a faith which is so like to that which is saving that 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 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 in 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. 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,” which means that 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 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 even 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 that their carcasses fell in the wilderness, and He swore 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 11 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 dependence 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 weigh what he said in 11 Chronicles 13, when Jeroboam and his hosts came against him. First, he reminded all Israel that the Lord God had given the kingdom to David and his sons for ever “by a *covenant* of salt” (verse 5). Next, he denounced the sins of his adversary (verses 6-9). Then he affirmed the Lord to be “our God” and that He was with him and his people (verses 10-12). But Jeroboam heeded not, but forced the battle upon them. “Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter” “because they *relied upon* the LORD God of their fathers” (verse 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 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 see 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 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 sepulcher*, 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 may be the case of the Ninevites, why may they not be apt to apply [appropriate] a Gospel promise when they are not like to meet with such difficulty and opposition?” (David Clarkson, 1680, for some time 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 hearts. 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 not “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 scriptural 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 our 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 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 2:23-24). 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 faith (Mat 13:20-21). Saving faith will make a man prepare for the coming of the Lord—so also will a non-saving faith. 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 faith (Mat 13:20).

Perhaps some readers are ready to say that all of this is very unsettling and, if really heeded, most distressing. May God in His mercy grant that this article may have just those

very effects on many who read it. 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 this 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 false sense of 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). Oh, my reader, heed that word *now*.

In closing this 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 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 either be 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 encroach 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 these mine enemies, *which would not* that I should *reign over them*, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luk 19:27).

Again, there are multitudes who are quite ready for Christ to justify them, but not to sanctify. Some kind, 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 dissolve utterly their old frame of nature, to melt their souls, so as to make them

run in a new mould, they like not. To deny self utterly, 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 John referred to Herodias, it 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.

