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**STUDIES**  
**IN THE**  
**SCRIPTURES**

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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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*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

## THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

We would ask those of our readers who are sticklers for mathematical precision to kindly bear with us this time. According to their logical order, the next article in this series should have been upon the Kingdom of Christ, but at the moment, we feel strongly led to write upon another and different glory of the Saviour's. When outward circumstances are sorely trying to flesh and blood, when the soul is cast down by the dark providences of God, when one is out of employment and troubled as to how to make ends meet, it is by no means an easy task to fix one's attention upon a deep doctrinal discussion, though where one is enabled to “gird up the loins of his mind,” such is often a good mental and spiritual tonic. But, having in view the “present distress” and the pinch of it, which many of our readers are now feeling, when at a time that it almost seems as though “every man's hand is against” them, probably a simple meditation upon the precious subject of the compassion of Christ will prove more timely.

Oh, dear reader, how deeply thankful we should be that Christ is *compassionate*! That He is not so far away as to know nothing about the painful trials through which we are now passing, nor so high above us as to be incapable of entering sympathetically into our ways, nor yet so changed in Himself, from what He was during the days of His humiliation, as to be no longer moved to pity. So far from this being the case, the Holy Spirit has graciously assured us that, “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15). These words open to us a soul-refreshing view of the personal affection and tenderness of our all-loving Christ to the Church which is His body.

If we consult the records, which God has so graciously given us of the life of His incarnate Son in this scene of sin, suffering, and sorrow, a most blessed unveiling of the heart of Christ is there set before us. “But when He saw the multitudes, he was *moved with compassion* on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no

shepherd" (Mat 9:36). Here we see our Lord's tender yearning over the souls of people. "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (Mat 14:14). In this, we see His kindly solicitude for the welfare and comfort of the body. When the poor leper came to Christ for healing, we are told, "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean" (Mar 1:41). When the two blind beggars besought His mercy, we read, "Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes" (Mat 20:34). When the Lord beheld the bereaved widow of Nain, "He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not" (Luk 7:13). Truly, "Thou, O LORD, art a God *full* of compassion" (Psa 86:15).

Nor has the resurrection and ascension of Christ wrought any change in His heart. Essentially, He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). The compassion of Christ is such that the grievances of His people touch His heart as if they were His own. How plainly this is brought out in Acts 9:4, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?" Saul trod but on the feet, but the Head complained! Behold His tender compassion to Stephen, evidenced by granting a vision of Himself (Act 7:56). Mark it again toward the apostle Paul, quieting his fears on the tempest-tossed ocean (Act 27:23). Observe it too toward the apostle John, a lonely exile on Patmos, seen in the wondrous revelation sent unto him and by His own reassuring hand (Rev 1:17).

Yet, in spite of these definite Scriptures, not a few, under the stress of painful trials, find it difficult to harmonize their sorrows and sufferings with an all-compassionate Christ, who has the power to deliver out of them, but does not do so. To carnal reason, it often appears that the Lord Jesus would be exercising more tenderness and manifesting more sympathy were He to speedily bring us out of difficulties and distresses. At such times, Satan asks, "Would *you* allow a dearly beloved one to languish day after day, and month after month, were you able to relieve him?" Ah, dear friend, the Lord of glory is not to be judged by feeble sense. "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is *before* them" (Ecc 9:1), that is, by things seen. Many of the wicked now have all that the natural heart can wish, while many of the righteous scarcely have a dollar to call their own. We are to walk *by faith*, and not by sight, and faith allows nothing to raise a doubt as to the tender concern of Christ for His own.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb 4:15). The Greek word for "touched" means to condole with, to suffer with others, as in 1 Corinthians 12:26. 1. Christ *knows* all about our infirmities, sufferings, and sorrows. This He does actually, none of them being too small to escape His notice, "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" (Psa 56:8). 2. He knows them *experimentally*. He has been exercised by the same trials. He knows the smart, the weight, the grievousness of them. He knows from actual experience what it is to be "wearied" (Joh 4:6), to be "an hungered" (Mat 4:2), and to say, "I thirst" (Joh 19:28). He knows what poverty is (2Co 8:9), yea, to have not where to lay His head (Mat 8:20). He knows what it means to lack sympathetic friends (Mat 26:40), and to be troubled by horrible suggestions from Satan.

3. Not only is Christ cognizant of, and possessed of an experimental acquaintance with, the sorrows through which His people pass, but He is *affected* by them, "touched" with the feeling of their infirmities (Heb 4:15). What a remarkable word is that in Isaiah 63:9, "In

all their affliction he was afflicted"! Christ Himself has a compassionate sense of what His people suffer. 4. Moreover, His sympathy is accompanied with a desire to succour (Heb 2:18) and relieve them, to do that which is best for them in every circumstance. 5. It is also to be borne in mind that Christ is affected by the infirmities of His people, as One who is deeply and intimately concerned in them. It is not the compassion of a stranger, of one who is unrelated by near and dear ties, but that of a Friend (Pro 18:24), a Brother (Heb 2:12), a Husband (2Co 11:2), a Father (Isa 9:6).

What a terrible sin is it, then, for any Christian to call into question the tenderness of our great High Priest toward His people. Yet is it one which that wretched unbelief, still remaining in us, is ever prone to commit. As this is the practical crux in the application of our subject, let us endeavour to throw some light on the seeming difficulty. Here is one of Christ's blood-bought people lying upon a bed of sickness, languishing in pain. Here is another nursing such a one, fearing that, in a short time, she will be called upon to give up her loved one. Here is another who is out of work, with half a dozen little mouths to feed. Each one cries unto the Lord for deliverance from these trying circumstances, but instead of relief coming, matters seem to get worse. Are these things, such experiences, consistent with an omnipotent Christ who is full of compassion?

First of all, let the sorely-exercised heart seek to realize (by faith resting on God's holy and unerring Word) that the Lord Himself has *sent* the affliction and that for our spiritual good. O fellow Christian, if the chastening hand of the Lord be now making you smart, it is because He is dealing with you, not in wrath, but in *love* (Heb 12:5). What a difference it makes unto a weeping soul to know that the rod too is wielded by tender compassion! Then, let each of us seek grace to say with Him who has left us an example, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11).

Second, let us earnestly endeavour to recognize His merciful design in each trial He sends us. He "doth not afflict willingly" (Lam 3:33), but because *we* have given Him occasion to. When the heart has become too much attached to the world, our affections unduly set upon things below, the Lord turns our carnal sweets into bitters, and our temporal fountains into "broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer 2:13), so as to wean us from them. When temporal prosperity was our portion, how cold were our hearts toward the Lord. How little real praying we did. But as He says, "In their affliction they will seek me early" (Hos 5:15)! Ah, my reader, has not this been your experience! Men *cry* unto the Lord "in their trouble" (Psa 107:13). Then, thank Him for them, if they are stirring you up to pray. Again, just as drenching rains, roaring winds, and biting frosts, are necessary for the good of vegetation, so trials and tribulations must be our portion if the graces of patience and submission are to flourish in our souls.

Third, admire and be thankful for the blessed compassion which Christ has manifested by *bestowing grace*, which has enabled you to bear whatever burden He has seen fit to lay upon your frail shoulders. But for *His* sustaining strength, you would have utterly sunk beneath the load. Of old, God purposely brought His people into a howling desert, so as to manifest the sufficiency of His resources to minister unto them. O let us not murmur, as did they, and unbelievably ask, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psa 78:19). Rather, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall [not necessarily *remove* it, but]

*sustain thee*” (Psa 55:22). Rest on the Lord, seek His grace, plead His promises, and thou shalt find that the Lord is “a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1).

Remembering what He Himself passed through down here, the Lord Jesus has a tender and continuing sympathy with His suffering members. He has a deep compassion for each of His tried saints, even when He does not see well to set them free at once from their pains. For not only has He their spiritual and ultimate good in view, but, what is yet more blessed, *His* affections never move Him to ignore the sovereign and all-wise will of the Father. Then, let not the deferring of the deliverance, the postponing of relief, cause any to call into question that love which passeth knowledge. Rather, let us rest with calm confidence on that sure word, “His compassions fail not. They are new every morning” (Lam 3:22-23).

“That the God of glory should have such respect to contemptible creatures, as not only to suffer for, but also to suffer with them; that He should have compassion on us in infirmities, which are the effects of sin, or in themselves sinful, and show tenderness where there is just and proper occasion for His indignation and severity; that He should concern Himself, not only in those cases where common friends will stand by us, but in our weaknesses, where others will be ashamed of us; in dangers and sufferings, where others will be afraid; in the sad circumstances of our lives, when others withdraw, and where his own best friends on earth deserted Him—that He should have such regard for those who are infinitely below Him, and whom He might pass by with as much disregard as we do flies or grasshoppers—for we are incomparably less to Him than these are to us—if these things were in our thoughts, what occasion of wonder will they offer to us! How admirable is Christ hereby represented to us! How worthy of all admiration!” (David Clarkson, 1621-1673).

Finally, let it be pointed out, what a source of encouragement is there in the precious fact of Christ’s compassion for us to address ourselves unto Him in all our straits and weaknesses. If He be so concerned in us and our trials, if He be so affected in Himself with a sense of them, and have both in His person and priestly office such a propensity to relieve us, then, how gladly, promptly, and continuously should we ply Him for help and succour. This is the very use which the inspired apostle makes of this truth, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). The Lord graciously add His blessing.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### *54. The Path of Tribulation (10:32-34)*

God has not promised His people a smooth path through this world. Instead, He has ordained that, “We must through much tribulation” enter His kingdom (Act 14:22). Why should it be otherwise, seeing we are now in a territory which is under His curse. And what has brought down that curse, but *sin*. Seeing, then, that there still is a world of sin, both

without and within each one of us, why should it be thought strange if we are made to taste the bitterness of its products! Suppose it were otherwise, what would be the effect? Suppose this present life were free from sorrows, sufferings, separations. Ah, would we not be content with our present portion? Wisely, then, has God ordered it that we should be constantly reminded of the fact, "*This is not your rest: because it is polluted*" (Mic 2:10). Trials and tribulations are needful if there is to be wrought in us "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phi 1:23).

The word, "tribulation," is derived from the Latin, "tribulum," which was a flail used by the Romans to separate the wheat from the chaff. How much "chaff" remains even in the one who has been genuinely converted! How much of the "flesh" mingles with and mars his spiritual exercises! How much, which is merely "natural," is mixed with his youthful zeal and energetic activities! How much of carnal wisdom and leaning unto our own understanding there is, till God is pleased to deepen His work of grace in the soul! And one of the principal instruments which He employs in that blessed work is the "tribulum" or flail. By means of sore disappointments, thwarted plans, inward fightings, painful afflictions, does He "take forth the precious from the vile" (Jer 15:19), and remove the dross from the pure gold. It is by weaning us from the things of earth that He fits us for setting our affections on things above. It is by drying up creature-streams of satisfaction that He makes His children thirst for the Fountain of living water.

Tribulation worketh patience" (Rom 5:3). Patience is a grace which has both a passive and an active side. Passively, it is a meekly bowing to the sovereign pleasure of God, a saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11). Actively, it is a steady perseverance in the path of duty. This is one of the great ends which God has in view in the afflicting of His children—to effect in them "a meek and quiet spirit" (1Pe 3:4). "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience" (Rom 5:3-4). It is one thing to obtain a theoretical knowledge of a truth by means of reading. It is quite another to have a real and inward acquaintance with the same. As the tried and tempest-tossed soul bows meekly to the providential dealings of God, he experimentally learns what is "that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2). "And experience, hope" (Rom 5:4), which is a firm expectation of a continuance of sustaining grace and final glory. Since then our sufferings are one of the means which God has appointed for the Christian's sanctification, preparing us for usefulness here, and for heaven hereafter, let us glory in them.

But let us lift our thoughts still higher. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb 12:3). Ah, it is unto *His* image which the saint is predestinated to be conformed (Rom 8:29), first in suffering, and then in glory. Let each troubled and groaning child of God call to remembrance the afflictions through which the Man of sorrows passed! Is it not fitting that the servant should drink of the cup which his Master drank? O my brethren, the highest honour God confers upon any of us in this life is when He permits us to suffer a little for Christ's sake. O for grace to say with the beloved apostle, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2Co 12:9). "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (1Pe 4:14).

“No man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto” (1Th 3:3). Yet afflictions do not come upon all saints in the same form, nor to the same degree. God is sovereign in this, as in everything else. He knows what will best promote the spiritual good of His people. All is ordered by Him in infinite wisdom and infinite love. As has been well said, “God had one Son without sin, but none without sorrow.” Yet the sorrow is not unmixed. God tempers His winds unto the lambs. With every temptation or trial, He provides a way to escape. In the midst of sorest trouble, His all-suffering grace is available. The promise is sure, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee” (Psa 55:22), and where faith is enabled to rest in the Lord, His sustaining power is realized in the soul.

Afflictions are not all that the Lord sends His people. He daily loadeth them with His benefits (Psa 68:19). The smilings of His face greatly outnumber the frowns of His providence. There are far more sunny days than cloudy ones. But our memories are fickle. When we enter the wilderness, we so quickly forget our exodus from Egypt and deliverance at the Red Sea. When water gives out (Exo 17:1), we fail to call to remembrance the miraculous supply of manna (Exo 16:15). It was thus with the apostles. When they had forgotten to take bread, the Lord Jesus tenderly remonstrated with them, saying, “O ye of little faith...Do ye not understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?” (Mat 16:5-10). O how much peace and joy we lose in the present through our sinful failure in not calling to remembrance the Lord’s past deliverances and mercies.

“Thou shalt remember *all* the way which the LORD thy God led thee” (Deu 8:2). Sit down and *review* God’s previous dealings with thee. Bring before your hearts His tender patience, His unchanging faithfulness, His powerful interpositions, His gracious gifts. There have been times in the past, when your own folly brought you into deep waters of trouble, but God did not cast you off. You fretted and murmured, but God did not abandon you. You were full of fears and unbelief, yet God suffered you not to starve. He neither dealt with you after your sins, nor rewarded you according to your iniquities. Instead, He proved Himself to be *unto you* the “God of *all* grace” (1Pe 5:10). There were times in the past, when every man’s hand and heart appeared to be against you, when the enemy came in like a flood, and it looked very much as though you would be drowned. But help *was* at hand. In the *fourth* watch of the night, the Lord Jesus appeared on the waters, and you were delivered. Then *remember* this, and let the realization of past deliverances comfort and stay your heart in the midst of the present emergency.

Many are the appeals made unto us in the Word of God to do this very thing. Varied and numerous are the motives employed by the Holy Spirit in the Scripture of truth to stir up God’s children unto constancy of heart and the performance of duty when “circumstances” seem to be all against them. Every attribute of God is made a distinct ground for urging us to run with perseverance the race that is set before us. The promises of God are given to cheer, and His warnings to stir up our hearts unto a fuller compliance with His revealed will. Rewards are promised to those who overcome the flesh, the world, and the devil, while eternal woes are threatened unto those failing to do so. Faith is to be stimulated by the record given of God’s grace which sustained fellow-pilgrims in by-gone



days. Hope is to be stirred into action by the glorious goal which the Word holds up to view. And, as we have said, fresh courage for the present is to be drawn by us from calling to mind God's goodness in the past. It is *this* particular motive which the apostle pressed on the Hebrews in the passage which is now to be before us.

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions" (Heb 10:32). In vv. 16-21, the apostle had given a brief summary of the inestimable privileges which are the present portion of the regenerated people of God. In Heb 10: 22-24, he had exhorted them to make a suitable response to such blessings. In Heb 10:25-31, he had fortified their minds against temptations to apostasy, or to wilful and presumptuous sins. He now bids them to recall the earlier days of their profession, and to consider what they had already ventured, suffered, and renounced for Christ, and how they had been supernaturally sustained under their trials. The force of this was, disgrace not your former conduct by now casting away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward.

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated"(Heb 10:32). The beginnings of God's work of grace in their souls is here spoken of as being "illuminated." The Holy Spirit had revealed to them their depravity and impotency, their lost and miserable state by nature. He had brought before them the unchanging demands of God's righteous law and their utter failure to meet those claims. He had pointed them to the Lord Jesus, who, as the Sponsor and Surety of His people, had assumed all their liabilities, kept the law in their stead, and died for their sins. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Co 4:6). Thus, He had granted unto them an experimental acquaintance with the Gospel, so that they had felt in their own consciences and hearts the power of its truth. How unspeakably solemn is it to note that this too had been the experience of the apostates in Hebrews 6:4-6, for the very word here rendered "illuminated" is there translated, "enlightened."

Right after their illumination by God, they were called upon to feel something of the rage of His enemies. At the beginning of this dispensation, those who made profession of Christianity were hotly persecuted, and the believing Hebrews had not escaped. This, the apostle would remind them of, "After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions"(Heb 10:32). As soon as God had quickened their hearts and shone upon their understandings so that they embraced His incarnate Son as their Lord and Saviour, earth and hell combined against them. By nature, we are in the dark, and while in it, we met with no opposition from Satan or the world. But when, by grace, we determined to follow the example which Christ has left us, we were soon brought into the fellowship of His sufferings. By such experiences, we are reminded that God has called us to the combat, that as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we are to "endure hardness" (2Tim 2:3), and need to take unto ourselves the armour which God has provided (Eph 6:10-18)—not to speculate about, but to *use* it.

The attitude toward and the conduct of the Hebrew Christians, under this "great fight of afflictions" during the days of their "first love," is here summed up, first, in the one word, "endured." They had not fainted or given way to despondency, nor had they renounced their profession. They failed in no part of the conflict, but came off conquerors. This they

had been enabled unto by the efficacious grace of God. They had been wondrously and blessedly supported under their sufferings. From Acts 8, we learn that when the church at Jerusalem was sorely persecuted, its members so far from abandoning Christianity, were scattered abroad, and "went everywhere preaching the word" (v. 4). How greatly was the Captain of their salvation honoured by this valour of His soldiers. It is a noticeable fact of history that *babes* in Christ have often been the bravest of all in facing suffering and death. Perhaps because the great and glorious change involved in the passing from death unto life is *fresh* in their minds than in that of older Christians. Now, it was to the recollection of these things unto which the apostles here called the flagging and tempted Hebrews.

"But call to remembrance." "It is not the bare remembrance he intends, for it is impossible men should absolutely forget such a season. Men are apt enough to remember the times of their sufferings, especially such as are here mentioned, accompanied with all sorts of injurious treatments from men. But the apostle would have them *so* call to mind, as to consider withal, what support they had under their sufferings, what satisfaction in them, what deliverance from the, that they might not despond upon the approach of the like trials and evils on the same account. If we remember our sufferings only as unto what is evil and afflictive in them, what we lose, what we endure, and undergo, such a remembrance will weaken and dispirit us, as unto our future trials. Hereon, many cast about to deliver themselves for the future, by undue means and sinful compliances, in a desertion of their profession, the thing the apostle was jealous of concerning these Hebrews. But if, withal, we call to mind what was the cause for which we suffered, the honour that is in such sufferings, outbalancing all the contempt and reproaches of the world, the presence of God enjoyed in them, and the reward proposed unto us, the calling these things to mind, will greatly strengthen us against future trials, provided we retain the same love unto, and valuation of the things for which we suffered, as we had in those former days" (John Owen, 1616-1683).

The remembrance, then, of past warfare, if it had been carried on faithfully and diligently under the banner of Christ, is at length useful to us, not as a pretext for sloth, as though we had already served our time, but to render us more active in finishing the remaining part of our course. For Christ has not enlisted us on this condition, that we should after a few years ask for a discharge, like soldiers who have served their time, but that we should pursue our warfare even unto the end" (John Calvin, 1509-1564). It, therefore, becomes a solemn and searching question for each of us to face. To what extent am I *now* being antagonized by the world? Something must be seriously wrong with me if I have the good-will of everybody. God's Word emphatically declares, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution" (2Ti 3:12).

"Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used" (Heb 10:33). In this verse, the apostle mentions one or two features of what their "great fight or affliction" had consisted. Some of them were made a public spectacle to their neighbours, by the malicious accusations brought against them, and by the derision and punishment laid upon them. While others were the "partners" of those who were cruelly treated. The principal reference here is to the loss which they had sustained in their characters and reputations, and unto many people (especially those of a sensitive temperament), this is a sore trial.

Almost anything is easier to bear than obloquy and disgrace. But sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master. They slandered Him, and said He had a demon.

Reproach and slander are exceedingly trying, and if we are not upon our guard, if we fail to gird up the loins of our minds (1Pe 1:13), we are likely to be so cast down by them as to be incapacitated for duty. Despondency and despair are never excusable in the Christian and must be steadily resisted. We need to make up our minds that if, by grace, we are determined to follow the example which Christ has left us, we shall have many enemies—especially in the religious world—who will scruple at no misrepresentations of our motives and actions. We must learn to undervalue our reputations and be content to be regarded as “the offscouring of all things”(1Co 4:13). We must seek grace to emulate Him, who “set my face like a flint” (Isa 50:7), who “endured the cross, *despising* the shame” (Heb 12:2). Unless we cultivate His spirit, we shall be at a great disadvantage when sufferings come upon us.

Not only had the Hebrew Christians suffered personally, but they had fellowship also in the sufferings of others. This is a Christian duty and, we may add, a privilege. As members of the same family, as fellow-pilgrims toward the better country, as called to serve together under the same banner, it is only meet that we should bear “one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2), and “weep with them that weep” (Rom 12:15). Of Moses, it is recorded that he, “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb 11:24-25). To be a companion of those who suffer for Christ is an evidence of our love for His brethren, of courage in suffering, and of readiness to succour those who are persecuted because of the Gospel. We do well to frequently ponder Matthew 25:42-45.

“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds” (Heb 10:34). The apostle here makes grateful acknowledgment of the sympathy which the Hebrews had shown him in an hour of need. The historical reference may be to the time when he lay bound in chains at Jerusalem (Act 21:33), when their love for him was shown by their prayers, and perhaps letters and gifts. It is the bounden duty for Christians to express in a practical way their compassion for any of Christ’s suffering servants, doing everything in their power to succour, support, and relieve them. Equally so is it the duty of God’s ministers to thankfully own the kindness shown them. Christ Himself will yet publicly bear witness unto the services of love which have been shown unto His brethren (Mat 25:34-40).

“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds” (Heb 10:34). These words supply one of the many proofs that the apostle Paul was the author of this epistle. For of the other persons, whom some have fancied wrote it, such as Luke, Barnabas, Clement, etc., there is no hint anywhere in Scripture, nor we believe in ecclesiastical history, of any of them suffering bonds in Judea. But the lying of Paul in bonds and imprisonments was renowned above all others. Hence, he styled himself in particular, “Paul, prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Phm 1:1), and gloried in this peculiar honour as “an ambassador in bonds” (Eph 6:20), and as such, desired the saints at Colosse to remember him at the throne of grace (Col 4:3). Thus, his “bonds,” being above all others so familiar, such a subject of the churches’ prayers, this reference here in Hebrews 10:34, at once identifies the writer.

“And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods” (Heb 10:34). This supplies further information upon the deportment of the Hebrews under their trials. They had not only

patiently “endured” the great fight of affliction, but were happy in being counted worthy to suffer for Christ—a blessed triumph was that of the mighty grace of God over the weakness of the flesh. God is able to strengthen in the inner man, “with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col 1:11). Ordinarily, few things are more calculated to distress the minds of men than their being cruelly plundered of those things for which they have laboured hard, and which they and their families still need. Wailing and lamentations commonly accompany them. Blessed is it when the heart is brought to hold lightly all earthly comforts and conveniences, for it is easier then to part with them should we be called upon to do so.

“Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance” (Heb 10:34). This clause supplies the key to the previous one, showing the ground of their joy. Faith looked away from things seen to those unseen, reckoning that “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18). “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Co 4:17). Where the heart’s affections are truly set upon things above (Col 3:2), few tears will be shed over the loss of any earthly baubles. True, it is *natural* to mourn when rudely deprived of material possessions, but it is *supernatural* to rise above such grieving.

The true riches of the Christian are not accessible to human or Satanic plunderers. Men may strip us of all our worldly possessions, but they cannot take from us the love of God, the salvation of Christ, the comforts of the Holy Spirit, the hope of eternal glory. Said one, who was waylaid by a bandit, who demanded his money or his life, “Money, I have none on me. My *life* is hid with Christ in God.” The poor worldling may give way to despair when business is bad, bonds deteriorate, and banks smash, but no child of God ought ever to do so. He has been begotten unto an inheritance which is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven” (1Pe 1:4). Yet it is only as faith is in exercise, as the heart is really occupied with our heavenly portion, that we *enjoy* them, and regard all else as but “vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecc 1:14).

“What was it that enabled them thus to bear up under their sufferings? They knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. Observe, first, the happiness of the saints in heaven is ‘substance,’ something of real weight and worth—all things here are but shadows. Secondly, it is a better substance than anything they can have or lose here. Thirdly, it is an enduring substance. It will outlive time and run parallel with eternity. They can never spend it. Their enemies can never take it from them, as they did their earthly goods. Fourthly, this will make a rich amends for all they can lose and suffer here. In heaven, they shall have a better life, a better estate, better liberty, better society, better hearts, better work, everything better” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Heb 10:34). Let us now weigh carefully the first three words of this clause. These Hebrew saints had a firm conviction of heart concerning their heavenly portion. It does not say, “Knowing from God’s promises,” but, “Knowing in *yourselves*.” This presents a side of the truth, an aspect of Christian assurance, which is rarely dwelt upon in these days. Instead, it is widely ridiculed and denied, many insisting that the only basis of assurance is the bare letter of Scripture. It is quite true that the foundation of our

confidence is the written Word, but that is *not* the *only* ground, any more than a marriage certificate is the sole proof which a woman has that the man who loves, cherishes, and lives with here is her husband. No, one has only to read impartially through the first epistle of John in order to discover that he, who is walking with God and enjoying the light of His countenance, has many evidences that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus.

“Knowing in yourselves.” The one who is following on to know the Lord (Hos 6:3), not only has the testimony of God’s Word without, but he has also the witness of the Spirit within him, that he is a child and heir of God (Rom 8:16-17). In his regeneration and begun-experimental sanctification, he has received “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23). In consequence, he now has new desires, new conflicts, new joys, new sorrows. Faith purifies his heart (Act 15:9). He has received the Spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, “Abba Father”(Rom 8:15). From what he finds in his own heart, he *knows* that he is heaven-born and heaven-bound. Let those, who are strangers to a supernatural work of grace in their own hearts, mock and scoff all they please. Let them sneer at introspection, call it mysticism, or anything else they wish, but one who is scripturally assured of the Spirit’s work within him, refuses to be laughed-out of his surest proof that he is a child of God.

Granted that many have been and are deluded—acknowledging that the unregenerate heart is “deceitful above all things”(Jer 17:9).—admitting that the devil has lulled thousands into hell by means of happy feelings within them—yet none of these things alter or affect to the slightest degree the fact that it is both the duty and privilege of every genuine Christian to know *in himself* that he has passed from death unto life. Provided he be denying self, taking up his cross, and following Christ in the path of obedience, he will have cause for rejoicing in the testimony of a good conscience (2Co 1:12). But if he yields to the lusts of the flesh, fellowships an ungodly world, and gets into a backslidden state, then the joy of his salvation will be lost. Nothing, then, is of greater practical importance than that the Christian should keep clean and unstained his inward evidences that he is journeying toward heaven.

“Such, then, are the things which the apostle wishes the Hebrew Christians to ‘call to remembrance.’ It is easy to see how the calling of these things to remembrance was calculated to serve his purpose—to guard them from apostasy, and establish them in the faith and profession of the Gospel. It is as if he had said, ‘Why shrink from suffering for Christianity now? Were you not exposed to suffering from the beginning? When you first became Christians, did you not willingly undergo sufferings on account of it? And is not Christianity as worthy of being suffered for as ever? Is not Jesus the same yesterday, and today, and forever? Did not the faith and hope of Christianity formerly support you under your sufferings, and make you feel that they were but the light afflictions of a moment? And are they not as able to support you now as then? Has the substance in heaven become less real, or less enduring? And have you not as good evidence now as you had then that to that persevering Christian such treasure is laid up? Are you willing to lose all the benefit of the sacrifices you have made, and the sufferings you have sustained? And they will all go for nothing if you endure not unto the end!’ These are considerations all naturally suggested by the words of the apostle, and all well calculated to induce them ‘to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering’” (John Brown, 1722-1787).

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### 6. *His Early Experiences (Continued)*

Human nature is very apt to turn eyes of envy upon those who occupy exalted positions. It is commonly supposed that they, who are stationed in seats of eminence and honour, enjoy many advantages and benefits which are denied those beneath them. But this is far more imaginary than real, and where true, is offset by the added responsibilities incurred and the more numerous temptations which are there encountered. What was before us in our last article ought to correct the popular delusion. David, on the plains of Bethlehem, was far better off than David in the king's household. Tending the sheep was less exacting than waiting upon Saul. Amid the green pastures, he was free from jealous courtiers, the artificial etiquette of the palace, and the javelin of a mad monarch. The practical lesson to be learned by us is to be contented with the lowly position which the providence of God has assigned us. And why should those who are joint-heirs with Christ be concerned about the trifles and toys of this world?

Resuming now at the point where we broke off, we next read, "And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul" (1Sa 18:12). The word for "afraid" here is a milder one than that employed in verse 15, and might be rendered, "apprehensive." The king was becoming increasingly uneasy about the future. Consequent upon his disobedience, the prophet of God had plainly told Saul, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king," and then he added, "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou" (1Sa 15:23, 28). While he was probably ignorant of David's anointing (1Sa 16:13), it is plain that Saul was now growing more fearful that the man who had vanquished Goliath was he whom Jehovah had selected to succeed him.

First, it was evident to all that the Lord had given the young shepherd the victory over Goliath, for none had dared, in his own courage, to engage the mighty giant. Second, David's behaving himself so wisely in every position assigned him, and his being "accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants" (1Sa 18:5), indicated that he would be popular with the masses were he to ascend the throne. Third, the song of the women caused the jealous king to draw his own conclusion, "They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands, and what can he have more *but the kingdom?*" (1Sa 18:8). And now that his personal attack upon David's life had been frustrated (1Sa 18:11), Saul was apprehensive, for he saw that the Lord was with David, while he knew that He had forsaken himself.

"And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him" (1Sa 18:12). The proofs that the special favour of God rested upon David were too plain and numerous for Saul to deny. Jehovah was protecting and preserving, prospering and succeeding David, giving him victory over his enemies and acceptance in the sight of the people. Ah, my reader, when the smile of the Lord is resting upon any of His saints, even the wicked are obliged to take note of and acknowledge the same. The chief captain of Abimelech's host admitted to Abraham, "God is *with thee* in all that thou doest" (Gen 21:22). What a

testimony was that from a heathen! When Joseph was in the house of Potiphar, we are told, "And his master *saw* that the LORD was with him" (Gen 39:3). Can those among whom our lot is cast perceive that the special blessing of heaven is resting upon us? If not, our hearts ought to be deeply exercised before God.

"And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul"(1Sa 18:12). An additional cause of Saul's alarm was the knowledge that the Lord had departed from him, and therefore was he destitute of strength of mind and courage, wisdom and prudence, and had become mean and abject, and exposed to the contempt of his subjects. The reference is to 1Sa 16:14. A solemn warning is this for us. It was because of his rebellion against the Lord, that Saul was now deserted of God. How often God withdraws His sensible and comforting presence from His people, through their following of a course of self-will. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him" (Joh14:21).

"Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people" (1Sa 18:13). Solemn indeed is it to behold how Saul acted here. Instead of humbling himself before God, he sought to rid himself of the man whose presence condemned him. Instead of judging himself unsparingly, for the sin which had caused the Spirit of God to leave him, the wretched king was loth to look any more at the one upon whom Jehovah's favour manifestly rested. How differently did sinning David act at a later date! Behold him as he cries, "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight....Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psa 51:3-4, 11). Ah, here is the great difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate. The one harden themselves in their sin, the other are broken before God on account of it.

"Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people"(1Sa 18:13). But let us admire again the hand of God over-ruling, yea, directing, the reprobate monarch's actions to the carrying out of His own designs. Though it was hatred of his person that caused the king to remove David from the court, and perhaps partly to please his subjects and partly because he hoped he might be slain in battle, that our hero was now made captain over a regiment. Yet this only served the more to ingratiate him with the people, by affording him the opportunity of leading them to victory over their enemies. Abundant opportunity was thus afforded to all Israel to become acquainted with David and all his ways.

Let us also take note of another line in the typical picture here. Though anointed king of Israel (1Sa 16:13), David was, nevertheless, called upon to endure the hatred of the ruling power. Thus it was with David's Son and Lord. The One who lay in Bethlehem's manger was none other than "Christ ['The Anointed'] the Lord" (Luk 2:11), and "born King of the Jews" (Mat 2:2). Yet the king of Judea sought His life (Mat 2:16)—though fruitlessly, as in our type. So too at a later date, when His public ministry had begun, we read that, "The Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him" (Mat 12:14). Blessed is it to see how that, instead of attempting to take things into his own hands, David was content to quietly wait the time which God had appointed for his

coronation. In like manner, our blessed Lord willingly endured the “sufferings” before He entered into His “glory.” May divine grace grant unto us all needed patience.

“And David behaved himself wisely in all ways; and the LORD was with him” (1Sa 18:14). Observe that little word, “all,” and turn it into prayer and practice. Whether on the farm, in the court, or on the battlefield, the man after God’s own heart conducted himself prudently. Here too, he foreshadowed Him of whom it was declared, “He hath done *all* things *well*” (Mar 7:37). Let this ever be our desire and aim. “And the LORD was with him,” protecting and prospering. That word in 11 Chronicles 15:2 still holds good, “The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.” If we diligently seek to cultivate a daily walk with God, all will be well with us.

“Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them” (1Sa 18:15-16). When the God-forsaken king perceived that he had gained no advantage against David, but that instead, he succeeded in all his undertakings, and was more and more in favour with the people, Saul was greatly alarmed, lest the hour was drawing near when the kingdom should be rent from him and given to his rival. When the wicked discern that the awe and blessing of God is upon the righteous, they are “afraid” of them. Thus, we read that “Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy” (Mar 6:20). When it is known that God is in the assemblies of His saints, even the great ones of the earth are convicted and rendered uneasy. See Psalms 48:2-6.

“And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD’S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him” (1Sa 18:17). This was said not in friendship and good-will to David, but as designed to lay a snare for him. Thoroughly obsessed with envy, the king was unable to rest. If it could be accomplished without incurring direct guilt, he was determined to encompass David’s destruction. Formerly, he had made a personal attack upon his life (1Sa 18:11), but now he feared the people, with whom David was so popular (1Sa 18:16). So Saul deemed it wiser to devise this vile plot. He would have David work out his own doom. Remarkable is it to note that this was the very way in which Saul’s own career was ended—he was slain by the Philistines. See 1 Samuel 31:1-5.

“Only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD’S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him”(1Sa 18:17). Was this incident before David when he wrote, “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Psa 55:21)! How unspeakably dreadful was this. Here was a man, with murder in his heart, deliberately plotting the death of a fellow-creature. Yet, at that very moment, talking about “fighting the *LORD’S* battles”! O how often is the vilest hypocrisy cloaked with spiritual language! How easy it is to be deceived by fair *words*! How apt would be the bystanders, who heard this pious language of Saul, to conclude that the king was a very godly man. Ah, my reader, learn well this truth—It is *actions* which speak louder than words.



“And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?” (1Sa 18:18). Some of the commentators have supposed that Saul promised David his daughter to wife at the time when he went forth to engage Goliath, but there is nothing in Scripture which directly supports this. What is recorded in 1 Samuel 17:25 were the words of Israel and not of the king—they *supposed* he would do this and more. When Saul’s proposal was made known to him, the modesty and humility of David was at once manifested. Some think that the reference made by David to his “family,” had in view his descent from Ruth the Moabitess.

It is blessed to behold the lowly spirit which was displayed by David on this occasion. No self-seeking time-server was he. His heart was occupied in faithfully performing each duty assigned him, and he aspired not after earthly honours and fleshly advantages. “Who am I?” at once evidenced the mean estimate which he entertained of himself. Ah, *that is* the man whom the Lord uses and promotes. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:6). “And what is my life?” breathes the same sentiment. The pitting of *my* life against the Philistine is no equivalent to receiving the *king’s* daughter in marriage. Here again, we see the subject of these articles adumbrating the perfections of his Lord. “Learn of me; for I am meek and *lowly in heart*” (Mat 11:29) gives us what the modesty of David but imperfectly represented. Let writer and reader earnestly seek grace to heed that word, “Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly” (Rom 12:3).

“But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul’s daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife” (1Sa 18:19). What was the word of such a man worth? Be very slow, dear reader, in resting upon the promises of a fallen creature. No doubt the perfidy of the king, in so grossly affronting David, was designed to anger him. Such shameful treatment was calculated to stir up to mutiny one who had the right to claim the fulfillment of Saul’s agreement. And thus, the king thought he could gain an advantage against him. It is striking and solemn to discover that the curse of God rested upon that marriage, for the five sons born by Merab to the Meholathite (brought up by Michal) were delivered into the hands of the Gideonites, and “hanged” (2Sa 21:8-9).

“And Michal Saul’s daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him” (1Sa 18:20-21). A new opportunity now presented itself unto the wicked king’s purpose. Michal, another of his daughters, fell in love with David. He, therefore, proposed to give her to him for wife instead of Merab, hoping that he would now have the opportunity of bringing about his death. But let us look beyond the devil-possessed monarch, and behold and admire the wondrous ways of Him who maketh “all things work together for good” (Rom 8:28) to them that love Him. Just as of old, the Lord turned the heart of the daughter of Pharaoh unto Moses and thus foiled the evil designs of her father to destroy all the male children of the Hebrews, so He now drew out the affections of Michal unto David, and used her to thwart the murderous intentions of Saul. See 1 Samuel 19:11-17. What a proof that all hearts are in God’s hands!

Conscious that his own word would have no weight with him, the king slyly employed his servants to gain David’s confidence. They were commanded to commune with him

“secretly,” and to assure him, “The king hath *delight* in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king’s son-in-law” (1Sa 18:22). When the secret restraints of God are withdrawn from them, “The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc 8:11). They will scruple at nothing, but employ any and every means to hand for accomplishing their evil designs. They will flatter and praise or criticize and condemn, advance or abase the object of their spleen as best serves their purpose.

When David was informed of the king’s intention, his reply again evidenced the lowliness of his heart. “Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king’s son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?”—by the king (1Sa 18:23). From what follows, it seems evident that David was here pointing out his inability to bring to the king’s daughter the dowry that might be expected. Compare Genesis 29:18, 27; Exodus 22:16-17. Beautifully has Matthew Henry, in his comments on this verse, pointed out, “If David thus magnified the honour of being son-in-law to the king, how highly then should we think of it to be the sons (not in-laws, but in Gospel) to the King of kings! ‘Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us’ (1Jo 3:1)! Who are we that we should be thus dignified?” Utterly unable as we were to bring any “dowry” to recommend us unto God.

When his servants made known unto Saul David’s reply, the real design of the king became apparent. “The condition of the marriage must be that he kill a hundred Philistines, and, as proof that those he had slain were uncircumcised, he must bring in their foreskins cut off. This would be a great reproach upon the Philistines, who hated circumcision, as it was an ordinance of God. And perhaps David’s doing this would the more exasperate them against him, and make them seek to be revenged on him, which was the thing Saul desired and designed” (Matthew Henry). Even to such a stipulation, David did not demur. Knowing that God was with him, jealous of His glory to slay His enemies, he went forth and killed double the number required. Verily, God maketh the wrath of man to praise Himself (Psa 76:10).

## SAVING FAITH

### *4. Its Communication*

From the human viewpoint, things are now in a bad state in the industrial and social realms. Sad is it to see so many able-bodied men anxious for work, but unable to obtain employment. But from the spiritual viewpoint, things are in a far worse state in the religious realm. Sad is it to see the anti-Christian cults flourishing on every side, but far more grievous is it for those who are taught of God to discover that much of the so-called, “Gospel,” which is now being preached in many “Fundamentalist churches” and “Gospel halls,” is but a Satanic delusion. The devil knows the his captives are quite secure while the grace of God and the finished work of Christ are “faithfully” proclaimed to them, so long as the only way in which sinners *receive* the saving virtues of the atonement is unfaithfully concealed. Whilst God’s peremptory and unchanging demand for repentance

is left out, whilst Christ's own terms of discipleship (i.e. how to become a Christian, Act 11:26) in Luke 14:26-27, 33 are withheld, and whilst saving faith is frittered down to a mere act of the will, blind laymen will continue to be led by blind preachers, only for both to fall into the ditch.

Things are far, far worse even in the "orthodox" sections of Christendom than the majority of God's own children are aware. Things are rotten even at the very foundation, for with very rare exceptions, *God's* way of salvation is no longer being taught. Tens of thousands are "ever learning" points in prophecy, the meaning of the types, the significance of the numerals, how to divide the "dispensations," who are, nevertheless, "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2Ti 3:7) of salvation itself—"never able," because unwilling to pay the price (Pro 23:23), which is a full surrender to God Himself. So far as the writer understands the present situation, it seems to him that what is needed today is to press upon the serious attention of professing Christians such questions as, "*When* is it that God *applies* to a sinner the virtues of Christ's finished work? *What is it* which I am called upon to do in order to appropriate to myself the efficacy of Christ's atonement? What is it which gives me an actual entrance into the good of His redemption?"

The questions formulated above are only three different ways of framing the same inquiry. Now, the popular answer which is being returned to them is, "Nothing more is required from any sinner than that he simply *believe on* the Lord Jesus Christ." In the preceding articles of this series, we have sought to show that such a reply is misleading, inadequate, faulty, and that, because it ignores all the other Scriptures which set forth what God requires from the sinner. It leaves out of account God's demand for repentance (with all that that involves and includes) and Christ's clearly-defined terms of discipleship in Luke 14. To restrict ourselves to any one Scripture term of a subject, or set of passages using that term, results in an erroneous conception of it. They who limit their ideas of regeneration to the one figure of the new birth, lapse into serious error upon it. So they who limit their thoughts on how to be saved to the one word, "Believe," are easily misled. Diligent care needs to be taken to collect *all* that Scripture teaches on any subject if we are to have a properly balanced and accurate view thereof.

To be more specific. In Romans 10:13, we read, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now, does this mean that all who have, with their lips, cried unto the Lord, who have in the name of Christ besought God to have mercy on them, been saved by Him? They, who reply in the affirmative, are only deceived by the mere sound of words, as the deluded Romanist is when he contends for Christ's bodily presence in the bread, because He said, "*This is my body*" (Mat 26:26). And how are we to show the Papist is misled? Why, by comparing Scripture *with Scripture*. So here. The writer well remembers being on a ship in a terrible storm off the coast of Newfoundland. All the hatches were battened down, and for three days, no passenger was allowed on the decks. Reports from the stewards were disquieting. Strong men paled. As the winds increased and the ship rolled worse and worse, scores of men and women were heard calling upon the name of the Lord. Did He save them? A day or two later, when the weather cleared, those same men and women were drinking, cursing, card-playing!

Perhaps someone asks, "But does not Romans 10:13 say what it means?" Certainly it does, but no verse of Scripture yields its meaning to lazy people. Christ Himself tells us that there are many who call Him, "Lord," to whom He will say, "Depart from me" (Mat 7:22-23). Then, what is to be done with Romans 10:13? Why, diligently compare it with *all* other passages which make known what the sinner must do ere God will save him. If nothing more than the fear of death or horror of hell prompts the sinner to call upon the Lord, he might just as well call upon the trees. The Almighty is not at the beck and call of any rebel, who, when he is terrified, sues for mercy. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Pro 28:9)! "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and *forsaketh them* shall have mercy" (Pro 28:13). The only "calling upon his name" which the Lord heeds is that which issues from a broken, penitent, sin-hating heart, which thirsts after holiness.

The same principle applies to Acts 16:31 and all similar texts. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To a casual reader, that seems a very simple matter, yet a closer pondering of those words should discover that more is involved than at first sight appears. Note that the apostles did not merely tell the Philippian jailor to, "Rest on the finished work of Christ," or "Trust in His atoning sacrifice." Instead, it was a *Person* that was set before him. Again, it was not simply, "Believe on the Saviour," but, "*the Lord Jesus Christ.*" John 1:12 shows plainly that to "believe" is to "receive," and to be saved, a sinner must receive One who is not only a Saviour but "Lord," yea, who must be received *as "Lord" before* He becomes the Saviour of that person. And *to* receive "Christ Jesus *the Lord*" (Col 2:6) necessarily involves the renouncing of our own sinful lordship, the throwing down of the weapons of our warfare against Him, and the submitting to His yoke and rule. And before any human rebel is brought to do *that*, a miracle of divine grace has to be wrought within him. And this brings us more immediately to the present aspect of our theme.

Saving faith is not a native product of the human heart, but is a spiritual grace communicated from on high. "It is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). It is "of the operation of God" (Col 2:12). It is by "the power of God" (1Co 2:5). A most remarkable passage on this subject is found in Ephesians 1:16-20. There we find the apostle Paul praying that the saints should have the eyes of their understanding enlightened, that they might know, "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward, who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." Note the strong expressions here used. Not merely the power of God, or the greatness of it, but the "exceeding greatness of his power to usward." Note, too, the standard of comparison. We "believe *according* to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

God put forth His "*mighty power*" when He resurrected Christ. There was a mighty power seeking to hinder, even Satan and all his hosts. There was a mighty difficulty to be overcome, even the vanquishing of the grave. There was a mighty result to be achieved, even the bringing to life One who was dead. None but God Himself was equal to a miracle so stupendous. Strictly analogous is that miracle of grace which issues in saving faith. The devil employs all his arts and power to retain his captive. The sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more quicken himself than he can create a world. His heart is bound

fast with the grave clothes of worldly and fleshly lusts, and only omnipotence can raise it into communion with God. Well may every true servant of the Lord emulate the apostle Paul and pray earnestly that God *will* enlighten His people concerning this wonder of wonders, so that instead of attributing their faith to an exercise of their own will, they may freely ascribe all the honour and glory unto Him to whom alone it justly belongs.

If only the professing Christians of this untoward generation could begin to obtain some adequate conception of the *real condition* of every man by nature, they might be less inclined to cavil against the teaching that nothing short of a miracle of grace can ever qualify any sinner to believe unto the saving of his soul. If they could only see that the heart's attitude toward God of the most refined and moral, is not one whit different than that of the most vulgar and vicious. That he who is most kind and benevolent toward his fellow-creatures, has no more real desire after Christ than has the most selfish and brutal. Then it would be evident that divine power must operate to change the heart. Divine power was needed to create, but much greater power is required to regenerate a soul. Creation is only the bringing of something out of nothing, but regeneration is the transforming not only of an unlovely object, but one who *resists* with all its might the gracious designs of the Heavenly Potter.

It is not simply that the Holy Spirit approaches a heart in which there is no love for God, but He finds it filled with enmity against Him, and incapable of being subject to His law (Rom 8:7). True, the individual himself may be quite unconscious of this terrible fact, yea, ready to indignantly deny it. But that is easily accounted for. If he has heard of little or nothing but the love, the grace, the mercy, the goodness of God, it would indeed be surprising if he hated Him. But once the *God of Scripture* is made known to him in the power of the Spirit, once he is made to realize that God is the Governor of this world, demanding unqualified submission to all His laws, that He is inflexibly just, and "will by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:7) that He is sovereign, and loves whom He pleases and hates whom He wills, that so far from being an easy-going, indulgent Creator, who winks at the follies of His creatures, He is ineffably holy, so that His righteous wrath burns against all the workers of iniquity—then will people be conscious of indwelling enmity surging up against Him. And nothing but the all-mighty power of the Spirit can overcome that enmity and bring any rebel to truly love the God of Holy Writ.

Rightly did Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) the Puritan say, "A wolf will sooner marry a lamb, or a lamb a wolf, than ever a carnal heart will be subject to the law of God, which was the ancient husband of it—Romans 7:6. It is the turning of one contrary into another. To turn water into wine, there is some kind of symbolizing, yet that is a miracle. But to turn a wolf into a lamb, to turn fire into water, is a yet greater miracle. Between nothing and something, there is an infinite distance, but between sin and grace, there is a greater distance than can be between nothing and the highest angel in heaven....To destroy the power of sin in a man's soul is as a great a work as to take away the guilt of sin. It is easier to say to a blind man, See, and to the lame man, Walk, than to say to a man that lies under the power of sin, Live, be holy, for there is that that will not be subject."

In 11 Corinthians 10:4, the apostle describes the character of that work in which the true servants of Christ are engaged. It is a conflict with the forces of Satan. The weapons of their warfare are "not carnal"—as well might modern soldiers go forth equipped with only

wooden swords and paper shields, as preachers think to liberate the devil's captives by means of human learning, worldly methods, touching anecdotes, attractive singing, etc. No, "their weapons" are the "Word of God" and "all prayer" (Eph 6:17-18). And even these are only mighty "through God," that is, by His direct and special blessing of them to particular souls. In what follows, a description is given of wherein the might of God is here seen, namely, in the powerful opposition which it meets with and vanquishes, "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).

Herein lies the power of God, when He is pleased to thus put it forth in the saving of a sinner. The heart of that sinner is fortified against Him. It is steeled against His holy demands, His righteous claims. It is determined not to submit to His law, nor to abandon those idols which it prohibits. That haughty rebel has made up his mind that he *will not* turn away from the delights of this world and the pleasures of sin, and give God the supreme place in his affections. But God has determined to overcome his sinful opposition, and transform him into a loving and loyal subject. The figure here used is that of a besieged town—the heart. Its "strongholds"—the reigning power of fleshly and worldly lusts—are "pulled down." Self-will is broken, pride is subdued, and the defiant rebel is made a willing captive to "the obedience of Christ"! "Mighty through God" points to this miracle of grace.

There is one other detail pointed by the analogy drawn in Ephesians 1:19-21 which exemplifies the mighty power of God, namely, "and set him [Christ] at his own right hand in the heavenlies." The members of Christ's mystical body are predestinated to be conformed to the glorious image of their glorified Head. In measure, now—perfectly, in the day to come. The ascension of Christ was contrary to *nature*, being opposed by the law of gravitation. But the power of God overcame that opposition, and translated His resurrected Son bodily into heaven. In like manner, His grace produces in His people that which is contrary to nature, overcoming the opposition of the flesh, and drawing their hearts unto things above. How we would marvel if we saw a man extend his arms and suddenly leave the earth, soaring upward into the sky. Yet still more wonderful is it when we behold the power of the Spirit causing a sinful creature to rise above temptation, worldliness, and sin, and breathe the atmosphere of heaven—when a human soul is made to disdain the things of earth and find its satisfaction in things above.

The historical order in connection with the Head, in Ephesians 1:19-20, is also the experimental order with regard to the members of His body. Before setting His Son at His own right hand in the heavenlies, God raised Him from the dead. So, before the Holy Spirit fixes the heart of a sinner upon Christ, He first quickens him into newness of life. There must be *life* before there can be sight, believing, or good works performed. One who is physically dead is incapable of doing anything. So he who is spiritually dead is incapable of any spiritual exercises. First, the giving of life unto dead Lazarus, and then, the removing of the grave clothes which bound him hand and foot. God must regenerate before there can be a new creature in Christ Jesus (2Co 5:17). The washing of a child follows its birth.

When spiritual life has been communicated to the soul, that individual is now able to see things in their true colours. In God's light, he sees light (Psa 36:9). He is now given to perceive (by the Holy Spirit) what a lifelong rebel he has been against his Creator and Benefactor. That instead of making God's will his rule, he has gone his own way. That instead of having before him God's glory, he has sought only to please and gratify self. Even though he may have been preserved from all the grosser outward forms of wickedness, he now recognizes that he is a spiritual leper, a vile and polluted creature, utterly unfit to draw near, still less to dwell with, Him who is ineffably holy. And such an apprehension makes him feel that *his* case is hopeless.

There is a vast difference between hearing or reading of what conviction of sin is, and being made to feel it in the depths of one's own soul. Multitudes are acquainted with the theory, who are total strangers to the experience of it. One may read of the sad effects of war and may agree that they are indeed dreadful. But when the enemy is at one's own door, plundering his goods, firing his home, slaying his dear ones, he is far more sensible of the miseries of war than ever he was (or could be) previously. So an unbeliever may hear of what a dreadful state the sinner is in before God and how terrible will be the sufferings of hell. But when the Spirit brings home to his own heart its actual condition, and makes him feel the heat of God's wrath in his own conscience, he is ready to sink with dismay and despair. Reader, do *you* know anything of such an experience?

Only thus is any soul prepared to truly appreciate Christ. They that are whole need not a physician. The one, who has been savingly convicted, is made to realize that none but the Lord Jesus can heal one so desperately diseased by sin. That He alone can impart that spiritual health (holiness) which will enable him to run in the way of God's commandments. That nothing but His precious blood can atone for the sins of the past and naught but His all-sufficient grace can meet the pressing needs of the present and future. Thus, there must be discerning faith, before there is coming faith. The Father "draws" to the Son (Joh 6:44) by imparting to the mind a deep realization of my desperate need of Christ, by giving to the heart a real sense of the inestimable worth of Him, and by causing the will to receive Him on His own terms.

## **PROFITING FROM THE WORD**

### *9. The Scriptures and Joy*

The ungodly are ever seeking after joy, but they find it not. They busy and weary themselves in the pursuit of it, yet all in vain. Their hearts being turned from the Lord, they look downward for joy, where it is not. Rejecting the substance, they diligently run after the shadow, only to be mocked by it. It is the sovereign decree of heaven that nothing can make sinners truly happy but God in Christ. But this they will not believe, and therefore, they go from creature to creature, from one broken cistern to another, inquiring where is the best joy to be found. Each worldly thing which attracts them, says, "It is found in me,"

but each disappoints. Nevertheless, they go on seeking it afresh today in the very thing which deceived them yesterday. If after many trials, they discover the emptiness of one creature-comfort, then they turn to another, only to verify our Lord's word, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again" (Joh 4:13).

Going now to the other extreme—There are some Christians who suppose it is sinful to rejoice. No doubt, many of our readers will be surprised to hear this, but let them be thankful that they have been raised in sunnier surroundings, and bear with us a moment while we labour with those less favoured. Some of our readers have been taught—largely by implication and example, rather than by plain inculcation—that it is a duty to be gloomy. They imagine that feelings of joy are produced by the devil appearing as an angel of light. They conclude that it is well-nigh a species of wickedness to be happy in such a world of sin as we are in. They think it is presumptuous to rejoice in the knowledge of sins forgiven, and if they see a young Christian so doing, they tell him it will not be long ere he is floundering in the Sough of Despond. To all such, we tenderly urge the prayerful pondering of the remainder of this article.

"Rejoice evermore" (1Th 5:16). It surely cannot be unsafe to do what God has commanded us. The Lord has placed no embargo on rejoicing. No, it is Satan who strives to make us hang up our harps. There is no precept in Scripture bidding us, "Grieve in the Lord always, and again I say grieve." But there is an exhortation which bids us, "Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright" (Psa 33:1). Reader, if you be a real Christian (and it is high time you tested yourself by Scripture and make sure of the point), then Christ is yours, all that is in Him is yours. He bids you, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink *abundantly*, O beloved" (Song 5:1). The only sin you may commit against His banquet of love is to stint yourself. "Let your soul delight itself *in fatness*" (Isa 55:2) is spoken not to those already in heaven, but to saints still on earth. This leads us to say that:

1. We are profited from the Word when we perceive that *joy is a duty*. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I say, Rejoice" (Phi 4:4). The Holy Spirit here speaks of rejoicing as a personal, present, and permanent duty for the people of God to carry out. The Lord has not left it to our option whether we should be glad or sad, but has made happiness an obligation. Not to rejoice is a sin of omission. Next time you meet with a radiant Christian, do not chide him, ye dwellers in Doubting Castle, but chide yourselves. Instead of being so ready to call into question the divine spring of his mirth, judge yourself for your doleful state.

It is not a carnal joy which we are here urging, by which we mean a joy which comes from carnal sources. It is useless to seek joy in earthly riches, for frequently, they take unto themselves wings and fly away. Some seek their joy in the family circle, but that remains entire only for a few short years at most. No, if we are to "Rejoice evermore," it must be in an object that lasts for evermore. Nor is it a fanatical joy we have reference to. There are those with an excitable temperament, who are only happy when they are half out of their minds, but terrible is the reaction. No, it is an intelligent, steady, heart delight in God Himself. Every attribute of God, when contemplated by faith, will make the heart sing. Every doctrine of the Gospel, when truly apprehended, will call forth gladness and praise.

Joy is a matter of Christian duty. Perhaps the reader is ready to exclaim, "My emotions of joy and sorrow are *not* under my control. I cannot help being glad or sad as



circumstances dictate.” But, we repeat, “Rejoice in the Lord” is a divine command, and to a large extent, obedience to it lies within one’s own power. I am responsible to control my emotions. True, I cannot help being sorrowful in the presence of sorrowful thoughts, but I can refuse to let my mind dwell upon them. I can pour out my heart for relief unto the Lord, and cast my burden upon Him. I can seek grace to meditate upon His goodness, His promises, the glorious future awaiting me. I have to decide whether I will go and stand in the light or hide among the shadows. Not to rejoice in the Lord is more than a misfortune, it is a fault which needs to be confessed and forsaken.

2. We are profited from the Word when we *learn the secret* of true joy. That secret is revealed in 1 John 1:3-4. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” Ah, when we consider the littleness of their fellowship with God, the shallowness of it, it is not to be wondered at that so many Christians are comparatively joyless. We sometimes sing, “O happy day that fixed my choice on Thee my Saviour and my God! Well may this glowing heart rejoice and tell its raptures all abroad.” Yes, but if that happiness is to be maintained, there must be a continued steadfast occupation of the heart and mind with Christ. It is only where there is much faith and consequent love that there is much joy.

“Rejoice *in the Lord* always” (Phi 4:4). There is no other object in which we can rejoice “always.” Everything else varies and is inconstant. What pleases us today may pall on us tomorrow. But God is always the same, to be enjoyed in seasons of adversity as much as in times of prosperity. As an aid to this, the very next verse says, “Let your *moderation* be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Phi 4:5). Be temperate in connection with all external things. Do not be taken with them when they seem most pleasing, nor troubled when displeasing. Be not exalted when the world smiles upon you, nor dejected when it scowls. Maintain a stoical indifference to outward comforts. Why be so occupied with them, when the *Lord Himself* is so near! If persecution be violent, if temporal losses be heavy, the Lord is “a very *present* help in trouble” (Psa 46:1)—ready to support and succour those who cast themselves upon Him. He *will* care for you, so, “Be careful for nothing” (Phi 4:6). Worldlings are haunted with carking care, but the Christian should not be.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (Joh 15:11). As these precious words of Christ are pondered by the mind and treasured in the heart, they cannot but produce joy. A rejoicing heart comes from an increasing knowledge of and love for the truth as it is in Jesus. “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16). Yes, it is by feeding and feasting upon the words of the Lord that the soul is made fat, and we are made to sing and make melody in our hearts unto Him.

“Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy” (Psa 43:4). As Spurgeon (1834-1892) well said, “With what exultation should believers draw near unto Christ, who is the antitype of the altar! Clearer light should give a greater intensity of desire. It was not the altar as such that the Psalmist cared for, for he was no believer in the heathenism of ritualism. His soul desired spiritual fellowship, fellowship with God Himself in very deed. What are all the rites of religion unless the Lord be in them. What, indeed, but empty shells and dry husks? Note the holy rapture with which David regards his Lord!

He is not his joy alone, but his *exceeding* joy. Not the fountain of joy, the giver of joy, or the maintainer of joy, but the *joy itself*. The margin hath it, 'The gladness of my joy,' i.e. the soul, the essence, the very bowels of my joy."

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice *in the LORD*, I will joy in *the God* of my salvation" (Hab 3:17-18). Ah, that is something of which the worldling knows nothing. Alas, that it is an experience to which so many professing Christians are strangers. It is in God all the fount of spiritual and everlasting joy originates. From Him, it all flows forth. This was acknowledged of old by the Church when it said, "All my springs are in thee" (Psa 87:7). Happy the soul who has been truly taught this secret.

3. We are profited from the Word when we are taught *the great value of joy*. Joy is to the soul what wings are to the bird, enabling us to soar above the dregs of earth. This is brought out plainly in Nehemiah 8:10, "The joy of the LORD is *your strength*." The days of Nehemiah marked a turning-point in the history of Israel. A remnant had been freed from Babylon and returned to Palestine. The Law, long ignored by the captives, was now to be established again as the rule of the newly-formed commonwealth. There had come a remembrance of the many sins of the past, and tears, not unnaturally, mingled with the thankfulness that they were again a nation, having a divine worship and a divine Law in their midst. Their leader, knowing full well that, if the spirit of the people began to flag, they could not face and conquer the difficulties of their position, said to them, "This day is holy unto the LORD,"... this feast we are keeping is a day of devout worship; therefore, mourn not—"neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh 8:10).

Confession of sin, and mourning over the same, has its place, and communion with God cannot be maintained without it. Nevertheless, when true repentance has been exercised and things put right with God, we must forget "those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phi 3:13). And we can only press forward with alacrity as our hearts are joyful. How heavy the steps of him who approaches the place where a loved one lies cold in death! How energetic his movements as he goes to meet his bride! Lamentation unfits for the battles of life. Where there is despair, there is no power for obedience. If there be no joy, there can be no worship.

My brethren and sisters, there are tasks needing to be performed, service to others requiring to be rendered, temptations to be overcome, battles to be fought, and we are only experimentally fitted for them as our hearts are rejoicing in the Lord. If our souls are resting in Christ, if our hearts be filled with a tranquil gladness, work will be easy, duties pleasant, sorrow bearable, endurance possible. Neither contrite remembrance of past failures, nor vehement resolutions, will carry us through. If the arm is to smite with vigour, it must smite at the bidding of a light heart. Of the Saviour Himself, it is recorded, "Who for the *joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb 12:2).

4. We are profited from the Word when we attend to *the root of joy*. The spring of joy is faith, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in believing*" (Rom 15:13). There is a wondrous provision in the Gospel, both by what it takes from us and brings to us, to give a calm and settled glow to the Christian's heart. It takes away the load of guilt, by speaking peace to the stricken conscience. It removes that dread of God and terror of

death, which weighs on the soul while conscious it is under His condemnation. It gives us God Himself, as the portion of our hearts, as the object of our communion. The Gospel works joy, because the soul is at rest in God. But these blessings become our own only by personal appropriation. Faith must *receive* them, and when it does so, the heart is filled with peace and joy. And the secret of *sustained* joy is to keep the channel open, to continue as we began. It is *unbelief* which clogs that channel. If there be but little heat around the bulb of the thermometer, no wonder that the mercury marks so low a degree. If there is a weak faith, joy cannot be strong. Daily do we need to pray for a *fresh* realization of the preciousness of the Gospel, a fresh appropriation of its blessed contents, and then, there will be a renewing of our joy.

5. We are profited from the Word when we are *careful to maintain* our joy. "Joy in the Holy Spirit"(Rom 14:17), is of an altogether different order from a natural buoyancy of spirit. It is the product of the Comforter dwelling in our hearts and bodies, revealing Christ to us, answering all our need for pardon and cleansing, and so setting us at peace with God, and forming Christ in us, so that He reigns in our souls, subduing us to His control. There are no circumstances of trial and temptation in which we may refrain from it, for the command is to, "Rejoice in the Lord *alway*"(Phi 4:4). He, who gave this command, knows all about the dark side of our lives, the sins and sorrows which beset us, the "much tribulation" through which we must enter the kingdom of God. Natural hilarity leaves the woes of our earthly lot out of reckoning. It soon relaxes in presence of life's hardships. It cannot survive the loss of friends or health. But the joy to which we are exhorted is not limited to any set of circumstances or type of temperament, nor does it fluctuate with our varying moods and fortunes.

Nature may assert itself in the subjects of it, as even Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. Nevertheless, they can exclaim with Paul, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2Co 6:10). The Christian may be loaded with heavy responsibilities, his life may have a series of reverses, his plans may be thwarted, and his hopes blighted, the grave may close over the loved ones who gave to his earthly life its cheer and sweetness, and yet, under all his disappointments and sorrows, his Lord still bids him, "Rejoice." Behold the apostles in Philippi's prison, in the innermost dungeon, with feet fast in stocks, and backs bleeding and smarting from the terrible scouring they had received—how were they occupied? In grumbling and growling, in asking what they had done to deserve such treatment? No, "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and *sang* praises unto God" (Act 16:25). Ah, there was no sin in their lives. They were walking obediently, and so the Holy Spirit was free to take of the things of Christ and show them unto their hearts, so that they were filled to overflowing. If we are to maintain our joy, we must keep from grieving the Spirit.

When Christ is supreme in the heart, joy fills it. When He is Lord of every desire, the Source of every motive, the Subjugator of every lust, then will joy fill the heart and praise ascend from the lips. The possession of this joy involves taking up the cross every hour of the day. God has so ordered it that we cannot have the one without the other. Self-sacrifice, the cutting of a right hand, and the plucking out of a right eye are the avenues through which the Spirit enters the soul, bringing with Him the joys of God's approving smile and the assurance of His love and abiding presence. Much also depends upon the spirit in which we enter the world each day. If we expect people to pet and pamper us,

disappointment will make us fretful. If we desire our pride to be ministered unto, we are dejected when it is not. The secret of happiness is forgetting self and seeking to minister unto the happiness of others. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Act 20:35), so it is a happier thing to minister unto others than to be ministered unto.

6. We are profited from the Word when we are sedulous *in avoiding the hindrances to joy*. Why is it that so many Christians have so little joy? Are they not all born children of the light and of the day? This term, "light," which is so often used in Scripture to describe to us the nature of God, our relation to Him, and our future destiny, is most suggestive of joy and gladness. What other thing in nature is so beneficent and beautiful as the light. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1Jo 1:5). Ah, it is only as we walk with God, in the light, that the heart can truly be joyous. It is the deliberate allowance of things, which mar our fellowship with Him, that chills and darkens our souls. It is the indulgence of the flesh, the fraternizing with the world, the entering of forbidden paths, which blights our spiritual lives and makes us cheerless.

David had to cry, "Restore unto me *the joy of thy salvation*" (Psa 51:12). He had grown lax and self-indulgent. Temptation presented itself and he had no power to resist. He yielded and one sin led to another. He was a backslider, out of touch with God. Unconfessed sin lay heavy on his conscience. O my brethren and sisters, if we are to be kept from such a fall, if we are not to lose our joy, then self must be denied, the affections and lusts of the flesh crucified. We must ever be on our watch against temptation. We must spend much time upon our knees. We must drink frequently from the fountain of living water. We must be out and out for the Lord.

7. We are profited from the Word when we *diligently preserve the balance between sorrow and joy*. If the Christian faith has a marked adaptation to produce joy, it has an almost equal design and tendency to produce sorrow—a sorrow that is solemn, manly, noble. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2Co 6:10) is the rule of the Christian's life. If faith casts its light upon our condition, our nature, our sins, sadness must be one of the effects. There is nothing more contemptible in itself, and there is no more sure mark of a superficial character and trivial round of occupation, than unshaded gladness, that rests on no deep foundations of quiet, patient grief—grief, because I know what I am and what I ought to be. Grief, because I have learned the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom 7:13). Grief, because I look out on the world and see hell's fire burning at the back of its mirth and laughter and know *what* it is that men are hurrying to.

Ah, He who was anointed with the oil of gladness *above* his fellows (Psa 45:7) was also "the man *of sorrows*, and acquainted with grief." And both of these characters are (in measure) repeated in the operations of His Gospel upon every heart that really receives it. And if, by the fears it removes from us and the hope it breathes into us, and the fellowship into which it introduces us, we are anointed with the oil of gladness—on the other hand, by the sense of our own vileness which it teaches us, by the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, there is infused a sadness which finds expression in, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom 7:24). These two are not contradictory, but complementary. The Lamb must be eaten *with* "bitter herbs" (Exo 12:8).

## THE FIGHT OF FAITH

There are some who teach that those Christians who engage in spiritual fighting are living below their privileges. They insist that God is willing to do all our fighting for us. Their pet slogan is, "Let go, and let God." They say that the Christian should turn the battle over to Christ. There is a half truth in this, yet only a half truth, and carried to extremes, it becomes error. The half truth is that the child of God has no inherent strength of his own. Says Christ to His disciples, "Without me, ye can do nothing" (Joh 15:5). Yet this does not mean that we are to be merely passive, or that the ideal state in this life is simply to be galvanized automatons. There is also a positive, an active, aggressive side to the Christian life, which calls for the putting forth of our utmost endeavours, the use of every faculty, a personal and intelligent co-operation with Christ.

There is not a little of what is known as "the victorious life" teaching which is virtually a denial of the Christian's responsibility. It is lop-sided. While emphasizing one aspect of truth, it sadly ignores other aspects equally necessary and important to be kept before us. God's Word declares that, "Every man shall bear *his own burden*" (Gal 6:5), which means that he must discharge his personal obligation. Saints are bidden to, "*Cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2Co 7:1), and to, "*Keep himself* unspotted from the world" (Jam 1:27). We are exhorted to, "Overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). The apostle Paul declared, "*I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection*" (1Co 9:27). Thus, to deny that a Christian is called upon to engage in a ceaseless warfare with the flesh, the world, and the devil, is to fly in the face of many plain Scriptures.

There is a very real twofoldness to the Christian life and every aspect of divine truth is balanced by its counterpart. Practical godliness is a mysterious paradox, which is incomprehensible to the natural man. The Christian is strongest when he is weakest, wealthiest when he is poorest, happiest when most wretched. Though unknown (1Jo 3:1), yet he is well known (2Ti 1:18). Though dying (1Co 15:31), yet, behold, he lives. Though having nothing, yet he possesses all things (2Co 6:10). Though persecuted, he is not forsaken. Cast down, he is not destroyed. He is called upon to "rejoice with trembling" (Psa 2:11), and is assured, "Blessed are ye that weep now" (Luk 6:21). Though the Lord maketh him to lie down in green pastures and leadeth him beside still waters, he is yet in the wilderness, and "in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Psa 63:1). Though followers of the Prince of peace, Christians are to endure "hardness, as good *soldiers* of Jesus Christ" (2Ti 2:3), and though "more than conquerors" (Rom 8:37), they are often defeated.

"Fight the good fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12). We are called upon to engage in a ceaseless warfare. The Christian life is to be lived out on the battlefield. We may not like it, we may wish that it were otherwise, but so has God ordained. And our worst foe, our most dangerous enemy, is *self*, that "old man" which ever wants his way, which rebels against the "yoke" of Christ, which hates the "cross." That "old man" which opposes every desire of the "new man," which dislikes God's Word and ever wants to substitute man's word. But self has to be "denied" (Mat 16:24), his affections and lusts crucified (Gal 5:24). Yet that is by no means an easy task. O what a conflict is ever going on within the true

Christian. True, there are times when the “old man” pretends to be asleep or dead, but soon he revives and is more vigorous than ever in opposing that “new man.” Then it is that the real Christian seriously asks, “If it be so (that I truly am a child of God) why am I thus?” Such was Rebekah’s puzzling problem when “the children struggled together within her” (Gen 25:22).

What a parable in action is set before us in the above Scripture! Do we need any interpreter? Does not the Christian have the key which explains that parable in the conflicting experiences of his own soul? Yes, and is not the sequel the same with you and me, as it was with poor Rebekah? “She went and inquired of the LORD” (Gen 25:22). Ah, her husband could not solve the mystery for her. No man could, nor did she lean unto her own understanding and try and reason it out. No, the struggle inside her was so great and fierce, she must have *divine* assurance. Nor did God disappoint her and leave her in darkness. “And the LORD said unto her, *Two* nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen 25:23). But the meaning of such a verse is *hid* from those who are, in their own conceits, “wise and prudent.” But, blessed be God, it is revealed to those who, taught of the Spirit, are made to realize they are *babes*, that is, who feel they are ignorant, weak, helpless—for that is what “babes” are.

And who were the two nations that “struggled together” inside Rebekah? Esau and Jacob, from whom two vastly different nations descended, namely, Edom and Israel. Now, observe closely what follows. “And the one people shall be stronger than the other.” Yes, Esau was so strong that Jacob was afraid of him and fled from him. So it is spiritually, the “old man” is stronger than the “new man.” How strange that it should be so! Would we not naturally conclude that that which is “born of the Spirit” is stronger than that which is “born of the flesh” (Joh 3:6)? Of course, we would *naturally* think so, for, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1Co 2:14). But consider the matter from the standpoint of spiritual discernment. Suppose the “new man” *were* stronger than the “old man”—then what? Why, the Christian would be self-sufficient, proud, haughty. But God, in His infinite wisdom, allows that “new man” in His children to be weaker than the “old man.” Why? That they may depend upon Him. But it is one thing to know the theory of this, and it is quite another to put it into practice. It is one thing to believe the “new man” (Jacob) is weaker than the “old man” (Esau, who was born first!), and it is quite another thing to daily seek and obtain from God the needed strength to “fight” against the “old man.” That is why it is called the “good fight of *faith*,” for faith treats with *God*.

“Fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). Our *circumstances* are the battleground. The “flesh” is never long satisfied with the “circumstances” in which God places us, but always wants to change them, or get into another set than we are now in. Thus it was with Israel of old. The “circumstances” into which God had brought the children of Israel was the *wilderness*, and they murmured, and wished they were back in Egypt. And that is written as a *warning* for us! The tendency of circumstances is to bind our hearts to the earth. When prosperous, to make us satisfied with *things*. When adverse, to make us repine over or covet the things which we *do not* have. Nothing but the exercise of real faith can lift our hearts above circumstances, for faith looks away from all things seen, so that the heart delights itself and finds its peace and joy in the Lord (Psa 37:4). This is never easy to any

of us. It is always a *fight*, and only divine grace (diligently sought) can give us the victory. Oftentimes we fail. When we do, this must be confessed to God (1Jo 1:9), and a fresh start made.

Nothing but faith can enable us to rise above “circumstances.” It did so in the case of the two apostles, who, with feet fast in the stocks, with backs bleeding and smarting, sang praises to God in Philippi’s dungeon. That was faith victorious over most unpleasant circumstances. We can almost imagine each reader saying, “Alas, *my* faith is so *weak*.” Ah, ponder again this word, “*Fight* the good *fight* of faith”—note the repetition! It is not easy for faith to rise above circumstances. No, it is not. It is difficult, at times, extremely difficult. So the writer has found it. But remember, a “fight” is not finished in a moment, by one blow. Oftentimes the victor receives many wounds and is sorely pounded before he finally knocks-out his enemy. So we have found it, and still find it. The great enemy, the “flesh” (*self*) gives the “new man” many a painful blow, often floors him, but, by grace, we keep on *fighting*. Sometimes the “new man” gets the victory, sometimes the “old man” does. “For a just man falleth seven times, *and* riseth up again” (Pro 24:16).

Yes, dear reader, every real Christian has a “fight” on his hands. *Self* is the chief enemy which has to be conquered, and our *circumstances*, the battleground where the combat has to be waged. And each of us would very much like to change the battleground. There are unpleasant things which, at times, sorely try each of us, until we are tempted to cry with the afflicted Psalmist, “O that I had the wings like a dove! for then I would fly away” (Psa 55:6). Yes, sad to say, the writer has been guilty of the same thing. But, when he is in his right mind (spiritually), he is thankful for these very “circumstances.” Why? Because they afford an opportunity for *faith* to act and rise above them, and for us to find our peace, our joy, our satisfaction, not in pleasant surroundings, not in congenial friends, nor even in sweet fellowship with brethren and sisters in Christ. But—in *God*! He can satisfy the soul. *He* never fails those who truly trust Him. But it is a *fight* to do so. Yes, a real, long, hard fight. Yet, if we cry to God for help, for strength, for determination, He does not fail us, but makes us “more than conquerors.”

There is that in each of us which wants to play the coward, *run away* from the battlefield—our “circumstances.” This is what Abraham did (Gen 12:10), but he gained nothing by it. This is what Jacob did (Gen 28), and in consequence, his trials were multiplied. This is what Elijah did (1Ki 19:3), and the Lord rebuked him for it. And these instances are recorded “for our learning” (Rom 15:4), as warnings for us to take to heart. They tell us that we must steadfastly resist this evil inclination, and call to mind that exhortation, “Watch ye, *stand fast* in the faith, quit you [act] like men, *be strong*” (1Co 16:13).

“Fight the good fight of faith.” Nor does the Lord call upon us to do something from which He was exempted. O what a “fight” the Captain of our salvation endured! See Him yonder in the wilderness, “forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts” (Mar 1:13), and all that time without food (Mat 4:2). How fiercely the devil assaulted Him, renewing his attack again and yet again. And the Saviour met and conquered him on the ground of *faith*, using only the Word of God. See Him again in Gethsemane. There the fight was yet fiercer, and so intense were His agonies that He sweat great drops of blood. Nor was there any comfort from His disciples. They could not watch with Him one hour.

Yet He triumphed and that on the ground of faith, "When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." (Heb 5:7).

Those two instances are recorded for our instruction, and, as ever, their order is beautifully significant. They teach us *how* we are to "fight the good fight of faith." Christ Himself has "left us an example"! And what do we learn from these solemn and sacred incidents? This—the only weapon we are to use is the sword of the Spirit, and victory is only to be obtained *on our knees*—"with strong crying and tears." The Lord graciously enables us so to act. O that each of us may more earnestly seek grace to *fight* the good fight of faith. We shall have happy and peaceful fellowship together in heaven, but before we get there, the "fight" has to be fought, and *won* or we shall never get there at all (2Ti 4:6-8).

## GRIEVING THE SPIRIT

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30).

Methinks I would make this Scripture the motto of my daily walk, to keep in remembrance more than the dearest friend that wears the ring of love upon his finger, and bears it about with him whithersoever he goeth. And is the Holy Spirit grieved whenever a child of God forgetteth Jesus, and by indulgence in sin, loses sight of those sufferings which He endured on account of sin? Yes, God the Holy Spirit is grieved, communion with God the Father is interrupted, and all the agonies and bloody sweat of Jesus forgotten, if there be a loose and careless life. And shall I ever grieve the Holy Spirit by any one allowed transgression? Would not my soul feel shame at the consciousness of it, even if no eye but His had seen the foul act? Wouldest Thou grieve for me, O Lord, at such a sight? Can it be possible that a poor worm of the earth, such as I am, should excite such regard and attention?

And shall not the consideration have its constant and unceasing influence upon my soul? Shall I grieve the holy Lord by an unholy conduct? Shall I quench those sweet influences which first quickened me, and recompense the kindness, which, had it not been called forth to my spiritual life, would have left me to this hour as it first found me, dead in trespasses and sins? Oh! Thou holy, blessed, gracious Lord God the Spirit. Withdraw not, I beseech Thee, Thy restraining influences. Leave me not for a moment to myself. Thou knowest that I shall grieve Thee, if unassisted by Thy grace. Self-will and confidence, sloth and forgetfulness, pride and presumption, will afford an opportunity to the great enemy of souls to betray me into sin, if Thou do not keep me. But if Thou, Lord, wilt keep me, I shall be well kept. Thou wilt lead me to the all-precious Jesus. Thou wilt take of His, and so effectually shew it to me, that I shall be prepared for, guided in, and carried through all acts of holy obedience and by Thy sweet influences and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, I shall be enabled to mortify the deeds of the body, so as to live. My soul! be thou



constantly looking to Jesus, seeking communion with the Holy Spirit, and crying out to God the Father, with David, "Take not thine Holy Spirit from me," that I may not grieve that holy Lord, by whom I am sealed unto the day of redemption. (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827).

