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STUDIES
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SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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

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STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Having seen that our Lord, after His resurrection, ascended to heaven and sat down on the right hand of God, let us now inquire into the nature of that kingdom which has been conferred upon Him. It is indeed deplorable that there should be such wide difference of opinion upon this subject, for the Word of God is plain enough thereon. Such confusion as now exists among men only serves to demonstrate the awful depravity of our fallen nature and its tendency to pervert spiritual things. Into the controversies which have been waged upon the “dispensational” features of Christ’s kingdom, we shall not now enter. Rather would we attempt to give a simple and constructive outline of the teaching of Scripture upon this important and most blessed theme. May it please the Holy Spirit to enlighten our mind, preserve from all error, and guide us to write only that which honours Immanuel.

It is important to clearly grasp the fact that the term, “kingdom” (*basileia*), primarily has reference to sovereignty rather than territory. A king is a person who is advanced to the highest dignity, and his kingdom is that sphere where his authority is exercised. To illustrate—in times past, France was a “kingdom.” Today it is a republic. Yet there has been no territorial change. The country is still the same and is inhabited by the same race of people. But it is no more a “kingdom,” for the simple reason it no longer has a “king” ruling over it. Instead, it is *governed* by the “public.” They are sovereign. The “kingdom” of a “king,” then, is the sphere of his authoritative control, his sovereign dominion, with the necessary implication that his subjects respect his sceptre and obey his laws. With this definition before us, let us look at some of the principal characteristics of the “kingdom” or rule of Christ.

1. It is *natural* to Him as a member of the Godhead. “As the second Person of the Trinity, equal in power and glory to the eternal Father, the Word of God possesses an absolute, inherent, sovereign dominion as King over the whole universe. This authority is

intrinsic, underived, inalienable, and is the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (A. A. Hodge, 1823-1886). Of each of the Holy Three can it be said, "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou are exalted as head above all" (1Ch 29:11). And, "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Psa 103:19). By virtue of the union of His humanity to His Deity, Jesus Christ as *Man* inherits the privileges of this natural kingdom.

2. It is *delegated* to Him as the God-man Mediator. Because He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore, God has "highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phi 2:9-11). By the "name which is above every name," we are not to understand words or syllables, but dignity and glory, for names and titles express the quality of persons. This is clear from a parallel passage in Ephesians 1:20-21, where principalities and powers, etc. are placed in the rank of "names," above which Christ was exalted. He has been elevated above all created dignities.

When we say that the Mediator has received a "kingdom" from the Father (Dan 7:13-14; Luk 19:12), care must be duly taken *not* to conceive of this in the terms of an earthly monarch, who, reigning over one kingdom by original right, acquires dominion over another by inheritance or conquest. A new kingdom in *that* sense was impossible, for as God the Son, the entire universe acknowledged His sway. No, rather are we to think of His original kingdom being invested with a new form, wearing a new aspect, administered for a new end. From one angle, the mediatorial kingdom of Christ may be regarded as God's answer to the revolt of Satan and his organized efforts to blast His dominions. The great design of Christ's mediatorial regime is to glorify the Father in destroying "the works of the devil" (1Jo 3:8), subjugating every foe (1Co 15:24), and saving His elect from their sins (Mat 1:21), bestowing eternal life upon them (Joh 17:2), and bringing "many sons unto glory" (Heb 2:10).

Considered from another angle, the mediatorial throne, which Christ now occupies, is the *reward* bestowed upon Him for the humiliation and sufferings which He endured. As the majesty of the Son was, for a time, hidden from the eyes of His creatures, so now, for a season, the Father is pleased to veil His own glory by directing our more immediate attention to His Christ. This is brought out in those striking words of the Saviour's, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The design of which is "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (Joh 5:22-23). The Father has appointed Christ to transact His "business" for Him (Luk 2:49). The Father does not Himself appear so much now in the government of the universe, desiring the Mediator to have that glory. Says He, "Let My once-humbled Son take it. I commit all judgment unto Him." So too, the Father has made Christ (not Himself), "*Head* over all to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph 1:22-23).

3. It is *universal in its scope*. As God-man Mediator, Christ has been made Governor of the universe. "All power in heaven and in earth" has been *given* to Him (Mat 28:18). He has been given "power over all flesh" (Joh 17:2). Therefore, does He declare, "By me

kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth" (Pro 8:15-16). Therefore is He "the prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev 1:5), the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev 19:16). All the angels of God worship Him (Heb 1:6) and carry out His orders (Mat 24:31). All the wheels of providence move at His bidding. There is not an event however great, nor a circumstance however trivial, but His power controls. Complete dominion over all the works of God's hands is now the Redeemer's (1Co 15:27).

What a blessed and glorious truth is this. The despised, "Jesus of Nazareth," has been appointed "Heir of all things," and is now "upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb 1:2-3). "A *Man* sits upon the mediatorial throne of the universe. He who stood insulted, despised, condemned at Pilate's judgment-seat, now sitting at the right hand of God, rules all worlds, as He will hereafter, seated on the great white throne, judge all men. The attributes of both the divine and human natures are together exercised in the administration of this kingly reign. All His kingly acts are infinitely wise, righteous, and powerful, because He is God. But they are, at the same time, the acts of Man. They possess a truly human quality, for in all His administration, He has a feeling for our infirmities as well as an eye for our interests" (A. A. Hodge).

The *subjects* of His kingdom are, first, His *people*. Therefore is He in a special way the "King of saints" (Rev 15:3), for He has conquered them by the power of His grace, indwells them by His Spirit, and writes His laws upon their hearts. Though by nature, they are enemies to His government and unwilling to submit themselves to Him, yet are they made willing in the day of His power, are pleased with His rule, and made partakers of the advantages thereof. Second, His *enemies*. These He also rules by setting bounds to their power and malice, and making even their wrath to praise Him. Though they imagine a vain thing by supposing their defiance of Him is successful, He laughs at their folly, and in due time destroys all their projects. The day is coming when every foe shall be forced to bow down before Him, as subdued by Him, though not to Him.

4. It is *spiritual in its character*. Plainly has He Himself declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Joh 18:36). Great care needs to be taken by us lest we form *carnal* conceptions of the throne and reign of the Mediator. Christ is a spiritual King, for as the Lord from heaven, He has been made "a quickening Spirit" (1Co 15:45). His throne is a spiritual one (Rev 3:21). His sceptre is "a sceptre of righteousness" (Heb 1:8). His subjects are subdued by spiritual means. He fights not with carnal weapons, but with the Sword of the Spirit. The blessings which He bestows are spiritual (Eph 1:3). He dwells in the hearts of His people by faith (Eph 3:17). His kingdom consists not of "meat and drink" or such-like carnal things, but "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).

5. It is *restricted in its duration*. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1Co 15:24). How like Him! When He is in the height of His dominion, at the time of His full triumph, when every foe has been conquered, every rebel subdued, and when the glorified Church has been presented "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph 5:23), then, the Mediator gives up all things to the Father, and *as Mediator*, becomes "subject" unto Him, that God—Father, Son, and Spirit—may be "all in all" (1Co 15:28). Not does this conflict at all with the words, "no end," in Isaiah 9:7 and Luke 1:33. Just as

Christ's priesthood is an unchangeable one (passing not from one to another as the Aaronical), so His kingdom will never give way to another, for He is an everliving, everlasting King. Even on the new earth, the throne in it will be that of "God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

55. The Saving of the Soul (10:35-39)

As there is so much ground covered by the verses which are now to be before us, we shall dispense with our usual introductory paragraphs. In lieu of them, we present a brief analysis of the present passage. Hebrews 10:35 really belongs to the section which we took up in our last article. In verses 32-35, the apostle gives a persuasion unto perseverance in the Christian life. First, he bids the Hebrews call to remembrance what they had suffered for Christ's sake in days gone by. Then, let them not now renounce their faith and thereby render void their early witness (Heb 10:32-33). Second, he reminded them of the ground on which they had willingly suffered hardships and losses, namely, because they had the inward assurance and evidence that in heaven they had a better and enduring substance. Then, inasmuch as it changed not, why should they? (Heb 10:34). From these facts, the conclusion is drawn that a duty is rightly required from them, upon the performance of which the reward should be given them (Heb 10:35).

In the last section of Hebrews 10, the apostle first confirms the exhortation he had just insisted on, and points to the chief aids to perseverance, namely, patience and faith (Heb 10:36). Second, he encourages the Lord's people by the prospect of the sure and speedy coming of the Redeemer, who would then reward them (Heb 10:37). Third, he warns again of the fearful state of the apostate (Heb 10:38). Fourth, he affirms that they who persevered to the end, believe to the saving of the soul (Heb 10:39). The obvious design of these verses is to stir up Christians unto utmost earnestness in making their calling and election sure, to guard them against the danger of backsliding, and to bear their trials with submission to the will of God. May it please the Holy Spirit to apply this passage in power to the heart of both writer and reader that our meditation may issue in fruit to the glory of our blessed Lord.

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb 10:35). Let us notice, first, the force of the, "therefore." This is an inference drawn from the foregoing. Since you have already suffered so many things in your persons and goods, and inasmuch as divine grace supported and carried you through with constancy and joy, do not be discouraged and give way to despair at the approach of similar trials. Further, this, "therefore," is drawn from the blissful prospect which the sure promise of God holds before His faithful people, and gives point to the admonition. Inasmuch as confidence persisted in is going to be richly repaid, cast it not away.

“Cast not away therefore your confidence.” The word, “confidence,” here has respect unto an attitude or state of heart Godwards. It is the same term (in the Greek) as is translated, “boldness,” in Hebrews 10:19. It is found again in 1 John 3:21, “Then have we confidence toward God.” And in 1 John 5:14, “This is the confidence that we have in him.” It is not so much faith itself, as one of the products or fruits thereof. It is closer akin to hope. It is that effect of faith which fits the Christian for freedom and readiness unto all his spiritual duties, notwithstanding difficulties and discouragements. It is that frame of spirit which carries us cheerfully through all those sufferings which a real profession of the Gospel entails. More specifically, this “confidence” may be defined as fortitude of mind, courage of heart, and constancy of will.

From what has just been said, it will be seen that we do not agree with those commentators who understand Hebrews 10:35 as dehorting against the abandonment of Christianity. The apostle’s admonition here strikes deeper than a warning against forsaking the outward profession of the Gospel. It is addressed against that state of heart, which, if it became chronic, would likely lead to the external forsaking of Christ. What is needed in the face of trials and persecution is boldness of mind, the heart being freed from bondage and fear, through a prevailing persuasion of our acceptance with God in the performance of those duties which He has appointed us. It was this particular grace which was admired in Peter and John in Acts 4:13. It is only as the mind remains convinced of the righteousness of our cause, and as the heart is assured we are doing that which is well-pleasing to God, that, when we are criticised and condemned by men, and are menaced by their frowns and threats, we shall be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58), in nothing moved by our adversaries.

This confidence in and toward God, which had hitherto sustained the persecuted Hebrews, they are here bidden to, “Cast not away” (Heb 10:35). Here again the responsibility of the Christian is addressed. There are those who insist we can no more control our “confidence”—weaken or strengthen it—than we can control the wind. But this is to lose sight of the fact that we are moral creatures and accountable for the use or misuse of all our faculties. If I allow my mind to dwell upon the difficulties before me, the disadvantages I may suffer through faithfulness to Christ, or listen to the whisperings of Satan as to how I can avoid trouble by little compromises, then my courage will soon wane, and *I* shall be to blame. On the other hand, if I seek grace to dwell upon God’s promises, realize it is an honour to suffer for Christ’s sake, and remind myself that whatever I lose here is not worthy to be compared with what I shall gain hereafter, then, assured that God is for me, I shall care not who be against me.

To encourage the tempted Hebrews, the apostle at once added, “which hath great recompense of reward” (Heb 10:35). From these words, it is very evident that the true Christian may, and should, have his eye upon the reward that is promised those who suffer for the Gospel’s sake. Nor does this verse by any means stand alone. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven” (Mat 5:11-12)—notice carefully the words “in heaven,” which at once exposes the error of those who declare that the “Sermon on the Mount” (Mat 5-7) belongs not to and is not

about those who are members of the Body of Christ, but is “Jewish” and “Millennial.” Christians are not sufficiently occupied with their reward in heaven.

The subject of “Rewards” is too large a one for us to now canvass in detail. Yet in view of present-day errors, something needs to be said thereon. Not a few suppose that the concepts presented by “grace” and “reward” are irreconcilably at variance. The trouble with such people is that, instead of searching the Scriptures to discover how the Holy Spirit has *used* the term, they turn to a human dictionary. In human affairs, a “reward” commonly (though not always) denotes the recognition and recompensing of a *meritorious performance*, but not so is its general usage in Scripture. Take the first occurrence of the word. In Genesis 15:1, we find Jehovah saying unto Abraham, “Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” How utterly impossible for the patriarch to have done anything to *deserve* this! Once it is plainly perceived that *in Scripture* the term “reward” has in it *no* thought of a meet return for a *meritorious* performance, much of the fog with which modern “dispensationalists” have surrounded the subject will be cleared away.

“Which hath great recompense of reward” (Heb 10:35). Rightly did John Calvin (1509-1564) point out in his comments on this verse, “By mentioning ‘reward,’ he diminishes nothing from the *gratuitous* promise of salvation, for the faithful know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord in such a way that they still rest on God’s mercy alone. But it has been often stated elsewhere how ‘reward’ is *not* incompatible with the *gratuitous* imputation of righteousness.” If those who suppose that Christians, living since the days of J. N. Darby (1800-1882) and “Dr.” Scofield (1843-1921) appeared on the scene have “much more light” than they who preceded them, would only *read* the Reformers and the Puritans with an unprejudiced mind, they would soon be obliged to revise their ideas. In many respects, we have gone backwards instead of forwards, and only too often the “light” which is in men, is but *darkness*, and “How great is that darkness!” (Mat 6:23)—so great that it closes their eyes against all true light.

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb 10:36). The opening, “For,” intimates that the apostle is here confirming the exhortation which he had just insisted upon. “The reward can be obtained only by holding fast this confidence—by adhering steadily and perseveringly to Christ and His cause” (John Brown, 1784-1858). Patience, or endurance in the path of obedience, fidelity, and suffering, is indispensably necessary if we are to be preserved unto salvation. Let those, who will, call this teaching *legalistic*. The only other alternative is lawlessness and licentiousness. Though it is *not* “For,” yet it is “*through* faith and patience” or “perseverance,” that we “inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12).

No one who is familiar with the writings of John Owen the Puritan, who proclaimed the free grace of God and the gratuitousness of His salvation in such certain terms, will accuse him of legality or of inculcating creature-merits. Yet he, in his comments in Hebrews 10:35-36 wrote, “Wherefore, ‘the recompense of the reward’ here intended, is the glory of heaven, proposed as a crown unto them that overcome in their sufferings for the Gospel. And the future glory, which, as unto its original cause, is the fruit of the good pleasure and sovereign grace of God, whose pleasure it is to give us the kingdom, and as unto its procuring cause is the sole purchase of the blood of Christ, who obtained for us

eternal redemption. And it is, on both accounts, a free gift of God, for ‘the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God through Christ is life eternal’ (so as it can be no way merited nor procured by ourselves, by virtue of any proportion by the rules of justice between what we do or suffer, and what is promised), is yet constantly promised to suffering believers, under the name of a recompense or a reward. For it doth not become the greatness and goodness of God to call His own people unto sufferings for His name, and unto His glory, and therein to the loss of their lives many times, with all enjoyments here below, and not propose unto them, nor provide for them, that which shall be infinitely better than all that they so undergo. This confidence ‘*hath*’ this recompense of reward. That is, it gives a right and title unto the future reward of glory. It hath in it the promise and constitution of God. Whoever abides in its exercise, shall be no longer in the issue.”

“For ye have need of patience” (Heb 10:36). The apostle did not charge them with being destitute of this grace, for all who are born of the Spirit bear, in some measure, the fruit of the Spirit, and this among the rest (Gal 5:22). Those who are brought into the kingdom of Jesus Christ are into His patience also (Rev 1:9). No, the apostle signified that they needed the exercise, continuance, and increase of this grace. Compare Zephaniah 2:3, where the “meek” are exhorted to *seek* “meekness.” That unto which the apostle would bestir these saints was that they receive afflictions as from the hand of God, to bear reproaches and persecutions from men as that unto which He had “appointed” them (1Th 3:3), to commit their cause unto the Lord, and rest in Him (Psa 37:5-6), to bear up and not sink under trials, and to live in the constant expectation of heaven.

The Hebrew Christians (like we sometimes are) were tempted to become weary of well doing. Numbers of their fellows, who had once appeared to be zealous believers, had apostatized, and the rest would soon be sorely tried. It was necessary, then, that they should arm their minds with the spirit of resignation and persevering constancy, that having done the will of God, by steadfastly cleaving to Christ, and obeying Him through all temptations and sufferings, they might afterwards receive the promised gift of eternal life. The principle of this verse remains unchanged. Satan is the same, and so also is the world, and they who will live godly cannot escape trials and tribulations. Nor is it desirable that we should. Some of the finer and more delicate of the Christian graces can only be developed under stress and suffering. Then how much we need to pray for God to sanctify to our good each affliction which comes upon us, so that fruit may issue to His praise and that we may so conduct ourselves as to be encouragements to fellow-pilgrims.

The exercise of this grace of patience is to be continued until “after ye have done the will of God” (Heb 10:36). There is no dismissal from the discharge of this duty while we are left here upon earth. While the more immediate reference is unto *meekly bearing* whatever the sovereign will of our all-wise and infinitely loving God has ordained for us, yet the *active walking* in the way of God’s commandments is also included, as is evident from the word “done.” The will of God, as it is made known in His Word, is the alone rule by which we are to live and all our ways are to be conformed. That revealed will of God is not only to be believed and revered by us, but *practiced* as well. No situation in which we can be placed, no threatenings of men, however terrible, can ever justify us for disobeying God. True, there will be seasons of sore testing, times when it seems that our trials are more than flesh and blood can endure, and then, it is that we most have “need of patience.”

Nor will divine succour and supernatural grace be withheld if we humbly and trustfully seek it.

“That, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb 10:36). Here the “great recompense of reward” of the previous verse is designated “the promise,” partly is guard against the error that eternal life can be earned, or that heaven can be merited by creature performances. And partly to emphasize the *certainty* of that which is promised unto all who endure unto the end. The “promise” is here put for the things promised, as in Hebrews 6:12, 17; 11:13, 39. It is called, “*the promise*,” as in 1 John 2:25 etc., because it is the grand comprehensive promise, including all others, being the glorious consummation to which they point. Nor should any stumble because they cannot perceive the consistency of a thing being *both* a “reward” and a “promise.” We find the same conjunction of concepts in Colossians 3:24, “Ye shall receive the *reward* of the inheritance: *for ye serve* the Lord Christ.” It is so denominated to show that it is *not* merited by works, but is bestowed by free grace, and will certainly be enjoyed by all the elect. And yet, it will only be obtained by them as they persevere in the path of duty.

“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb 10:37). The casual, “For,” denotes that the apostle was about to confirm what he had just said. He both adds a word to strengthen their “confidence” and “patience,” and also points them to the near approach of the time when they should receive their “reward.” The Greek is very expressive and emphatic. The apostle used a word which signifies, “a little while,” and then, for further emphasis added a particle meaning, “very,” and this he still further intensified by repeating it. Thus, literally rendered, this clause reads, “For yet a very, very little while, and he that shall come will come.”

“There is indeed nothing that avails more to sustain our minds, should they at any time become faint, than the hope of a speedy and near termination. As a general holds forth to his soldiers the prospect that the war will soon end, provided they hold out a little longer, so the apostle reminds us that the Lord will shortly come to deliver us from all evils, provided our minds faint not through want of firmness. And in order that this consolation might have more assurance and authority, he adduces the testimony of Habakkuk. But as he follows the Greek version, he departs somewhat from the words of the prophet” (John Calvin). Frequently does the Holy Spirit emphasize the exceeding (comparative) brevity of the saints’ sufferings in this world, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa 30:5). “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet *shortly*” (Rom 16:20). “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment” (2Co 4:17).

“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb 10:37). The reference here is to the person of the Lord Jesus, as is evident from Habakkuk 2:3, to which the apostle here alludes. Like so many prophecies, that word of Habakkuk’s was to receive a threefold fulfillment—a literal and initial one, a spiritual and continuous one, a final and complete one. The literal was the divine incarnation, when the Son of God came here in flesh. The final will be His return in visible glory and power. The spiritual has reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when that which most obstructed the manifestation of Christ’s kingdom on earth was destroyed—with the overthrow of the Temple and its worship, official Judaism came to an end. The Christians in Palestine were being constantly persecuted by the Jews, but their conquest by Titus and their consequent

dispersion put an end to this. That event was less than ten years distant when Paul wrote. Compare our remarks on “see the day approaching” (Heb 10:25).

We trust that none will conclude from what has been said above that we regard Heb 10:37 as containing *no* reference to the final coming of Christ. What we have sought to point out was the *immediate* purport of its contents unto the Hebrews. But it also contains a message for us, a message of hope and comfort. It is *our* privilege, too, to be waiting for God’s Son from heaven. Let us add that it is a big mistake to regard every mention of the “coming” of Christ in the New Testament Scriptures as referring to His “appearing the second time” (Heb 9:28). In John 14:18, 28, the reference was to Christ’s “coming” by His Spirit. In John 14:23, to His “coming” in loving manifestation to the individual soul. In Ephesians 2:17, He “came” by the Gospel. In Revelation 2:5, His “coming” is in chastisement. Careful study of each verse is required in order to distinguish between these several aspects.

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb 10:38). The first half of this verse is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, and its pertinency to the admonition which the apostle was pressing upon the Hebrews is not difficult to perceive. The prophet is cited in proof that perseverance is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a child of God. He who has been justified by God, through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to his account, lives by faith as the influencing principle of his life. Thus, the apostle declared, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal 2:20). The one whom God has exonerated from the curse and condemnation of the law is not him who has merely “believed,” but is the man who *continues* “believing,” with all that that word includes and involves. Let the reader fully note the force of the present perfect “believeth,” in John 3:15-16, 18; 5:24, etc., and contrast the, “for a while believed,” of Luke 8:13!

The use of the future tense, “shall live,” announces and enforces the necessity for the continued exercise of faith. It is true that one who has been justified by God was previously quickened, for we are “justified by faith” (Act 13:39; Rom 5:1, etc.), and one who is dead in trespasses and sins cannot savingly believe—note the “called” *before* “justified” in Romans 8:30. It is also true that the real Christian *lives* by faith, for that is the very nature of indwelling grace. But it is equally true that the “just *shall live* by faith.” The constant exercise of faith by the saint is as essential to his final salvation as it was to his initial salvation. Just as the soul can only be delivered from the wrath to come by repentance (self-judgment) and personal faith in the Lord Jesus, so we can only be delivered from the power of indwelling sin, from the temptations of Satan, from an enticing world which seeks to destroy us, by a steady and persistent *walking* by faith.

Patient endurance is a fruit of faith, yet it is only as that vital and root grace is in daily exercise that the Christian is enabled to stand firm amid the storms of life. Those whom God declares righteous in Christ are to pass their lives here, not in doubt and fear, but in the maintenance of a calm trust in and a joyful obedience to Him. Only as the heart is engaged with God and feeds upon His Word, will the soul be invigorated and fitted to press onwards when everything outward seems to be against him. It is by our faith being drawn out unto things above that we receive the needed strength which causes us to look away from the discouraging and distracting scene around us. As faith lives upon Christ

(Joh 6:56-57), it draws virtue from Him, as the branch derives sap from the root of the vine. Faith makes us resign ourselves and our affairs to Christ's disposing, cheerfully treading the path of duty, and patiently waiting that issue which He will give. Faith is assured that our Head knows far better than we do what is good and best.

"But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb 10:38). It seems to the writer that the translators of the Authorized Version took an unwarranted liberty with the Word of God when they inserted (in italics) the words, "any man," and changed, "and," (*kai*) into, "but." The Holy Scriptures should never be altered to suit our ideas of evangelical truth. The Revised Version correctly gives, "if he shrink back," and Bagster's Interlinear, "and if he draw back." Yes, *if* the "just" man himself were to draw back and continue in apostasy, he would finally perish. "By this solemn consideration, therefore, the apostle urges on them the importance of perseverance, and the guilt and danger of apostasy from the Christian faith. *If* such a case should occur, no matter what might have been the former condition, and no matter what love or zeal might have been evinced, yet such an apostasy would expose the individual to the certain wrath of God. His former love could not save him, any more than the former obedience of the angels saved them from the horrors of eternal chains and darkness" (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870).

"But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb 10:38). Once more the apostle faithfully warns the Hebrew Christians (and us) of the dreadful consequence which would attend the continuance in a course of backsliding. He who thinks that by refusing to take up his cross daily and follow the example left by Christ, can escape the world's reproach and persecution, and yet go to heaven, is fatally deluding himself. Said the Lord Jesus, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it" (Mat 16:25). That is, he who is so diligent in looking after his temporal prospects, worldly reputation, and personal comforts, shall eternally lose his soul.

It was to stir up the Hebrews unto the more diligent labouring after living the life of faith that the apostle here pointed out the terrible alternative. Unless they maintained a steady trust in God and an obedient submission unto His revealed will, they were in grave danger of backsliding and apostatizing. If any should "draw back," then God would have "no pleasure in him," which is but the negative way of saying that he would be an object of abhorrence. But observe closely, it does not say God would have "no *more* pleasure in him," which would conflict with the uniform teaching of the Word concerning the *unchanging* love of God (Mal 3:6; Joh 13:1; Rom 8:35-39) toward His own. O the minute accuracy of Holy Writ! The practical application of this solemn word to us is that, in order to have a scripturally-grounded assurance of God's taking pleasure in *us*, we must continue cleaving closely unto Him.

"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb 10:39). The word, "perdition," shows plainly that the "drawing back," of the previous verse, is a fatal and final one. Nevertheless, so far is Hebrews 10:38 from establishing the doom of any child of God, the apostle assures the Hebrews that no such fate would overtake them. What is added here, in this verse, was to prevent their being unduly affrighted with the solemn warnings previously given. And lest they should conclude that Paul thought evilly of them, though he had warned, he did not regard them as treading the broad road to destruction. Instead, he was "persuaded better things of you"

(Heb 6:9). “Let it be noticed that this truth belongs also to us, for we, whom God has favoured with the light of the Gospel, ought to acknowledge that we have been called in order that we may advance more and more in our obedience to God, and strive constantly to draw nearer to Him. This is the real preservation of the soul, for by so doing, we shall escape eternal perdition” (John Calvin).

“In this, the apostle expresses the fullest conviction that none of those to whom he wrote would apostatize. The case which he had been describing was only a supposable case, not one which he believed would occur. He had only been stating what *must* happen if a sincere Christian should apostatize. But he did not mean to say that this *would* occur in regard to them. He made a statement of a general principle under the divine administration, and he designed that this should be a means of keeping them in the path of life” (A. Barnes). Christians may grow cold, neglect the means of grace, backslide, fall into grievous sins, as did David and Peter, but they shall not “draw back *unto perdition.*” No, they have been predestinated “to be conformed unto” the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), and God’s purpose cannot fail. They are the objects of Christ’s intercession (Joh 17:15, 24), and that is efficacious (Joh 11:42). They are *restored* by the good Shepherd when they go astray (Psa 23:3).

As the term, “perdition,” denoted that eternal damnation is the doom of apostates, so the word, “salvation,” here has reference to that ultimate consummation of the portion of all true believers. It is to be carefully noted that the apostle did not say, “Them that have believed to the salvation of the soul,” but, “Them that believe to the saving of the soul.” The difference is real and radical. There is a blessed sense in which every regenerated believer *has been* saved by Christ, yet there is also another, and most important sense, in which his salvation is *yet* future. See Romans 13:11; 1 Peter 1:5, 9. The complete and final salvation of the Christian is dependent upon his *continued* trust in and obedience to God in Christ, *not* as the *cause* thereof, yet as the indispensable *means* thereto.

It is gloriously true that Christians are “kept by the power of God” (1Pe 1:5). He, who prepares heaven for them, preserves them unto it. But by what instrument or means? The same verse tells us—“through faith” (1Pe 1:5). To depend upon an invisible God for a happiness that awaits us in an invisible world, when, in the meantime, He permits us to be harassed with all sorts of temptations, trials, and troubles, requires faith—real faith, supernatural faith. Through faith alone can the heart be sustained till we obtain salvation. Nothing but a God-given and God-maintained faith can enable us to row against the stream of flesh and blood, and so deny its cravings that we shall win through to heaven at last. The “flesh” is for sparing and pampering the body, but, “faith” is for the “saving of the soul.”

THE LIFE OF DAVID

7. *His Fleeing from Saul*

At the close of 1 Samuel 18, there is a very striking word recorded which supplies a most blessed line in the typical picture that was furnished by the man after God's own heart. There, we read, "David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by" (1Sa 18:30). The marginal reading is still more suggestive, "so that his name was *precious*." What a lovely foreshadowing was this of Him whose "Name" is "as ointment poured forth" (Song 1:3)! Yes, both to His Father and to His people, the name of Christ is "much set by." He has "obtained a more excellent name" than angels bear (Heb 1:4). Yea, He has been given "a name which is above every name" (Phi 2:9). "Precious" beyond description is that Name unto His own. They plead it in prayer (Joh 14:13). They make it their "strong tower" (Pro 18:10).

"And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David" (1Sa 19:1). How vivid and how solemn is the contrast presented between the last sentence of the preceding chapter and the opening one of this! And yet, perhaps, the spiritually-minded would hardly expect anything else. When the "name" of the "Beloved" (for that is what "David" signifies) is "much set by," we are prepared to see the immediate raging of the enemy—personified here by Saul. Yes, the picture here presented to our view is true to life. Nothing is more calculated to call into action the enmity of the serpent against the woman's Seed than the extolling of His "name," with all that that scripturally includes. It was thus in the days of the apostles. When they announced that, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Act 4:12), the Jewish leaders "commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Act 4:18). And because they heeded not, the apostles were "beaten" and again commanded "they should not speak in the name of Jesus" (Act 5:40).

The previous plot of Saul upon David's life had failed. Instead of his being slain by the Philistines, they fell under the hand of David, and the consequence was that the son of Jesse became more esteemed than ever by the people. His name was had in high honour among them. Thus it was, too, with his Antitype. The more the chief priests and Pharisees persecuted the Lord Jesus, the more the people sought after Him. "From that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death...and the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus" (Joh 11:53, 55-56). So it was after His ascension. The more His witnesses were persecuted, the more the Gospel prospered. There seems little room for doubt that the death of Stephen was one of the things used by God to convict him who afterwards became the mighty apostle to the Gentiles. When the early church was assailed, we are told, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Act 8:4). Thus does God make the wrath of man to praise Him.

Saul was growing desperate, and now hesitated not to make known unto his own son his fierce hatred of David. Yet, here again, we may behold and admire the directing hand of Providence in the king's not concealing his murderous designs from Jonathan. The son

shared not his father's enmity, accordingly we read, "But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: and I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee" (1Sa 19:2-3). It is blessed to see such true and disinterested friendship, for it should not be forgotten that Jonathan was the natural heir to the throne. Here we see him faithfully acquainting David of his danger, and counselling him to take precautionary measures against it.

Not only did Jonathan warn his beloved friend of the evil intentions of his father, but he also intreated the king on his behalf. Beautiful is it to see him interceding before Saul (1Sa 19:4-5) at the imminent risk of bringing down his anger upon his own head. Jonathan reminded Saul that David had never wronged him. So far from it, he had delivered Israel from the Philistines, and had thus saved the king's throne. Why then should he be so set upon shedding "innocent blood" (1Sa 19:5). Jonathan must not here be regarded as a type of Christ, rather is he a vivid contrast. Jonathan's plea was based upon David's personal merits. It is the very opposite in the case of the Christian's Intercessor. Our great High Priest appears before the King of the universe on behalf of His people, not on the ground of any good *they* have done, but solely on the ground of that perfect satisfaction or obedience which *He* offered to divine justice on their behalf. No merits of theirs can He plead, but His own perfect sacrifice prevails for them.

Jonathan's intercession was successful, "And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan" (1Sa 19:6). He not only gave his son a fair hearing, but was duly impressed by the arguments used, and was convicted, for the present, that he was wrong in seeking the life of David. Yet here again, the intercession of Jonathan and that of the Lord Jesus for His people are in striking contrast. The former had naught but a temporary and transient effect upon his father, whereas that of our Advocate is eternally efficacious—forever be His name praised. "And Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain" (1Sa 19:6). Once more, we see how easy it is for wicked men to make use of pious expressions, and appear to superficial observers very godly men. The sequel shows of what little value is the solemn oath of a king, and warns us to place no confidence in the engagements of earthly rulers. They who are acquainted with the Scriptures are not surprised when even national and international treaties become only worthless "scraps of paper."

Re-assured by Jonathan, David returned to Saul's household (1Sa 19:7). But not for long—a fresh war (probably local and on a small scale) broke out with the Philistines. This called for David to resume his military activities, which he did with great success (1Sa 19:8), killing many of the enemy and putting the remainder to flight. A blessed example does the man after God's own heart here set us. Though serving a master that little appreciated his faithful efforts, nay, who had vilely mistreated him, our hero did not refuse to perform his present duty. "David continues his good services to his king and country. Though Saul had requited him evil for good, and even his usefulness was the very thing for which Saul envied him, yet he did not, therefore, retire in sullenness and decline public service. Those that are ill paid for doing good, yet must not be weary of well-doing, remembering what a bountiful benefactor our heavenly Father is" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand” (1Sa 19:9). The opening word of this verse seems to intimate that the fresh victory of David over the Philistines stirred up the spiteful jealousy of the king, and thus, by “giving place to the devil” (Eph 4:26-27), became susceptible again to the evil spirit. “And David played with his hand,” no doubt upon the harp. One who had been so successful upon the battlefield, and was held in such honour by the people, might have deemed such a service as beneath his dignity. But a gracious man considers no ministry too humble by which he may do good to another. Or, he might have objected, the danger he incurred the last time he performed this office for Saul (1Sa 18:10), but he counted upon God to preserve him in the path of duty.

“And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin” (1Sa 19:10). In view of his so recently acceding to his son’s intercession and swearing that David should not be slain, our present verse furnishes an illustration of a solemn and searching principle. How often unsaved people, after sudden conviction, have *resolved* to break from their evil doings and serve the Lord, but only after a short season, to return to their course of sin, like a washed sow to her wallowing in the mire (2Pe 2:22). Where there has been no miracle of mercy wrought within the heart, no change of disposition, and where there is no dependence upon divine grace for needed strength, resolutions, however sincere and earnest, seldom produce any lasting effect. Unmortified lusts quickly break through the most solemn vows. Where the fear of God does not possess the heart, fresh temptations soon arouse the dormant corruptions, and this gives Satan good opportunity to regain complete mastery over his victim.

“But he slipped away out of Saul’s presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night” (1Sa 19:10). How wonderful is the care of God for His own! Though invisible, how real are His protecting arms! “Not a shaft of hate can hit, till the God of love sees fit.” What peace and stability it brings to the heart when faith realizes that, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7). Men may be filled with malice against us, Satan may rage and seek our destruction, but none can touch a hair of our heads without God’s permission. The Lord Almighty is the “Shield and Buckler” (Psa 91:4), the “Rock and Fortress” (Psa 18:2) of all those who put their trust in Him. Yet note that David was not foolhardy and reckless. Faith is not presumptuous. Though we are to trust Him, we are forbidden to *tempt* the Lord. Therefore, it is our duty to retire when men seek our hurt—cf. Matthew 10:23.

“Saul also sent messengers unto David’s house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: And Michal David’s wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow shalt thou be slain” (1Sa 19:11). Saul was thoroughly aroused. Chagrined by his personal failure to kill David, he now sent his guards to assassinate him. These were to surround his house and wait till daylight, rather than enter and run the risk of killing some one else, or allowing him to make his escape during the confusion and darkness. But man proposes and God disposes. The Lord had other services for David to perform, and the servant of God is immortal until the work allotted him has been done. This time, the king’s own daughter, who had married David, was the one to befriend him. In some way, she had learned of her father’s plan, so at once took measures to thwart it. First, she acquainted her husband of his imminent danger.

Next we are told, "So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped" (1Sa 19:12). In like manner, Rahab had let down the spies from her house in Jericho, when the king's messengers were in quest of him, and as the disciples let down the apostle Paul at Damascus, to preserve him from the evil designs of the Jews. Though the doors were securely guarded, David thus escaped through a window, and fled swiftly and safely away. It is of deep interest, at this point, to turn to the 59th Psalm, the heading of which (inspired, we believe) tells us it was written, "When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." In his critical situation, David betook himself to prayer, "Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD" (Psa 59:1-3). Blessed is it to see that ere he completed the Psalm, full assurance of deliverance was his, "But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy *in the morning*" (Psa 59:16).

"And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth, and when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick" (1Sa 19:13-14). Water will not rise above its own level. We cannot expect the children of this world to act according to heavenly principles. Alienated as they are from the life of God (Eph 4:18), utter strangers to Him in experience (Eph 2:12), they have no trust in Him. In an emergency, they have no better recourse than to turn unto fleshly schemings and devisings. From a natural viewpoint, Michal's fidelity to her husband was commendable, but from a spiritual standpoint, her deceit and falsehood was reprehensible. The one who commits his cause and case unto the Lord, *trusting* also in Him to bring to pass His own wise purpose and that which shall be for his own highest good (Psa 37:5), has no need to resort unto tricks and deceits. Does not David's having yoked himself to an unbeliever supply the key to his painful experiences in Saul's household!

"And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him" (1Sa 19:15). Bent on David's destruction, the king gave orders that, sick or no, he should be carried into his presence, and this for the specific purpose of slaying him by his own hand. Base and barbarous was it to thus triumph over one whom he thought was sick, and to vow the death of one that, for all he knew, was dying by the hand of nature. Spurred on by him who is "a murderer from the beginning" (Joh 8:44), the savage cruelty of Saul makes evident the extreme danger to which David was exposed, which, in turn, intensifies the blessedness of God's protection of him. How precious it is for the saint to know that the Lord places Himself as the Shield between him and his malicious foe! "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever" (Psa 125:2).

When the servants returned to and entered Michal's house, her plot was exposed and the flight of David discovered (1Sa 19:16). Whereupon the king asked his daughter, "Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped?" (1Sa 19:17). How thoroughly blurred is the vision of one who is filled with envy, anger, and hatred! He, who had befriended Saul again and again, was now regarded as an "enemy." There is a solemn lesson for us in this. If pride, prejudice, or self-seeking rule our hearts, we shall regard those who are our wisest counsellors and well-wishers as foes. Only when our eye

be single is our whole body full of light. Solemn is it to note Michal's answer to Saul, "He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?" (1Sa 19:17), thereby representing David as a desperate man who would have slain her had she sought to block his escape. Still more solemn is it to find the man after God's own heart married to such a woman!

"So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth" (1Sa 19:18). It was by Samuel he had been anointed, and through him he had first received the promise of the kingdom. Probably David now sought God's prophet for the strengthening of his faith, for counsel as to what he should do, for comfort under his present troubles, for fellowship and prayer. It was through Samuel he was most likely to learn the mind of the Lord. And too, he probably regarded asylum with Samuel as the most secure place in which he could lodge. Naioth was close to Ramah and there was a school of the prophets. If the Philistines gave no disturbance to the "hill of God" and the prophets in it (1Sa 10:5), it might be reasonably concluded that Saul would not.

"And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah. And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied" (1Sa 19:19-20). Notwithstanding the sacredness of the place David was in, Saul sent servants to arrest him. But again, the Lord interposed, by causing His Spirit to fall upon Saul's messengers, who were so much taken up with the religious exercises, they neglected the errand on which they had been sent. How this reminds us of the Pharisees and chief priests sending officers to apprehend Christ, but who instead of executing their commission, returned to their masters, saying, "Never man spake like this man" (Joh 7:32, 45-46)! Saul sent others of his servants, a second and a third time, to seize David, but with the same result as before (1Sa 19:21). Saul now, therefore, went forth in person to seek and slay David, but before he reached the place where David was, the Spirit of God came upon him and threw him into a kind of trance, in which he continued all day and night, giving David plenty of time to escape. Such strange methods does JOHOVAH sometimes employ in bringing to naught the efforts of His enemies against His servants.

PRAYER

IV. The Application

First, a word of *information*. As prayer is the duty of every one of the children of God, and carried on by the Spirit of Christ in the soul, so every one that doth but offer to take upon him to pray to the Lord had need to be very wary, and to go about that work especially with the dread of God, as well as with hopes of the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. Prayer is an ordinance of God in which a man draws near to Him, and therefore, it calleth for so much the more of the assistance of the grace of God to help a soul to pray as becomes one that is in the presence of Him. It is a shame for a man to behave himself

irreverently before a king, but a sin to do so before God. And as a king (who is wise) is not pleased with an oration made up with unseemly words and gestures, so God takes no pleasure in the sacrifice of fools. It is not long discourses nor eloquent tongues that are the things which are pleasing in the ears of the Lord, but a humble, broken, and contrite heart that is sweet in the nostrils of the heavenly majesty. Therefore, for information, know that there are these five things that are obstructions to prayer, and even make void the requests of the creature.

1. When men regard iniquity in their hearts at the time of their prayers before God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me" (Psa 66:18), when there is a secret love to that very thing which thou, with thy dissembling lips, dost ask for strength against. For this is the wickedness of man's heart, that it will even love and hold fast that which with the mouth it prays against. And of this sort are they that, "honour me with their mouth...but their heart is far from me" (Mat 15:8). Oh how ugly would it be in our eyes, if we should see a beggar ask an alms with an intention to throw it to the dogs! or, that should say with one breath, "Pray bestow this upon me," and with the next, "I beseech you give it me not"! And yet thus it is with these kind of persons. With their mouth they say, "Thy will be done," and with their hearts the opposite. With their mouth say, "Hallowed be thy name," yet with their hearts and lives, they would like to dishonour Him all the day long. These be the prayers that become sin, and though they put them often, yet the Lord will never answer them.

2. When men pray for show, to be heard, and thought somebody in religion. These prayers also fall short of God's approbation and are never like to be answered in reference to eternal life. There are two sorts of men that pray to this end: (1) Your trencher-chaplains that thrust themselves into great men's families, pretending the worship of God, when in truth the great business is their own bellies, and were notable pointed out by Ahab's prophets, and also Nebuchadnezzar's, who, though they pretended great devotion, yet their lusts were the things aimed at by them. (2) Them also that seek repute and applause for their eloquent terms and seek more to tickle the ears and heads of their hearers than anything else. These be they that "pray to be heard of men," and have their reward already.

These persons are discovered thus—they eye only their auditory in their expressions. They look for commendation when they have done. Their hearts either rise or fall according to their praise or enlargement. The length of their prayer pleaseth them, and that it might be long, they vainly repeat them over and over, but look not from what heart they come. They look for returns, but it is the windy applause of men. And therefore, they love not to be in the their chamber, but among company. And if at any time, conscience thrusts them into their closet, yet hypocrisy will cause them to be heard in the streets. And when their mouths have done going, their prayers are ended, for they wait not to hear what the Lord will say.

3. A third sort of prayer that will not be accepted of God is when either they pray for wrong things, or if for right things, that the things asked for might be spent upon their own lusts and made out to wrong ends. "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jam 4:2-3). Ends contrary to God's will is a great argument with Him to frustrate the petitions presented before Him. Hence, it is that so many pray for this and that and yet receive it not. God

answers them only with silence. They have their words for their labour. That is all. *Objection:* But God hears some persons though their hearts be not right with Him, as He did Israel in giving quails, though they spent them on their lusts. *Answer:* If He doth, it is in judgment, not in mercy. He gave them their desire indeed, but they had better have been without, for He sent leanness into their souls. Woe be to that man that God answereth thus.

4. Another sort of prayers there are that are not answered—those made by men and presented to God in their own persons only, without their appearing in the Lord Jesus. Though God hath appointed prayer, and promised to hear the prayer of the creature, yet *not* the prayer of any creature that comes not in Christ. “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name,” said Christ, “that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (Joh 14:13). Though you be never so devout, zealous, earnest, and constant in prayer, yet it is in Christ only that you must be heard and accepted. But, alas! the most of men know not what it is to come to God in the name of our Lord Jesus, which is the reason why they live wickedly, pray wickedly, and also die wickedly. Or else that they attain to nothing else but what a mere natural man may attain unto.

5. The last thing that hindereth prayer is the form of it without the power. It is an easy thing for men to be very hot for such things as forms of prayer, as they are written in a book. But yet they are altogether forgetful to inquire with themselves whether they have the Spirit and power of prayer. These men are like a painted man, and their prayers are like a false voice. They in person appear as hypocrits and their prayers are an abomination. When they say they have been pouring out their souls to God, He says they have been “howling” like dogs (Hos 7:14).

When, therefore, thou intendest to pray to the Lord of heaven and earth, consider these particulars. First, what thou wantest. Do not as many, who in their words only beat the air, and ask for such things as indeed they do not desire, nor see that they stand in need of. Second, when thou seest what thou wantest, keep to that, and take heed that thou prayest feelingly. *Objection:* But I have a sense of nothing. Then, by your argument, I must not pray at all. *Answer:* 1. If thou findest thyself senseless, in some sad measure, yet thou canst not complain of that senselessness, but by being sensible. There is a sense of senselessness according to thy sense, then, that thou hast of the need of anything, so pray. And if thou art sensible of thy senselessness, pray the Lord to make thee sensible of what ever thou findest thy heart senseless of. “Call upon me, and I will hear thee, and show thee great and mighty things that thou knowest not,” that thou art not sensible of.

2. Take heed that thy heart go to God as well as thy mouth. Let not thy mouth go any further than thou strivest to draw thine heart along with it. David would lift his heart and soul to the Lord and with good reason. For so far as a man’s mouth goeth not along with his heart, so far it is but lip labour only. And though God calls for and accepteth the calves of the lips, yet the lips without the heart argueth not only senselessness, but our being without sense of our senselessness, and therefore, if thou hast a mind to enlarge in prayer before God, see that it be with thy heart.

3. Take heed of affecting expressions and so to please thyself with the use of them that thou forget not the life of prayer. I shall conclude this use with a caution or two. First, take heed you do not throw off prayer, through sudden persuasions that thou has not the Spirit, neither prayerst thereby. It is the great work of the devil to do his best, or rather his worst,

against the best prayers. He will flatter your false, dissembling hypocrits and feed them with a thousand fancies of well-doing, when their very duties of prayer and all other stink in the nostrils of God. So he stands at a poor Joshua's hand (Zec 3:1) to resist and discourage. Take heed, therefore, of such false conclusions and groundless discouragements, and though such persuasions do come in upon thy spirit, be so far from being discouraged by them, that thou use them to put thee upon further sincerity and restlessness of spirit in thy approaching to God.

Secondly, as such sudden temptations should not stop thee from prayer and pouring out thy soul to God, so neither should thine own heart's corruption hinder thee. It may be thou mayest find in thee all those things before mentioned and that they will be endeavoring to put forth themselves in thy praying to Him. Thy business, then, is to judge them, to pray against them, and lay thyself so much the more at the foot of God, in a sense of thy own vileness, and rather make an argument from thy vileness and corruption of heart to plead with God for justifying and sanctifying grace, than an argument of discouragement and despair. David went this way, "O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great" (Psa 25:11)

Next, a word of *encouragement* to the poor tempted and cast-down soul to pray to God through Christ. 1. That Scripture in Luke 11:7-8 is very encouraging to any soul that doth hunger after Christ Jesus. In Luke 11:5-7, he spake a parable of a man that went to his friend to borrow three loaves, who, because he was in bed, denied him. Yet for his importunity-sake, he did arise and give him, clearly signifying that though poor souls, through the weakness of their faith, cannot see that they are the friends of God, yet they should never leave asking and knocking at God's door for mercy. Mark, saith Christ, "I say unto you, although he will not arise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity (of restless desires), he will arise and give him as many as he needeth." Poor heart! thou criest out that God will not regard thee, thou doest not find that thou art a friend to Him, but rather an enemy in thine heart, by wicked works, and thou art as though thou didst hear the Lord saying to thee, as in the parable, "Trouble me not, I cannot give unto thee." Yet I say, *continue* knocking, crying, moaning, and bewailing thyself. I tell thee, though He will not arise and give thee because thou art His friend, yet because of thy importunity He will arise and give thee as many as thou needest.

The same in effect you have discovered in the parable of the unjust judge and the poor widow. Her importunity prevailed with him. And verily mine own experience tells me that there is nothing that doth more prevail with God than importunity. Is it not so with you in respect of beggars that come to your door? Though you have no heart to give them anything at their first asking, yet if they follow you, bemoaning themselves and will take no nay without an alms, you will give them, for their continual begging overcome you.

2. Another encouragement for a poor, trembling, convicted soul is to consider the place, *throne* or seat, on which the great God hath placed Himself to hear the petitions of poor creatures, and that is, a throne *of grace*. It is the "mercy-seat," which signifies in the days of the Gospel that God hath taken His abiding-place in mercy and forgiveness and from thence, He doth intend to hear the sinner and to commune with him, as He saith, "And *there* I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat" (Exo 25:22). Poor souls! they are very apt to entertain strange thoughts of God, and His carriage towards them, and conclude that He will have no regard unto them, when He

is upon the mercy-seat and hath taken up His place there on purpose to hear and regard the prayers of poor creatures. If He had said, "I will commune with thee from My throne of judgment," then you might have trembled and fled from the face of the great and glorious Majesty. But when He declares He will hear and commune with souls from the mercy-seat, this should encourage thee, and cause thee to hope, and to "come *boldly* (freely) unto the throne of grace, that we may there obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

3. By this mercy-seat is Jesus Christ, who continually besprinkleth it *with His blood*, hence, it is called, "the blood of sprinkling." When the high priest, under the law, entered the holiest, where the mercy-seat was, he might not go in without blood. Why so? Because, though God was upon the mercy-seat, yet He was perfectly just as well as merciful. Now the blood was to stop justice from running out upon the persons concerned in the intercession of the high priest, as was signified in Leviticus 16:13-17, to show that all that unworthiness which thou fearest, should not hinder thee from coming to God, in Christ, for mercy. Thou criest out that thou art vile, and therefore, God will not regard thy prayer. It is true, if thou delight in thy vileness and come to God out of a mere pretence. But if from a sense of thy vileness, thou do pour out thy heart to God, desiring to be saved from guilt, and cleansed from filth, with all thy heart, then fear not, thy vileness will not cause the Lord to stop His ear from hearing of thee. The value of *the blood of Christ*, which is sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, stops the course of justice, opens a flood-gate from the mercy of the Lord to be extended unto thee. Thou hast, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest "by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way" (Heb 10:19-20), which He has made to thee that thou die not. When God sees the blood, He will pass over you and the plague shall not be upon you.

A word of *reproof*. 1. This speaks sadly to you who never pray at all. I will pray, saith the apostle, and so saith the heart of them that are Christians. Thou then art not a Christian, that art not a praying person. The promise is, "That every one that is righteous shall pray." Thou then art a wicked wretch that prayest not. Jacob got the name of Israel by wrestling with God, and all his children bear that name with him. But the people that forget prayer, that call not on the name of the Lord, they have prayer made *for* them, but it is such as this, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name" (Jer 10:25). How likest thou this, O thou that art so far off from pouring out thine heart before God, that thou goest to bed like a dog, and riseth like a hog, and forgettest to call upon Him? What wilt thou do when thou shalt be damned in hell, because thou couldest not find in thine heart to ask for heaven? Who will grieve for thy sorrow that thou didst not count mercy worth asking for?

2. This rebukes you that make it your business to slight, mock at, and undervalue the Spirit, and praying by that. What will you do when God shall come to reckon for these things? Did God send His Holy Spirit into the hearts of His people to the end that you should taunt at it? If God sent Korah and his company headlong to hell for speaking against Moses and Aaron, do you that mock at the Spirit of Christ think to escape unpunished? Did you ever read what God did to Ananias and Sapphira for telling one lie against it? Also to Simon Magus for the undervaluing of it. It is a fearful thing to do despite unto the Spirit of grace. Compare Matthew 12:31 with Mark 3:29.

3. As this is the doom of those who do openly blaspheme the Holy Spirit, in a way of disdain and reproach to its office and service, so also it is sad for you who resist the Spirit of prayer by a form of man's inventing. A very juggle of the devil that the traditions of men should be of better esteem and more to be owned than the Spirit of prayer. Hath God required these things at your hands? If He hath, show us where. If not (as I am sure He has not), then what cursed presumption is it in any pope, bishop, or other to command that, in the worship of God, which He hath not required! Thus is the Spirit of prayer disowned and the form imposed. The Spirit debased and the form extolled. They that pray with the Spirit, though never so humble and holy, counted fanatics and they that pray with the form, though with that only, counted the virtuous.

I shall conclude this discourse with these words of advice to all God's people. "Believe that as sure as you are in the way of God, you must meet with temptations. The first day, therefore, that thou dost enter Christ's congregation, look for them. When they do come, beg of God to carry thee through them. Be jealous of thine own heart, that it deceive thee not in thy evidences for heaven, nor in thy walking with God in this world. Take heed of the flatteries of false brethren. Keep in the life and power of truth. Look most at the things which are not seen. Take heed of little sins. Keep the promise warm upon thy heart. Renew thy acts of faith in the blood of Christ" (John Bunyan, 1660).

SAVING FAITH

V. It's Evidences

The great majority of those who read this article will, doubtless, be they who profess to be in possession of a saving faith. To all such, we would put the question, "Where is your proof? What effects has it produced in you?" A tree is known by its fruits, and a fountain by the waters which issue from it. So the nature of your faith may be ascertained by a careful examination of what it is bringing forth. We say, "A *careful* examination," for all fruit is not fit for eating nor all water for drinking, so all works are not the effects of a faith which saves. Reformation is not regeneration, and a changed life does not always indicate a changed heart. Have you been saved from a dislike of God's commandments and a disrelish of His holiness? Have you been saved from pride, covetousness, murmuring? Have you been delivered from the love of this world, from the fear of man, from the reigning power of every sin?

The heart of fallen man is thoroughly depraved. Its thoughts and imaginations being only evil continually (Gen 6:5). It is full of corrupt desires and affections, which exert themselves and influence man in all he does. Now, the Gospel comes into direct opposition with these selfish lusts and corrupt affections, both in the root and in the fruit of them (Ti 2:11-12). There is no greater duty that the Gospel urges upon our souls than the mortifying and destroying of them, and this indispensably, if we intend to be made partakers of its promises (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5-8). Hence, the first real work of faith is to cleanse the soul from these pollutions and therefore we read, "They that are Christ's have crucified the

flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Mark well, it is not that they “ought to” do so, but that they *have actually*, in some measure or degree.

It is one thing really to *think* we believe a thing, it is quite another actually to do so. So fickle is the human heart that, even in natural things, men know not their own minds. In temporal affairs, what a man really believes is best ascertained by his practice. Suppose I meet a traveler in a narrow gorge and tell him that just ahead is an impassable river, and that the bridge across it is rotten. If he declines to turn back, am I not warranted in concluding that he does not believe me? Or if a physician tells me a certain disease holds me in its grip, and that in a short time it will prove fatal if I do not use a prescribed remedy which is sure to heal. Would he not be justified in inferring that I did not trust his judgment were he to see me, not only ignoring his directions, but following a contrary course? Likewise, to believe there is a hell and yet run unto it, to believe that sin continued in will damn and yet live in it—to what purpose is it to boast of *such* a faith?

Now, from what was before us in the last article, it should be plain beyond all room for doubt that when God imparts saving faith to a soul, radical and real effects will follow. One cannot be raised from the dead without there being a consequent walking in newness of life. One cannot be the subject of a miracle of grace being wrought in the heart without a noticeable change being apparent to all who know him. Where a supernatural root has been implanted, supernatural fruit must issue therefrom. Not that sinless perfection is attained in this life, nor that the evil principle, the flesh, is eradicated from our beings, or even purified. Nevertheless, there is now a yearning after perfection, there is a spirit resisting the flesh, there is a striving against sin. And more, there is a growing in grace and a *pressing forward* along the “narrow way” which leads to heaven.

One serious error so widely propagated today in “orthodox” circles, and which is responsible for so many souls being deceived, is the seemingly Christ-honouring doctrine that it is, “His blood which *alone* saves any sinner.” Ah, Satan is very clever. He knows exactly what bait to use for every place in which he fishes. Many a company would indignantly resent a preacher’s telling them that getting baptized and eating the Lord’s Supper were God’s appointed means for saving the soul. Yet most of these same people will readily accept the lie that it is *only* by the blood of Christ we can be saved. That is true Godwards, but it is not true manwards. The work of the Spirit in us is *equally* essential as the work of Christ for us. Let the reader carefully ponder the whole of Titus 3:5.

Salvation is twofold. It is both legal and experimental, and consists of justification and sanctification. Moreover, I owe my salvation not only to the Son, but to all three persons in the Godhead. Alas, how little is this realized today, and how little is it preached. First and primarily, I owe my salvation to God the Father, who ordained and planned it, and who chose me unto salvation (2Th 2:13). In Titus 3:4, it is the Father who is denominated, “God our Saviour.” Secondly and meritoriously, I owe my salvation to the obedience and sacrifice of God the Son incarnate, who performed as my Sponsor everything which the Law required, and satisfied all its demands upon me. Thirdly and efficaciously, I owe my salvation to the regenerating, sanctifying, and preserving operations of the Spirit. Note that *His* work is made just as prominent in Luke 15:8-10, as is the Shepherd’s in Luke 15:4-7! As Titus 3:5 so plainly affirms, God “*saved* us, *by* the washing of regeneration, and

renewing of the Holy Spirit,” and it is the presence of *His* “fruit” in my heart and life which furnishes the immediate evidence of my salvation.

“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom 10:10). Thus, it is the heart which we must first examine in order to discover evidences of the presence of a saving faith. And first, God’s Word speaks of “*purifying* their hearts by faith” (Act 15:9). Of old, the Lord said, “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from the wickedness, that thou mayest be saved” (Jer 4:14). A heart that is being purified by faith (cf. 1Pe 1:22) is one fixed upon a pure Object. It drinks from a pure fountain, delights in a pure Law (Rom 7:22), and looks forward to spending eternity with a pure Saviour (1Jo 3:3). It loathes all that is foul and filthy—spiritually as well as morally—yea, hates the very garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 1:23). Contrariwise, it loves all that is holy, lovely, and Christlike.

The pure in heart shall see God (Mat 5:8). Heart purity is absolutely essential to fit us for dwelling in that place into which there shall in no wise enter anything “that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination” (Rev 21:27). Perhaps a little fuller definition is called for. Purifying the heart by faith consists of, first, the purifying of the understanding, by the shining in of divine light, so as to cleanse it from error. Second, the purifying of the conscience, so as to cleanse it from guilt. Third, the purifying of the will, so as to cleanse it from self-will and self-seeking. Fourth, the purifying of the affections, so as to cleanse them from the love of all that is evil. In Scripture, the “heart” includes all these four faculties. A deliberate purpose to continue in any one sin cannot consist with a pure heart.

Again, saving faith is always evidenced by a *humble* heart. Faith lays the soul low, for it discovers its own vileness, emptiness, impotency. It realizes its former sinfulness and present unworthiness. It is conscious of its weaknesses and wants, its carnality and corruptions. Nothing more exalts Christ than faith, and nothing more debases a man. In order to magnify the riches of His grace, God has selected faith as the fittest instrument, and this, because it is that which causes us to go entirely out from ourselves unto Him. Faith, realizing we are nothing but sin and wretchedness, comes unto Christ as an empty-handed beggar to receive all from Him. Faith empties a man of self-conceit, self-confidence, and self-righteousness, and makes him seem nothing, that Christ may be all in all. The strongest faith is always accompanied by the greatest humility, accounting self the greatest of sinners, and unworthy of the least favour (see Mat 8:8-10).

Again, saving faith is always found in a *tender* heart. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Eze 36:26). An unregenerate heart is hard as a stone, full of pride and presumption. It is quite unmoved by the sufferings of Christ, in the sense that they act as no deterrent against self-will and self-pleasing. But the real Christian *is* moved by the love of Christ and says, “How can I sin against His dying love for me?” When overtaken by a fault, there is passionate relenting and bitter mourning. Oh, my reader, do *you* know what it is to be melted before God, for you to be heart-broken with anguish over sinning against and grieving such a Saviour? Ah, it is not the absence of sin, but the grieving over it, which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it, “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6). It is not inactive, but energetic. That faith which is “of the operation of God” (Col 2:12) is a mighty principle of power, diffusing spiritual energy to all the faculties of the soul and enlisting

them in the service of God. Faith is a principle of life, by which the Christian lives unto God; a principle of motion by which he walks to heaven along the highway of holiness; a principle of strength, by which he opposes the flesh, the world, and the devil. "Faith in the heart of a Christian is like the salt that was thrown into the corrupt fountain that made the naughty waters good and the barren land fruitful. Hence, it is that there followeth an alteration of life and conversation, and so bringeth forth fruit accordingly, 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good fruit,' which treasure is faith" (John Bunyan in *Christian Behaviour*, 1628-1688).

Where a saving faith is rooted in the heart, it grows up and spreads itself in all the branches of obedience, and is filled with the fruits of righteousness. It makes its possessor act for God, and thereby evidences that it is a living thing and not merely a lifeless theory. Even a newborn infant, though it cannot walk and work as a grown man, breathes and cries, moves and sucks, and thereby shows it is alive. So with the one who has been born again—there is a breathing unto God, a crying after Him, a moving toward Him, a clinging to Him. But the infant does not long remain a babe. There is growth, increasing strength, enlarged activity. Nor does the Christian remain stationary. He goes "from strength to strength" (Psa 84:7).

But observe carefully, faith not only "worketh," but it "worketh *by love*." It is at this point that the "works" of the Christian differ from those of the mere religionist. "The papist works that he may merit heaven. The Pharisee works that he may be applauded, that he may be seen of men, that he may have a good esteem with them. The slave works lest he should be beaten, lest he should be damned. The formalist works that he may stop the mouth of conscience, that will be accusing him, if he do nothing. The ordinary professor works because it is a shame to do nothing, where so much is professed. But the true believer works because he *loves*. This is the principal, if not the only motive that sets him a-work. If there were no other motive within or without him, yet would he be working for God, acting for Christ, because he loves Him. It is like fire in his bones" (David Clarkson, 1621-1686).

Saving faith is ever accompanied by *an obedient walk*. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1Jo 2:3-4). Make no mistake upon this point. Infinite as are the merits of Christ's sacrifice, mighty as is the potency of His priestly intercession, yet they avail not for any who continue in the path of disobedience. He acknowledges none to be His disciples save them who do homage to Him as their Lord. "Too many professors pacify themselves with the idea that they possess imputed righteousness, while they are indifferent to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They refuse to put on the garment of obedience. They reject the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints. They thus reveal their self-will, their enmity to God, and their non-submission to His Son. Such men may talk what they will about justification by faith and salvation by grace, but they are rebels at heart. They have not on the wedding-dress any more than the self-righteous, whom they so eagerly condemn. The fact is, if we wish for the blessings of grace, we must in our hearts submit to the *rules* of grace, without picking and choosing" (Charles H. Spurgeon on, "The wedding garment," 1834-1892).

Once more—Saving faith is *precious*, for, like gold, it will endure trial (1Pe 1:7). A genuine Christian fears no test. He is willing, yea, wishes to be tried by God Himself. He cries, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2). Therefore is he willing for his faith to be tried by others, for he shuns not the touchstone of Holy Writ. He frequently tries himself, for where so much is at stake, he must be *sure*. He is anxious to know the worst as well as the best. That preaching pleases him best which is most searching and discriminating. He is loath to be deluded with vain hopes. He would not be flattered into a high conceit of his spiritual state without grounds. When challenged, he complies with the apostle’s advice in 11 Corinthians 13:5.

Herein does the real Christian differ from the formalist. The presumptuous professor is filled with pride, and, having a high opinion of himself, is quite sure that *he* has been saved by Christ. He disdains any searching tests, and considers self-examination to be highly injurious and destructive of faith. That preaching pleases him best which keeps at a respectable distance, which comes not near his conscience, which makes no scrutiny of his heart. To preach to him of the finished work of Christ and the eternal security of all who believe in Him strengthens his false peace and feeds his carnal confidence. Should a real servant of God seek to convince him that his hope is a delusion, and his confidence presumptuous, he would regard him as an enemy, as Satan seeking to fill him with doubts. There is more hope of a murderer being saved than of *his* being disillusioned.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it gives the heart victory over all the vanities and vexations of things below. “For whatsoever is born of God *overcometh the world*: and this is the victory that *overcometh the world*, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4). Observe that this is not an ideal after which the Christian strives, but an actuality of present experience. In this, the saint is conformed to his Head, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (Joh 16:33). Christ overcame it for His people, and now He overcomes it in them. He opens their eyes to see the hollowness and worthlessness of the best which this world has to offer, and weans their hearts from it by satisfying them with spiritual things. So little does the world attract the genuine child of God that he longs for the time to come when God shall take him out of it.

Alas, that so very few of those now bearing the name of Christ have any real experimental acquaintance with these things. Alas, that so many are deceived by a faith which is not a saving one. “He only is a Christian who *lives for Christ*. Many persons think they can be Christians on easier terms than these. They think it is enough to trust in Christ while they do not live for Him. But the Bible teaches us that if we are partakers of Christ’s death, we are also partakers of His life. If we have any such appreciation of His love in dying for us as to lead us to confide in the merits of His death, *we shall be* constrained to consecrate our lives to His service. And this is the only evidence of the genuineness of our faith” (Charles Hodge on 11 Corinthians 5:15, 1797-1878).

Reader, are the things mentioned above actualized in your own experience? If they are not, how worthless and wicked is your profession! “It is, therefore, exceedingly absurd for any to pretend that they have a good heart while they live a wicked life, or do not bring forth the fruit of universal holiness in their practice. Men that live in the ways of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, expecting to be received hereafter as holy persons, without a holy practice, act as though they expected to make a fool of their

Judge—which is implied in what the apostle says (speaking of men’s doing good works and living a holy life, thereby exhibiting evidence of their title to everlasting life). ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap’ (Gal 6:7). As much as to say, ‘Do not deceive yourselves with an expectation of reaping life everlasting hereafter, if you do not sow to the Spirit here. It is in vain to think that God will be made a fool of by you’” (Jonathan Edwards in *Religious Affections*, 1703-1758).

That which Christ requires from His disciples is that they should magnify and glorify Him in this world and that by living holily to Him and suffering patiently for Him. Nothing is as honouring to Christ as that those who bear His name should, by their holy obedience, make manifest the power of His love over their hearts and lives. Contrariwise, nothing is so great a reproach to Him, nothing more dishonours Him, than that those who are living to please self, and who are conformed to this world, should cloak their wickedness under His holy name. A Christian is one who has taken Christ for his example in all things. Then how great the insult which is done Him by those claiming to be Christians whose daily lives show they have no respect for His godly example. They are a stench in His nostrils. They are a cause of grievous sorrow to His real disciples. They are the greatest hindrance of all to the progress of His cause on earth, and they shall yet find that the hottest places in hell have been reserved for them. Oh, that they would either abandon their course of self-pleasing or drop the profession of that name which is above every name.

Should the Lord be pleased to use this article in shattering the false confidence of some deluded souls, and should they earnestly inquire how they are to obtain a genuine and saving faith, we answer, “Use the means which God has prescribed.” When faith be His gift, He gives it in His own way. And if we desire to receive it, then, we must put ourselves in that way wherein He is wont to communicate it. Faith is the work of God, but He works it not immediately, but through the channels of His appointed means. The means prescribed cannot effect faith of themselves. They are no further effectual than as instruments in the hands of Him who is the principal cause. Though He has not tied Himself to them, yet He has confined us. Though He be free, yet the means are necessary to us.

The first means is *prayer*, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Eze 36:26). Here is a gracious promise, but in what way will He accomplish it and similar ones? Listen, “Thus saith the LORD God; I will yet for this *be inquired of* by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Eze 36:37). Cry earnestly to God for a new heart, for His regenerating Spirit, for the gift of saving faith. Prayer is a universal duty. Though an unbeliever sin in praying (as in everything else), it is not a sin for him to pray.

The second means is the *written Word* heard (Joh 17:20; 1Co 3:5) or read (2Ti 3:15). Said David, “I will never forget thy precepts: for *with them* thou hast quickened me” (Psa 119:93). The Scriptures are the Word of God, through them He speaks. Then read them—asking Him to speak life, power, deliverance, peace, to your heart. May the Lord deign to add His blessing.

WELCOME TIDINGS

I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psa 34:1). And why not? God changes not (Mal 3:6). His eternal purpose of grace and His wondrous love are ever the same. True, I change, yet in this matter, I ought not, for I am bidden to “Rejoice *evermore*” (1Th 5:16). True, circumstances may vary, yet faith has power to lift the heart above them, and often does so, but (alas) not always. Shall I then make excuses for this? Nay, that would be sinful. Rather must I with shame confess my failure. The standard here set before us is to be ardently desired and earnestly striven after.

“I will bless the LORD at all times” (Psa 34:1). All times include hard times, trying times, times of adversity. In every situation, under every circumstance, our lips should show forth God’s praise. In bright days of joy and in dark nights of fear, we ought alike to magnify the perfections of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and makes them combine for good unto them that love Him. “Giving thanks always for all things” (Eph 5:20). That “all things” includes *chastisements*. How so? Because they are given in “love” (Heb 12:5) and are designed for the Christian’s “profit” (Heb 12:10).

Ah, dear reader, we ought to “Bless the LORD,” not only *during* “hard times,” but *for* them. Why so? Because they afford a suitable background upon which God’s faithfulness and sufficiency may shine forth the more plainly. He can furnish a table in the wilderness, and does so for His own. Moreover, we ought to bless God for (what man terms) “hard times” because of the golden opportunity they furnish us for the exercise of faith. Nothing is more honouring to God than this. Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, *giving glory* to God” (Rom 4:20). Contrariwise, nothing is more dishonouring to God than doubting and murmuring. Verily, it takes a crisis to *reveal* how much faith, or how little faith, we really have.

Praising the Lord is a wonderful antidote for doubtings and fears. None can really “Bless the LORD” very long without his heart being lifted out of the bog of unbelief. *Cultivate* this spirit, dear brethren, and thus prove that, “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10). Satan knows the truth of that full well, and therefore does he seek to dampen and depress us. But we are not ignorant of his devices. Then, let us meet his efforts to cast down our souls by presenting to God a “sacrifice of praise” (Heb 13:15). Nothing is more calculated to raise the heart above earthy trials and their gloomy tendency than to be occupied with the Lord and His goodness. Let us remember that because God “changeth not,” we have *the same* ground and cause to “bless” Him in “hard times” as in prosperous ones.

As they have gone over the above paragraphs, perhaps some of our friends have been “reading between the lines,” and drawn the conclusion that the writer also is now feeling the “pinch” severely, and is seeking to console himself. Then, let us assure you that there is *nothing* “between the lines.” Thank God, our financial position is as good *this* year as in former ones. Praise be unto His holy name, there are no “hard times” with Him who declares, “The cattle upon a thousand hills are mine” (Psa 50:10). If the publishing of this little magazine be “of the Lord,” then, until it has served His purpose, He will maintain it.

Faith may be tested, but if it is genuine, God will not mock it. O for more faith to His honour and praise.

No, we felt that Psalm 34:1 was a fitting verse with which to begin our "Welcome Tidings" letter. As older readers will remember, once a year, we seek to give some account of the grace of God in condescending to use these "Studies" in blessing to some of His dear people. But ere doing this, we felt constrained to emphasize the force of this word, "I will bless the LORD *at all times*" (Psa 34:1). We heartily bless Him that, in these so-called "hard times," He *is* faithfully supplying all our need. Our longing is that He will not only design to use this magazine for the feeding of His sheep, but that He will also employ it to get unto Himself "a name and a praise in the earth," and to this end that there may be a larger credit-balance at the end of this year than in former ones. O that many others may be encouraged to turn away from all worldly and fleshly ways of raising money, and wholeheartedly trust in the living God.

During the past twelve months, our hearts have been gladdened almost every day by letters from the scattered children of God testifying to the help received from the "Studies"—how gracious of the Lord to grant such encouragement along the way. "Thank you also for the Magazine. I cannot begin to express what help and blessing we have received through the perusal of them. I have been reprov'd and convicted many times. Our prayer is that He will deepen His work of grace in you, and so teach you experimentally that you may be able to teach others—that He will mercifully preserve you from all error, and guide and help you in the preparation of every article—that He will bring you into touch with many more of His hungry people, and above all, that God's blessings may continue upon the ministry to His own glory and the good of His beloved saints" (A brother in Kentucky).

"The incalculable help which I have derived from its Christ-exalting ministry (alas, so seldom heard today) has begotten likewise in me the desire to make known to others those glories which eternal years shall never all unfold" (A brother in Pennsylvania). "We can truly say we have benefited from your Magazine, for which we praise our God and Saviour, and also thank you for the wonderful truth of God's Word which we have been hungering for. Truly we want to obey God's Word" (A brother in Minnesota). "I want to thank you for the wonderful studies in Hebrews. Your letters have bred in me a desire to be a real man of God. I have gone over and over, marked and remarked the 'Studies' which you have been so kind to send me. I receive from them deep food, good strong meat, for which I thank God" (A brother in Texas). "I would like to join with those who have been blest and helped by your ministry through the printed page, and express in this feeble way my thanks....I begin to see that more and more the flesh profiteth nothing. My prayer is: Help me to be holy, O Spirit divine, Come sanctify wholly this temple of Thine; Now cast out each idol, here set up Thy throne, Reign, reign, without rival, supreme and alone. Now that is the influence your ministry has upon me by the grace of God" (A brother in Michigan).

"It is a pleasure to say at the end of this year that much of the blessing coming to my life and ministry is traceable to 'Studies.' For all this I thank you and the Lord Jesus" (Pastor in Michigan). "When the Magazine arrives, I drop everything, and begin meditating on the good things. Praise the Lord for the help I receive with each issue. Please

keep me on the mailing list” (Pastor in Minnesota). “Your writings and your Studies in the Scriptures have been of untold benefit to me, and have greatly enriched both mind and heart. I pray that God may long spare you to continue giving to His dear people these precious truths” (Pastor in Canada). We are always especially glad to hear of Pastors and other Christian workers being helped.

“I do thank you for sending me the Studies. My friend and myself have been helped through reading them. We do pray that God will bless the messages to all who read them. It makes one want to know more of His precious Word and to have His blessing in everything” (Sister in Australia). “The magazines have come to hand regularly with their wealth of precious food for starving sheep—soul-satisfying, heart-searching, doubt-dispelling, God-honouring portions. May the Holy Spirit continue His aid in the preparation of the articles” (Brother in Australia). “Your message has been an inspiration and blessing, and has helped me in many a dry place. Some things I found bitter to my taste, but most profitable as they worked in my heart and conscience. I refer particularly to ‘The Scriptures and Obedience’ in the October number. It was most searching. What blessing we miss through disobedience! Isaiah 48:18 is constantly in my mind as I think of these things” (Another brother in Australia).

“Last week I made a special and prayerful study of your articles on ‘Repentance,’ and I do thank the God of all grace that He moved you to stress the subject, for there is an awful need for it. It has been a great blessing to my soul, and I believe to every true child of God. The unfolding of this truth leadeth every one who calls himself by the name of the Lord to soul exercise, and to examine himself by the light of God’s Word, while at the same time deceitful natural feelings, which still live within us, get burnt up like the chaff” (Brother in Holland). “We enjoyed your addresses on Matthew 7 very much. It is just the character of ministry that is so much needed today” (Brother in England). “Thank you so much for sending me the magazine during 1931. It always brings me a real blessing. The articles on Repentance have been of much help” (Brother in Sweden). “Your magazine is very helpful for my spiritual life” (Brother in Syria).

The above are representative of many more which might be quoted. May the reading of these few extracts evoke praise from many hearts, and stimulate to further prayer that God will graciously enlarge the circulation of this magazine and condescend to use it more and more in blessing to His people. Yours in His happy service, A. W. and V. E. Pink.

IT IS FINISHED

“How terribly have these blessed words of Christ’s been misunderstood, misappropriated, and misapplied. How many seem to think that at the cross the Lord Jesus accomplished a work which rendered it *unnecessary* for the beneficiaries of it to live holy lives on earth. So many have been deluded into thinking that, so far as their reaching heaven is concerned, it matters not how they walk provided they are “resting on the finished work of Christ.” They may be unfruitful, untruthful, disobedient, yet (though they

may possibly miss some "millennial crown") so long as they repudiate all righteousness of their own and have faith in Christ, they imagine they are "eternally secure."

All around us are people who are worldly-minded, money-lovers, pleasure-seekers, Sabbath-breakers, yet who think all is well with them because they have "accepted Christ as their personal Saviour." In their aspiration, conversation, and recreation, there is practically nothing to differentiate them from those who make no profession at all. Neither in their home-life, business-life, nor social-life is there anything save empty pretensions to distinguish them from others. The fear of God is not upon them, the commands of God have no authority over them, the holiness of God has no attraction for them.

"It is finished" (Joh 19:30). How unspeakably solemn to realize that these precious words of Christ's have been used of Satan to lull thousands into a false peace. Yet such is the case. We have come into close contact with many who have no private prayer-life, who are selfish, covetous, dishonest, but who suppose that a merciful God will overlook all such things provided they once put their trust in the Lord Jesus. What a horrible perversion of the truth! What a turning of God's grace "into lasciviousness" (Jude 1:4)! Yes, those who now live the most self-seeking and flesh-pleasing lives, talk about their faith in the blood of the Lamb, and suppose they are safe. How the devil has deceived them!

"It is finished." Do those blessed words signify that Christ *so* satisfied the requirements of God's holiness that that Holiness no longer has any real and pressing claims upon us? Perish the thought. Even to the redeemed, God says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1Pe 1:16). Did Christ "magnify the law, and make it honourable" (Isa 42:21) that we might be lawless? Did He "fulfil all righteousness" (Mat 3:15) to purchase for us an immunity from loving God with all our hearts and serving Him with all our faculties? Did Christ die in order to secure a divine indulgence that we might live to please self? Many seem to think so. No, the Lord Jesus has left His people an example that they should "follow (not ignore) his steps."

"It is finished." What was? The need for sinners to repent? No indeed. The need for turning to God from idols? No indeed. The need for mortifying my members which are upon the earth? No indeed. The need for being sanctified wholly, in spirit, and soul, and body? No indeed. Christ died not to make my sorrow for, hatred of, and striving against sin, useless. Christ died not to absolve me from the full discharge of my responsibilities unto God. Christ died not so that I might go on retaining the friendship and fellowship of the world. How passing strange that any should think He did. Yet the *actions* of many show that this is *their* idea.

"It is finished" (Psa 34:1). What was? The sacrificial types were accomplished, the prophecies of His sufferings were fulfilled, the work given Him by the Father had been perfectly done, a sure foundation had been laid on which a righteous God could pardon the vilest transgressor of the Law who threw down the weapons of his warfare against Him. Christ had now performed all that was necessary in order for the Holy Spirit to come and work in the hearts of His people, convicting them of their rebellion, slaying their enmity against God, and producing in them a loving and obedient heart.

O dear reader, make no mistake on this point. The "finished work of Christ" avails you nothing if your heart has never been broken through an agonizing consciousness of your sinfulness. The "finished work of Christ" avails you nothing unless you have been saved

from the power and pollution of sin (Mat 1:21). It avails you nothing if you still love the world (1Jo 2:15). It avails you nothing unless you are a “*new creature*” in Him (2Co 5:17). If you value your soul, search the Scriptures and see for yourself. Take no *man’s* word for it.

