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“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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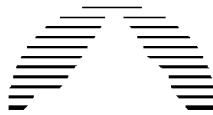
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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow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

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THE PRECEPTS AND LIBERTY

“So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will *walk at liberty*: for I seek thy precepts” (Psa 119:44-45). But do not men at large—at least in the ‘civilized’ world—“walk at liberty”? The great majority think so, but they are much mistaken. The fact is that sin has thoroughly perverted the judgment of the natural man, so that he is wanting in any true sense of values; and hence, it is that the Word of truth says, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa 5:20). So completely has sin blinded the unregenerate that they suppose that bondage is freedom; and freedom, bondage. The sinner imagines that he can only enjoy liberty while he is lord of himself, and that to surrender unto the claims of Christ and take His yoke upon him would be bringing him into captivity. *That is why* he sees in the Lord Jesus “no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa 53:2)!

A false notion of liberty possesses all of our hearts. Until the Holy Spirit takes us in hand, we want to be at our own disposal and do whatever we please, without any one to call us to account. Yet the impracticability of such a notion appears in the outworking of it in the natural world. If there were not government in the human sphere, every man doing that which was right in his own eyes, there would be a state of utter lawlessness—anarchy. Still more evident, to those with anointed eyes, is the untenability and wickedness of such a notion when applied to the spiritual realm. Since God be our Creator, since we are wholly dependent upon Him—even for every breath that we draw—it becomes us to be in subjection to Him, for to Him we are accountable for all of our actions. Manifestly, it is our duty both to will and to do that which is pleasing to our Maker, our Benefactor, our Judge.

“I will walk at liberty” (Psa 119:45). Note well, that statement is preceded by “I keep thy law continually,” and is followed by “for I seek thy precepts.” Rightly did Thomas Scott (1747-1821) point out, “The service of God is perfect freedom, and every deviation is proportional slavery to sin and Satan.” Only in the path of God’s precepts does the soul find true liberty—that is why God’s Law (the expression of His will) is called “the perfect law *of liberty*” (Jam 1:25; 2:12)! By the Fall, we have come under the law of sin and death; and consequently, we are fettered by our corruptions and bound over to eternal misery. But God’s Word makes known to us the way of deliverance from that bondage. Sin destroys man’s liberty, for it prevents him prosecuting his chief end—which is to glorify God—as it equally hinders him from attaining his highest good, which is to be holy and happy. Only by heeding the Law of the Lord can emancipation be obtained.

License is not liberty, for true liberty is not the opportunity to do what we want, but it is the power to do what we ought. Freedom of heart lies in a course of obedience to God, for there is no satisfaction to the heart until it finds its satisfaction in the “good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom 12:2). The difference between the license of the natural man and the liberty of the spiritual man is that of being the bond-slave of sin and “the Lord’s freeman” (1Co 7:22); and that is determined by the chains of darkness being displaced by the cords of duty, the fetters of sin by the yoke of Christ. And Christ’s yoke is “easy” (Mat 11:30), for it is lined with love. God’s commandments “are not grievous” (1Jo 5:3), for they are dictated by infinite wisdom and are designed for our highest good. Loving, pleasing, enjoying, praising God is the only real freedom and blessedness. God’s precepts must be *sought*—desired and attended to—if we are to “walk at liberty.”

The more whole-heartedly and constantly we “seek” God’s precepts and order our lives by them, the more will we “walk at liberty.” 1. Thereby we shall be delivered from the darkness of a sin-blinded understanding. “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psa 119:130). “Simple” there does not mean dull-witted, weak-minded, or illiterate, but one who is plain-hearted, sincere, and with an eye single to God’s glory (compare 2Co 1:12). It is the words of God being received into an honest and good heart which dispels the mists of error, disperses the clouds of prejudice, exposes the lies of Satan, and illuminates the soul. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments” (Psa 111:10). The more we walk the path of obedience, the sounder becomes our judgment, and the keener our discernment in perceiving what would promote or what would make against our best interests.

2. Thereby we are delivered from the bondage of our lusts. No man can serve two masters. In our unregenerate days, we were entirely dominated by our corruptions, for God had no place in our hearts and

lives. But the more He possesses our hearts, and the more we are governed by His precepts, the less will sin tyrannize us. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16). To "walk in the Spirit" is to be governed by that Word of Truth which he dictated for us. Therefore, our daily prayer needs to be "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psa 119:133). If some iniquity *has* "dominion" over me, it is because my steps are not ordered by the Word in all things.

3. Thereby we are delivered from a sin-enslaved will. We do not propose to enter here into a philosophical disquisition on the nature and exercises of the will. The natural man's will is quite free to choose, but *what determines* his choice? His inclinations: he always chooses that which, everything considered, is most agreeable to him. Being fallen, he prefers to serve self rather than God, the world more than Christ, the pleasures of sin above holiness; and therefore, always chooses the former. God makes His people willing in the day of His power to choose Christ by bringing them to feel their need of Him and giving them a desire for Him. The will of the sinner is "free *from* righteousness"; of the saint, "free *from sin*" (Rom 6:18, 20)! The more we love God's law and the pleasanter obedience becomes to us, the more the will is emancipated from the power of our corruptions.

4. Thereby are we delivered from the accusations of a guilty conscience. Just so long as we lived in rebellion against God, that inward monitor condemned us; and though at times we succeeded in drowning its voice, there were moments and seasons when our rest was disturbed. But "great peace have they which love thy law" (Psa 119:165). The more we love God's law and the more we seek His precepts, the more freedom have we from convictions of guilt.

5. Thereby are we delivered from the snares of the Fowler. The unregenerate "are taken captive by him at his will" (2Ti 2:26), so that it is *his* behests they perform (Joh 8:44). But "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Joh 8:36).

6. Thereby we are freed from the disapprobation of God. If we be truly seeking His precepts, we shall enjoy the quickenings and comforts of the Spirit; it is our self-will which "grieves" Him and restrains His gracious operations within us. So too we shall escape God's chastenings, for it is when we forsake His Law and keep not His commandments that He visits our transgressions with the rod and His providences are against us (Psa 89:30-32).

7. Thereby are we delivered from the bondage of human opinions and customs. There are not a few professing Christians whose freedom is circumscribed by "the commandments and doctrines of men" with their "Touch not; taste not; handle not" (Col 2:20-22), but the one who is regulated only by God's precepts will walk at liberty from such impositions.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

36. *Philippians 1:8-11, Part 4 (:10-11)*

“That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness” (Phi 1:10-11). By the “day of Christ,” we understand the time when He shall be revealed before an assembled universe as King of kings and Lord of lords, when He shall judge the world in righteousness (Act 17:31), “taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel” and being “glorified in his saints” (2Th 1:7-10). For the redeemed, it will be a day of examination and adjudication (Rom 14:12; 2Co 5:10)—not for the purpose of ascertaining their justification, but to attest their sanctification, to exhibit what grace had wrought in them; that the radical difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate, the blessed and the cursed, may be fully displayed; that Christ might be owned and magnified as the Author of all their godliness; and that they may be rewarded for their good works. It will then appear that the outstanding characteristic which distinguishes the children of God from the children of disobedience is that of *personal holiness*—holiness both of character and conduct; and since holiness has both a negative and positive side to it, the apostle has here designedly linked together “without offence” and “being filled with the fruits of righteousness” (Phi 1:10-11).

This phrase, “till the day of Christ” coming in between “without offence” and “being filled with the fruits of righteousness” belongs to each of them, both in grammatical sense and doctrinal purport. From its insertion there, we may gather at least three things. First, it is required that this negative and positive holiness *be maintained* without interruption until that day; or, in other words it enforces the necessity of the saints’ perseverance unto the end of their course. Second, it intimates the *special relation* which holiness has *unto* that “day,” when “every man’s work shall be made manifest” (1Co 3:13) and the Lord “both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts” (1Co 4:5). Third, it sets before us a *powerful incentive* to live hourly with the judgment seat of Christ before us, that “we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1Jo 2:28). Christ warned His disciples against carnality, lest “that day come upon you unawares” (Luk 21:24), and His apostle exhorted believers in view of that day to “cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Rom 13:12).

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness” (Phi 1:11): of *what* “righteousness”? No doubt, quite a number of our readers would answer the imputed righteousness of Christ; yet in so doing, they would be mistaken. It is important to recognise the threefold distinction the New Testament makes. There is a righteousness God communicates to His people in regeneration, there is a righteousness reckoned to their account at justification, and there is a righteousness wrought out by them in their sanctification. Those who confound those three things confuse themselves and imbibe error. When it is said “the effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man availeth much” (Jam 5:16), it signifies more than one to whom the obedience of Christ has been imputed, namely, one whose *heart* is right and whose *ways* are pleasing to God. One who has been justified may be in a backslidden state; and while that be the case, his prayers would avail nothing (Isa 59:2, Jam 4:3)! If we would ask and receive of God, then we must “keep his commandments” (1Jo 3:22). Righteousness is right doing, walking according to the Divine Rule, namely, the Law of the Lord, and keeping His commandments is what is termed practical righteousness—righteousness wrought out in our practice. But since by nature, “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10), a miracle of grace must first take place within us.

As the Lord Jesus declared, “make the tree good, and his fruit good” (Mat 12:33), for grapes are not borne by thorns, nor figs by thistles. The heart must needs first be made right, before our conduct will become so. Only a righteous man will produce the fruits of righteousness: he must have a righteous root within from whence they come. At regeneration, a principle of righteousness is imparted to the soul. In that miracle of grace, the heart is made right with God. At the new birth, a nature is received “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24); and when the saints are there exhorted to “put on [as a uniform] the new man,” they are enjoined to live and walk as new creatures in Christ. That principle of righteousness received from God at regeneration, that new and holy nature, is expressly said to be “his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works” (Eph 2:10)—that is the end for which He regenerates us, that our lives may glorify Him. The tree is made good that it may bear good fruit. “Created in Christ Jesus” means that at the new birth, we are made vitally one with Him; and as faith in Christ (a cleav-

ing to Him) is the first act of the spiritual babe, His righteousness is then imputed to him, so that he is legally—as well as experimentally—righteous before God.

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (1Jo 2:29). That tells us one of the ways by which we may recognise the regenerate, and distinguish them from unregenerate professors, namely, by their conduct—for it is by their fruit that the tree is known. In sharp contrast from the “children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2), the regenerate children of God walk in obedience to Him, treading “in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Psa 23:3), heeding His precepts, and keeping His statutes. Like begets like: God is righteous, and He makes His children so. Like father, like children. If the reader will carefully ponder John 8:38-44, he will see how that truth is argued and proved: the Son, being like unto the Father; the wicked, bearing the features and performing the will of their father, the Devil. The regenerate, then, are “trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified” (Isa 61:3); and He is glorified by their bearing “the fruits of righteousness” (Phi 1:11). Only the *doer* of righteousness is really born of God; and therefore, one whose character and conduct is unrighteous in his ways and walk cannot be a righteous person, and should not be regarded so by the saints.

Now the “fruits of righteousness” (Phi 1:11) brought forth by a righteous person are those acts which be agreeable to the Law of God and which have the Word of God for their Rule. Righteousness is right doing; and only that can be right, which accords with the revealed will of God. Unless *He* has appointed a certain line of conduct for us to engage in, our actions would either be men-pleasing, or self-seeking. A succinct summary of God’s will is made known unto us in the Ten Commandments, the Moral Law being the rule for us to walk by—the Gospel precepts or exhortations found in the Epistles are but so many explanations of those commandments, applied to the varied relations and details of our lives. As “sin is the transgression of the law,” so righteousness is a conformity to it (1Jo 3:4-7). The fruits of righteousness, therefore, are those works which the Christian performs answerably to that which the Word of God warrants and requires—in other words, they are acts of *obedience* unto the Lord. “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13).

“Being *filled* with the fruits of righteousness” (Phi 1:11). This was the God-honouring standard of excellence which the apostle longed that the saints should attain unto. Here again we are struck with the vast difference between *his* large-heartedness and those whose supplications are so cramped in spirit and limited in scope. It is a false humility, which restricts our requests within narrow bounds. It is nothing but unbelief which limits the bounty of God to the bestowing of trifling favours. Nor is the plea of our unworthiness any valid reason to justify the poverty of our asking. No saint has ever presumed to approach God and seek blessings from Him on the basis of his own worthiness: the most spiritual and pious Christian who ever lived was heavily in debt to God, and therefore, could only supplicate for mercy on the ground of His infinite *grace*. Paul, then, was not content to see these Philippians bearing *some* fruit, but prayed that they might be “*filled* with the fruits of righteousness” and he based not that request on anything which they had to their credit, but rather did he eye the munificence of God and ask in accordance therewith. Let none of us ever rest satisfied with a small measure of grace.

The bringing forth the fruits of righteousness abundantly should be the deep and daily concern of every child of God, for His honour is never more promoted than when we are so engaged. Said the Lord Jesus, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; *so* shall ye be my disciples” (Joh 15:8)—in this manner, shall ye make evident the real and radical difference there is between you and hypocrites. The Father is not glorified by our lip service, but by the tenour and texture of our daily lives, by having all our steps and actions ordered by His Word. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16): those “good works” are the same thing as these “fruits of righteousness”; and we should be wholly taken up with the performing of the same. We believe that in His “*so* shine,” Christ gave warning of a danger: we need to beware of aiming at our *own* glory in such fruit-bearing. God has not given us the Spirit for the purpose of serving and magnifying ourselves. He who aims to gain a reputation for eminent piety before his fellows has yielded to the spirit of Phariseism. Divine grace is not bestowed upon the Christian to advance his honour, but to glorify its Giver.

Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) understood the “being filled with the fruits of righteousness” to have a threefold force. First, *the whole Christian* to be so engaged. “A tree is said to be filled with fruit when all its branches are down-laden with them, so as there is not a twig empty nor thin-set therewith. Now, as the

heart in man is the bulk and body of this tree, so every power of the soul, member of the body, is a branch, and is so to be understood in this allusion." Before conversion, were not all our inward faculties and external organs used in the service of unrighteousness?—if not designedly so, yet actually, for they were not employed in serving *God*. What were our affections set upon, what chiefly engaged our minds, how were our eyes and ears, lips, and hands occupied? As we formerly yielded our members to iniquity, "even so now yield your members servants to righteousness" (Rom 6:19)—*all* of them, so that ye may be *filled* with such fruits. The godly man is likened unto a flourishing tree in Psalm 1; and one of the fruits there mentioned is the budding of holy thoughts: "In his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa 1:2). He stores his mind with its precepts and promises, he studies how best he can please God, he devises good (Pro 14:22), and "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Pro 23:7).

Second, "A Christian is filled with fruit when good works *of all sorts* do grow there. 'Unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God' (Col 1:10): 'In all pleasing,' that is, all the ways whereby God is pleased, in all that is the will of God concerning us, to be done by us." If the believer is to be "filled with the fruits of righteousness," *every grace* must be active. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2Pe 1:5-7). Therein, the Christian differs from all other trees, for though a natural tree may be heavily laden, yet only with the fruit of one kind; whereas "the fruit of the Spirit is in *all* goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph 5:9). Said the apostle, "Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in *this* grace *also*" (2Co 8:7)—i.e. this of contributing to the needs of the poor of the flock, he would have them lacking in nothing. If we are to be filled with fruits, then we must have respect to *all* the Divine commandments (Psa 119:6), being remiss in no duty and failing in no practice of godliness, withholding nothing that is due unto the Lord.

Third, to be filled with the fruits of righteousness is to be filled with them *at all times*. "Our whole time is to be filled with some good work or other. Now there are these things our time is to be filled withal: our callings, recreations, holy duties; and we are to subordinate the one to the other; and then, we are holy in all. A man brings forth fruit in recreations, as well as in holy duties, if his *end be* to have spirits to perform holy duties with. Blossoms may wither and fall off, yet prepare for fruit. Now, it is impossible to give certain rules what time is to be allotted for each of these: the conditions, tempers, and constitutions do so vary. Poor men, that live by their daily labour, are necessitated to spend more time in their calling, than in recreations and duties. Men that are of weak and fiery spirits, and have callings that are exhausters of them, are as much necessitated to spend more time in recreations than in their callings or holy duties—though perhaps if such men had grace enough, even the most serious duties might be a recreation to them. But if a man proportions wisely and conscientiously his time according to his conditions, and puts holy ends in all, he will be found for the circumstance he stood in, the ground he was planted in, filled with the fruits of righteousness."

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by [Revised Version—"through"] Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:11). How jealous was the apostle for the glory of his Master, giving honour to whom honour was due! Though these fruits be borne by the saints—and without them, they would not be saints—yet they originate not from them, and therefore, they have no ground for boasting. "From me is thy fruit found" (Hos 14:8). He is the vitalizing Vine of which we are the branches. Yet our verse is very far from teaching that Christians are entirely passive in their fruit-bearing, or that they may excuse comparative fruitlessness by attributing the same unto the sovereignty of the Lord—that it was not His good pleasure they should be more productive. Such an idea is a wicked perversion of a blessed truth, and Christ Himself gave the lie to it when He declared, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear *much* fruit" (Joh 15:8), as His apostle also did in our text, when he prayed that the saints should be "filled" with the same. If we are not, the blame rests wholly upon ourselves, and it is a horrible and Satanic slander to attribute it to anything in God. Very different was the teaching of the Puritans from such Antinomianism.

In his most excellent exposition of the phrase, "Which are by Jesus Christ," T. Goodwin explained it to signify: First, they "are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10)—that is, they issue from our being made vitally one with Him (united to Him) at regeneration.

Second, “because they are such fruits as do arise from the Spirit of Jesus Christ, received from Him and dwelling in the heart.” Christ is the root; the new nature is the branch springing forth from Him; the Holy Spirit is the energizer and fructifier.

Third, “fruits of righteousness are by Jesus Christ because they are the fruits that follow upon a man’s apprehending (laying hold of) the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ for his righteousness...the great spring of holiness and obedience is faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus.”

But that well-balanced Puritan did not stop short there—as the hyper-Calvinists do—but went on to point out: “Fourth, fruits of righteousness are by Christ because they are so by *motives drawn from Him*,” amplifying the same by showing that when the dying love of Christ constrains us to obedience, when His grace teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; when we realise He redeemed us to be a peculiar people zealous of good works; when *these* are the motives whereby a man is acted, his holy actions are the fruits of righteousness.

Fifth, “fruits of righteousness are by Christ because they flow from *our union* with His person; and therefore, the apostle speaks of our growing up ‘into him in all things’ (Eph 4:15). The way to grow up in all things is to grow up in Him—into nearer union and communion with His person, and fellowship with Him; and growing up herein, a man grows more holy.”

Sixth, they are “the fruits of righteousness” when *the example* of Christ is before me *to move me to the like righteousness*. ‘He that saith he abideth in him [saith the apostle in 1 John 2:6] ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.’” He is to be our Model and Pattern in all things. It is to His holy image we are to be conformed, and just so far as we “follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21) do we bear the fruits of righteousness which are by Him.

Seventh, “My actions are fruits of righteousness when I look for all the *acceptance* of my fruits in Jesus Christ, or when I expect that they shall all be accepted of God in and through Jesus Christ, and not as they come from me. Thus our services are expressed to be ‘spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ’ (1Pe 2:5).” Our best performances are faulty, and are only pleasing unto God as they are presented in the name of Christ and perfumed with His merits.

Unto the above we would add, fruits of righteousness are by Jesus Christ as we *wear His yoke*. The key passage on fruit-bearing is John 15; and there, as all through Scripture, is a perfect blending of the Divine and human sides. If on the one hand, we learn that Christ is the true Vine, and His Father the Husbandman who purgeth every branch that it may bring forth more fruit; on the other hand, Christ there exhorts us to “*abide* in me, and I in you” (Joh 15:4) (which enforces your responsibility); and then adds, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (Joh 15:4). To “*abide*” in Christ is to be yoked to Him, to walk with Him, to commune with Him, to draw from Him; it is the opposite of wandering from Him to allow something to come between our heart and Himself. “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5). The marginal rendering is much to be preferred, sustaining as it does the figure used in the context: Christ was not there emphasising the impotency of the believer, but was enforcing the impossibility of his bearing fruit if *fellowship* with Himself was broken—stressing the imperative need of our “*abiding*” in our walking with Him.

“Unto the glory and praise of God” (Phi 1:11). This clause also qualifies the first one: only those are the “fruits of righteousness” which are produced with *this* specific aim and design. All our actions should be directed by the heart unto this grand end: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31). Neither the pleasing of self, nor the approbation of our fellows, must be our motive. No matter what we may be employed in, whether it be our daily callings or recreations, the honour and pleasing of God must be as definitely eyed as when we are exercised in holy duties. When speaking of the giving of alms—which is one fruit of righteousness—the apostle says, “If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1Pe 4:11). That was ever what regulated and marked our blessed Redeemer. He never sought honour for Himself, but constantly had the glory of His Father in view; and if we have received His Spirit and abide in Him, that will characterise us. When our hearts are imbued with God’s glory, when we aim at and refer all to the same, then are our works “unto the glory and praise of God,” and then are they “the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:11)!

We will reserve our remarks upon the being “without offence till the day of Christ” (Phi 1:10) until we come (D.V.) to 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 and 5:23-24, but will offer a few words on the “being filled with the fruits of righteousness” in reference to that Day. As stated in our second paragraph, “the day of Christ” was here mentioned by Paul, because our holiness bears a special relation to that season. As T. Goodwin pointed out: “It shall not be with a man as with other trees, that have long borne fruit and at the last have none appearing on them; but all the fruit that man hath borne successively in his whole life, he shall appear withal at the latter day. Wicked men shall appear with all their bad works, and godly men shall appear with all their good works; and therefore the end of the world is called a *harvest* (Mat 13:39) and a *reaping* (Gal 6:5-7), where the apostle alludeth to the day of judgment. ‘He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,’ but when the harvest is, he shall ‘come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves’ (Psa 126:6). Now that which the apostle prayed for in the behalf of these Philippians is that at that day, they might appear filled with all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ.” What an incentive to holiness to keep *that* before us! Those fruits will be to the honour of Christ, the glory of God; and we shall be richly rewarded.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

16. *The Jordan (3:2-3)*

“And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it” (Jos 3:2-3). For three days, the congregation of Israel had been encamped before that river which barred their entrance into the land of promise; thus being obliged to take full stock of that formidable barrier and made fully conscious of their own helplessness. The Jordan is the symbol of death; and it is not until the saint appropriates the solemn truth—or has learned from painful experience—that death is written upon all his natural powers that he is likely to make any real spiritual progress or enter practically into his fair heritage. *That* was the great lesson which had to be learned by the father of them that believe, before his longing could be realised and fruit borne. Because Sarah was barren, he thought to obtain the desired son by Hagar, only to bring trouble upon his household. Not until he truly recognised the natural impotency of himself and his wife did he count upon Him who quickeneth the dead: Romans 4:17-21.

Thus it was, too, with the chief of the apostles: “For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death [Act 19:22-41], and doth deliver [from those who then sought his life]: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2Co 1:8-10). It is God’s way with His people to so order His providences that they are “pressed out of measure, above strength” (2Co 1:8), until they are brought to despair of deliverance by their own efforts. Then it is they discover that death is stamped upon all their members and powers and are brought to acknowledge, “we have no might...neither know we what to do” (2Ch 20:12). Ah, but note they at once added, “but our eyes are *upon thee*”! It was for that very reason Paul and his companions had “the sentence of death” in themselves—that they “should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (2Co 1:9).

By nature, we are self-confident, and by practice, to a considerable extent self-reliant. But those qualities have no scope or place in the spiritual life, having to be completely renounced. Just as we must repudiate our own righteousness before the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, so we are required to disown our own wisdom and strength, ere the power of Christ works in us and for us. “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mar 8:34) is Christ’s own unchanging demand. To “deny himself” is for a man to abandon all trust in himself, to disclaim any capability of his own, to be emptied of self. In order thereto, God often brings him into situations where he discovers it is utterly vain to look to himself for relief. Until he has found out that all attempts to extricate himself are futile, he has not learned his utter helplessness; and until he does so, he will not really look outside himself unto the Lord. Israel then were made to feel their powerlessness during the three days they were encamped before the overflowing Jordan; and that, in order to prepare them to count upon the Almighty.

But let it also be duly observed that to “deny himself” is not only for a man to disown his own righteousness, wisdom, and strength, but also to renounce all self-will and self-pleasing. The *whole* of “self” is to be set aside, and “the cross” taken up—that is, the principle of self-sacrifice is to dominate and regulate him; and that, in order to “follow Christ.” The former are a negative means to an end: they are preparatives unto a life of obedience, or a practical owning of the Lordship of Christ. We turn to God “from idols”—the chief of which is *self*—that we should “serve the living and true God” (1Th 1:9)—i.e. that we should be subject to Him, and governed by Him. And that is the important truth set forth here. Israel were now commanded to turn their gaze away from the Jordan, and fix their eyes steadily on “the ark.” And of what or of whom does the ark speak? Of *Christ*, says the reader. True, yet such an answer is far too general to be of any elucidation. Of Christ in what relation?—Of His person, His work, or His official character? If of His office, which particular aspect thereof?

It should be evident to any attentive student that the spiritual interpretation of our passage—both doctrinally and practically—turns upon our answers to those questions. The ark is the central object in this miraculous event, being mentioned by name in chapters 3 and 4 no less than sixteen times, and alluded to as “it” five times, or a total of twenty-one times—or 7 x 3, which, in the language of Scripture numerics signifies a complete manifestation of God. What, then, was the ark; and for what purpose was it made? The

ark was a coffer or chest, made of shittim wood, overlaid both within and without with pure gold (Exo 25:10-11). It was to be a depository for the two tables of stone (Exo 25:16); and accordingly, when all its sacred furniture was made and the tabernacle was set up, we are told that Moses “took and put the testimony into the ark” (Exo 40:20), where it still abode in the days of Solomon (1Ki 8:9). It is most essential that this fact be carefully noted, if we are to perceive aright the spiritual meaning of this holy vessel: the ark was made *for the Law*—and not the Law for the ark—as is abundantly clear from Deuteronomy 10:1-5.

It was for the above-mentioned reason that the ark was called “the ark of the testimony” (Exo 26:33-34, etc.). The tables of stone on which the finger of God had written the Ten Commandments were termed the “tables of testimony” (Exo 31:18); and from their being deposited in it, the ark received its principal designation; and since the ark was the most important object in the tabernacle, it was called “the tabernacle of testimony” (Num 1:50, 53, etc.). The tables of stone were designated “the testimony”; the ark, “the ark of the testimony”; and the tabernacle, “the tabernacle of testimony,” because they one and all declared *what God is* and made known the terms on which He would hold fellowship with His people. The Law was a revelation of the righteousness of Jehovah, with its demands upon the faith, love, and obedience of His saints. It witnessed immediately to the Divine holiness, yet by necessary implication, to the sinfulness of Israel. The tabernacle was the place of God’s habitation where Israel was to meet with Him: not only to receive a knowledge of His will and hold fellowship with Him (Exo 25:21-22), but also having a prominent respect to their sins against which the Law was ever testifying, and to use the appointed means of their restoration to His favour and blessing.

It has not been sufficiently recognised by more recent writers that in that Tabernacle of Testimony, not only was witness plainly borne unto the ineffable holiness and majesty of the Lord, but also to His gracious condescension and abounding mercy. It testified to the wondrous provisions He had made whereby transgressors of the Law could receive pardon and the defiled be cleansed. In its outer court stood the brazen altar, where sacrifices of atonement were offered. There too was the laver of water for the washing of the hands and feet (Exo 30:18-20). Still more significant and blessed, the very ark which enshrined the Law was covered with the mercy-seat (Exo 25:21)! That mercy-seat formed Jehovah’s throne in Israel, for it was there between the cherubim seat that He “dwellest” (Psa 80:1, etc.), ruling over His people. Thus the ark and its lid, the mercy-seat, testified unto His being “a just God and a Saviour” (Isa 45:21): the Law, proclaiming His inexorable justice, the mercy-seat testifying to the provision of His grace for the transgressions of His people—a covering of mercy that they might draw near unto Him and live.

We turn now to take particular note of the fact that in Joshua 3:3, etc., the ark is called “the ark of *the covenant*,” the reference being to that compact into which Jehovah entered with Israel at Sinai and which they solemnly bound themselves to keep (Exo 19:1-6; 24:1-8). By the establishment of the Sinaitic Covenant, the relation between God and Israel was brought into a state of formal completeness. Under the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:7-8, etc.), the Lord had pledged Himself to faithfully bestow upon Abraham’s seed every needful blessing; and now that covenant of promise was supplemented by the covenant of Law, which bound that seed to render the dutiful return of obedience which their gracious God justly required from them. The foundation was thus outwardly laid for a near and lasting relationship, resulting in a blessed intercourse between the God of Abraham on the one hand, and the dutiful descendants of Abraham on the other. And it was primarily with the design of furthering and securing that end that the ratification of the covenant at Sinai was so immediately followed by instructions for the making and erection of the tabernacle.

The Ten Commandments were *the terms* of the covenant entered into at Sinai (Exo 34:28): “And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments” (Deu 4:13); and it was on the basis of their compliance therewith that God undertook to deal with Israel and make good His promises to Abraham. His readiness to show Himself strong in their behalf was at once evidenced: “And they departed from the mount of the LORD three days’ journey: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days’ journey, to search out a resting place for them” (Num 10:33). But alas, the very next thing recorded is “the people complained” and “it displeased the LORD” (Num 11:1); and His chastening hand fell heavily upon them. Then we learn of the opposition made against Moses by his own brother and sister, and the Lord’s smiting Miriam with leprosy (Num 12). That is at once followed by an account of the sending forth of the twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan, the mixed report which they made upon their return, the unbelief and rebellion of the people, with their repudiation of Moses as their leader and determination to return unto Egypt (Num 13; 14:1-5).

The evil conduct of Israel is summed up by the Psalmist in those solemn words, "They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law" (Psa 78:10). Their breaking of the covenant at once released the Lord from making good unto *that* perverse generation His declarations unto Abraham; and therefore, He told them, "But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness...After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise" (Num 14:32-34). They should know to their lasting misery what had produced that "breach of promise" (compare the "if" of Exodus 19:5!) and the protracted and woeful consequences thereof. The promises Jehovah made unto Abraham and unto Moses would not be fulfilled unto that particular generation because of their unbelief and disobedience; but unto their descendants, they should be made fully good. As Joshua himself testified at a later date, "the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hands. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Jos 21:44-45).

The forty years' wandering in the wilderness expired with the death of Moses, and all whose sins occasioned that punishment had also died. It was the new and younger generation over which Joshua was placed, and now a fresh chapter opened in the history of Israel. What has been pointed out above explains not only the prominent position occupied by the ark in the crossing of Jordan and in the subsequent events, but why it is there designated "the ark of the covenant." Israel's success—or rather, the Lord's showing Himself strong in their behalf—would turn upon *their keeping of* the covenant established at Sinai and their walking in implicit obedience unto God. Israel's crossing of the Jordan with their eyes fixed on the ark signified that they marched into Canaan *led by the Law!*

What has just been emphasized is of something more than mere historical importance: it is recorded for the instruction of God's people in *all* generations, and needs to be turned by them into earnest prayer for Divine enablement. It reveals to us the principal thing which the Holy One requires from us, if He is to undertake for us and make a way through whatever "Jordan" may confront us. It makes known the basic principle of God's governmental dealings with His people in every age: the exercise of His power on our behalf is regulated by our submission to Him. God cannot be the Patron of sin; and therefore, He will not show Himself strong in the behalf of rebellious subjects. As said before, we must deny self and take up our cross in order to "follow" Christ; and what *that* signifies is made clear to us here in Israel's "following" the ark of the covenant. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1Jo 2:6)—and *He* walked in perfect subjection to the Law of God!

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

13. Conclusion

In the course of our explanation of this doctrine, we have sought to take a comprehensive view of it as a whole, and then to examine in detail its essential components. Truth is a unit, one harmonious whole, but with our very limited powers of comprehension, we are incapable of receiving it as such: rather, do we take it in "here a little, and there a little" (Isa 28:10, 13). That is according as God has constituted us. When endeavouring to master a subject or problem which is presented to the mind, we are obliged to consider singly its several elements and branches. When partaking of material food, we do not attempt to swallow it whole, but first break it into fragments and then masticate them. It is thus with the spiritual aliment, which God has provided for the soul. Unless we carefully collate all that the Spirit has revealed on a subject, duly ponder each aspect, and view it in its true perspective, we shall obtain nothing more than a vague and faulty conception thereof.

Though Truth be a unit, it has two sides to it. It is thus in the communicating of it: it is a Divine revelation, yet it passed through the minds of holy men and is couched in their language. It is thus with its contents, as a whole and all its parts. There is both a Divine and a human side to it, issuing from God, addressed to men: revealing His heart and will, enforcing our responsibility. That necessarily presents a problem to the finite mind—the more so, since our mind is impaired by the ravages of sin. As man is constructed, he is unable to take in both sides of the Truth at a single glance, being obliged to view each separately. Unless he does so, a distorted vision will inevitably ensue, for while contemplating but one half, he will imagine that he is actually viewing the whole. Now those two sides of the Truth are not contradictory, but complementary. Since God be God, He must maintain His sovereign rights and enforce His authority; and since He has constituted man a moral agent, He deals with him accordingly—having absolute control over him, yet leaving him to act freely.

This twofoldness of truth is exhibited in every doctrine contained in Holy Writ, in every aspect of the Faith, in every branch of the Evangelical system; and it is in the maintaining of a due proportion and balance between them that the competency and helpfulness of any expositor chiefly appears, as it is also the hardest part of his task. Most conspicuously is this the case with the doctrine we have been treating of, for not only is reconciliation itself a mutual affair, but Scripture presents reconciliation as being both an accomplished thing and also as something now being effected—according as it is viewed from the standpoint of what Christ wrought at the cross, or from what is required of the sinner in order for him to personally enter into the good of what the Redeemer there procured. It is specially for the benefit of the young preacher—scores of which will read them—that these closing paragraphs are penned, for unless he be quite clear upon this distinction, his trumpet will give forth an uncertain sound.

When was God really reconciled to the Christian?—at the cross, or when he savingly believed the Gospel? That question was before us on pages 141 and 142 (June 1945), the bottom of 186 (August 1945) of last year's issues, and on page 42 of this (February 1946); yet we believe that some will welcome a further elucidation. On this subject, as so many, the Puritans are much to be preferred to the best writers of the nineteenth century. "God is never actually reconciled to us, nor we to Him, till He gives us the regenerating Spirit" (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677). "For the preparing us to be reconciled, it is necessary that we be convinced that we be enemies to God, and that He accounts us such, and that so long as we remain in that state, He is also an enemy to us" (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680). "There is a double reconciliation here (2Co 5:18-19). First, fundamental, at the death of Christ, whereby it was obtained. This is the ground of God's laying aside His anger. Second, actual or particular, when it is complied with by faith. This regards the application of it, when God does actually lay aside His enmity, and imputes sin no more to the person" (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

Elsewhere, S. Charnock says, "He acts toward the world as a reconciling God, towards believers as reconciled. He is reconcilable as long as He is inviting and keeps men alive in a state of probation." The Puritans drew a plain and broad line of demarcation between the impetration or purchase of salvation, and the actual or bestowing of the same. "By *impetration*, we mean the purchase of all good things made by Christ for us with and of the Father; and by *application*, the actual enjoyment of those good things upon our believing; as if a man paid a price for the redeeming of captives, the paying of a price supplieth the room of the impetration of which we speak, and the freeing of the captives is the application of it" (John Owen,

1616-1683). Christ merited and obtained the reconciliation of both sides, yet God has not reconciled to us—nor are we to Him—until we repent and believe. So it is in justification: Christ wrought out a perfect and everlasting righteousness for all His people, yet God does not impute that righteousness to any of them, until they savingly believe the Gospel.

While most of the best theologians of the last century recognised the necessary distinction between the impetration and the application of reconciliation, yet often they failed to frame their postulates consistently therewith. For instance, one of the most eminent of them—and for whose works, we have a high regard—stated: “On the ground of God’s reconciliation to us, we are exhorted to be reconciled to Him, and the great motive or encouragement is His previous reconciliation.” That such language was not simply a slip of the pen (to which all are liable) is clear from what follows in his next paragraph: “‘The chastisement of our peace,’ by which peace was procured, ‘was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed’ (Isa 53:5). God was reconciled when that was done, and made justice cease to demand our punishment.” It is because such teaching has been so widely received and has led to serious mischief in the evangelical ministry, that its erroneous character needs to be exposed.

To affirm that God is reconciled to sinners—or if you prefer it, to His elect—before they are reconciled to Him is an unintentional, but tacit, repudiation of John 3:36: “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Note it is not “the wrath of God shall come upon Him,” but it is on him now and remains so as long as he be an unbeliever. In these respects, there is no difference whatever between the elect and the non-elect: all are “by nature the children of wrath” (Eph 2:3), under the Covenant of Works, and therefore, under the curse and condemnation of the Law. The work of Christ has not changed the attitude of a holy God toward a single soul who continues in love with sin and a rebel against Him. “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa 7:11), and “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18). It is not until the sinner repents and savingly believes the Gospel that he passes from one state to another, and the frown of God is displaced by His smile (Joh 3:18; 5:24). Of the elect, it is said, “which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but *now* have obtained mercy” (1Pe 2:10).

Here is another declaration from a nineteenth century theologian of high repute, and to whose works we are personally indebted not a little: “God is reconciled: He is no longer angry with the sinner, for he is no longer a sinner in the eye of God and His justice.” Had he said, “The penitent and believing sinner,” that would be blessedly true; instead, he was discussing what Christ’s work had accomplished Godwards. In the same paragraph, he averred, “All the chosen people are redeemed,” which is another statement badly in need of qualification and explanation. Christ indeed “gave himself a ransom for all” (1Ti 2:6)—His people; and He did so “that [in order that!] he *might redeem* us from all iniquity” (Titus 2:14), but none then unborn were actually “redeemed.” The correct way to state it is this: Redemption was purchased for all the chosen people by Christ, and “in due time” (1Ti 2:6), they are made partakers of that redemption by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit. Believers alone are actually redeemed or emancipated, and it is of *them* such passages as Galatians 3:3; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18:19 speak.

It is only by attending closely to the exact wording of Scripture and refusing to go one iota beyond its statements that we are preserved from confusion and error. Christ was made sin for us “that we *might be* made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). It is not said that “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to all His people,” but “to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4). “Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty *might be* rich” (2Co 8:9). He was “made a curse for us...that the blessing of Abraham *might come* on the Gentiles” (Gal 3:13-14). Christ “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he *might bring* us to God” (1Pe 3:18). But we are not *actually* made rich or partakers of the blessing of Abraham, nor brought to God, until we repent and believe. As we must distinguish between the impetration and the application of the atonement, so also must we between the grace of God *decreeing*, and the *execution* of the decree of His grace. The “all spiritual blessings” of Ephesians 1:3 include regeneration, yet none are regenerate until effectually called by God.

“We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom 5:10) *imperatively*, for God has accepted Christ’s ransom; yet He does not apply it till faith be exercised by us. Reconciliation, redemption, and justification are alike the results of Christ’s satisfaction, the blessings which He purchased for His people; but they are only bestowed upon them when they are personally reconciled to God. “God the Father justifies, through the Son, by the Spirit, who works faith to receive the same. But until those things meet together, our persons are not properly justified, notwithstanding Christ hath wrought out a complete righteousness”

(William Bridge, 1600-1670), nor is God reconciled to us till the Spirit has wrought faith in our hearts. In the light of Romans 3:25-26, are we not fully warranted in saying that Christ is set forth a propitiation through faith in His blood that God might be holy, and yet the Reconciler of him who ceases to defy His authority and sues for mercy through the Lord Jesus.

Though the governmental requirements of God demand that the sinner end his revolt before He will be reconciled to him, that by no means implies any doubt of Christ's satisfaction securing its designed effects. The atonement has done very much more than remove legal obstacles which previously stood in the way of friendship between God and men, or opened the door for Him to bestow peace and pardon upon all who would accept them, as the Arminian speaks; it has absolutely *guaranteed* the salvation of all for whom it was made. So far from the word "might" in the passages quoted above denoting uncertainty, it is expressive of design and intimates the sure consequence that follows from Christ's sacrifice. As the *Westminster Confession of Faith* so well puts it: "To all those for whom Christ has purchased redemption, He does certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same," where the word "redemption" is used—as it often is in Scripture—as including all the blessings which it was the immediate object of Christ's death to procure [Chapter VIII, Section VIII.].

That there is a human side to the Evangelical system by no means introduces an element of uncertainty into it or jeopardises its success. "But he [God] is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth" (Job 23:13). The Arminian comes far short of the full truth when he says, "All was done on Christ's part which was necessary to *make possible* the reconciliation and pardon of sinners, and it is now left with them whether they will receive or reject the Gospel offer"; and that "since God has constituted man a moral agent, He requires his voluntary co-operation." Christ's sacrifice has *made certain* the reconciliation and redemption of all for whom it was offered, for it ensured that He would "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa 53:11). Christ's impetration secured an infallible provision for the effectual application—namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit, who, by His invincible operations, should regenerate each of Christ's "seed" and work saving repentance and faith in them. Though eternal life, repentance, and faith be the "gifts" of God, they are also the *fruits* of Christ's atonement, and are conferred upon all in whose room He suffered and died.

Instead of merely opening a door of salvation for the whole of Adam's posterity to enter if they feel disposed to, the atoning work of Christ has effectually secured the actual salvation of all the people of God, for by the wisdom of the Divine counsels and the power of the Spirit, they are brought to gladly concur with God's will, and put their trust in the blood of the Lamb. Nevertheless, God still enforces the righteous requirements of His government and treats with men according to their responsibility, sending forth His ambassadors to charge them with their wickedness, bidding them to be reconciled to God, and assuring them of His gracious acceptance upon their ceasing to fight against Him. Before the sinner can enjoy the benefits of Christ's death, he must consent to return to the duty of the Law and live in obedience to God, for He will not pardon him while he continues to live in rebellion against Him. The Gospel calls upon men to repent of their sins, forsake their idols, and enter into solemn covenant with God, yielding themselves up unreservedly to Him, to henceforth live unto His glory.

The work of the evangelist is clearly defined: the O.T. precedes the New, the ministry of John the Baptist went before that of Christ, the substance of Romans 1 to 3 is to be preached ere the truth of Romans 4 and 5 is proclaimed. His first duty is to preach the Moral Law, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20): its requirements, its strictness, its spirituality, and its curse, so that his hearers may be brought to realise their guilty and lost condition. Coupled with this preaching of the Law must be a presentation of the character of the Lawgiver and His claims upon the creatures of His hand: that He is sovereign Lord, demanding unqualified submission to His will; that He is ineffably holy, hating all sin and iniquity; that He is inflexibly just and "will by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:7), and will yet judge every man according to his works. Conviction of sin, by the application of the Law to the conscience, is the first step in the progress by which men are led to take hold of God's covenant. Peace with God, which the covenant established, will be sought and prized by none except those who are conscious of their guilt and dread the displeasure and vengeance of the Judge of all the earth.

The second duty of the evangelist is to preach the Gospel; and that, in such a manner that he neither contradicts, nor weakens what is pointed out in the preceding paragraph—though complementing it. He is to show that the principal design of God in sending His Son here was to magnify the Law, to manifest His detestation of sin, to exhibit His justice; all of which was solemnly seen at the cross. He is then to open the

wondrous *grace of God* in giving His Son to execute His mission and perform His work, not only for the glory of God, but the good of sinners. He is to show the amazing thing is that God takes the initiative; that in Christ, *He* makes the advances; that by Christ, provision is made for the healing of the breach; and that He sends forth His servants to make overtures of peace, bidding sinners, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20)—to be converted, to repent of their sins, abandon their wicked ways, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and walk according to His precepts.

It is the duty of the evangelist to show that though Christ is ready to be the Friend of sinners, yet He will not be the Minister of sin; but rather maintains the honour and interests of the Father at every point. His call is: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28)—that is, "Come unto Me all ye that have in vain sought satisfaction in gratifying self and partaking of the pleasures of sin, and are now weighed down with burdened consciences and a sense of the deserved wrath of God." "Take my yoke upon you...and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Mat 11:29)—that is, "Own My scepter, surrender to My lordship, walk in obedience to My commandments, and rest of soul shall be your portion." The One who made satisfaction to God tells us the benefits of it are received only through our believing (Joh 3:16), and *that* is an act which principally respects the *will*. To believe is to "re-ceive" Christ (Joh 1:12) as He is offered in the Gospel: to receive a whole Christ, to be our Prophet, Priest, and King.

The work of the pastor or teacher is to further instruct those who *have responded* to the message of the evangelist. He is to show that as God out of Christ was an offended and threatening God, God in Christ is an appeased and promising God. He is to make it clear that the reason why those who responded to the call and appeal of the evangelist was not because they were in themselves wiser or better than those who reject it, but that it was God who made them to differ (1Co 4:7). That God did so first, by choosing them in Christ before the foundation of the world; second, by giving them as sheep to the good Shepherd for Him to save; third, by causing the Holy Spirit to bring them from death unto life, illumine their understandings, convict them of their lost estate, and make them willing to receive Christ. Thus they have no cause for boasting, but every reason to ascribe *all* the glory unto the Triune God.

Should the young preacher say, I am not yet quite clear in my mind, especially does the doctrine of election puzzle me as to exactly how I should address the unsaved. Neither election nor particular redemption should in anywise cramp your style. Your commission is to preach the Gospel to "every creature" you can reach, and the Gospel is that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*" (1Ti 1:15); and therefore, you are warranted in telling your hearers that there is a Saviour for every sinner out of Hell who feels his need of Him and is willing to comply with His terms. Your first business is to show him his *need* of Christ and count upon the Spirit's making your efforts effectual, assured that God's Word shall not return unto Him void, whether or no you are permitted to see its fruits. But if you are granted the privilege of seeing some comply with Christ's terms, then you may know that they are members of that Church which Christ loved and gave Himself for, and that the Spirit has now vitally united them to Him.

The evangelist's message is that there is salvation in Christ for all who receive Him as He is offered in the Gospel and put their trust in Him. Though Christ purchased reconciliation and justification for all His people, yet they do not receive the same until they repent and believe. God is willing to be on terms of amity with the sinner, yet He will not be so until the sinner submit to those terms. Christ has perfectly made peace with God, so that no other ransom or sacrifice is required, yet none are admitted into it until they make their peace with God. God has appointed a *connection*—a moral and holy one—between the blessings purchased by Christ and the actual conveyance of them to His people. Though Christ died in order to procure Heaven for them by His merits, He also died to procure for them the regenerating operations of His Spirit to prepare them for Heaven. The test or evidence of our compliance with God's terms is a life of voluntary obedience: "As many as *walk* according to this rule, peace be on *them*, and mercy" (Gal 6:16)—"mercy" toward their defects.

HUMILITY

A humble man can come to no harm; he will be ever trusting in the Lord, because he finds nothing in himself to trust in, while he gives great glory to God by trusting much in Him. God gives him great grace, and this is to keep alive an abiding sense of what he is in himself: to show him his ignorance and helplessness, to open to him daily more of the mystery of iniquity, to discover to him the stirrings of corruption, which others feel not, and make him sensible of these, even in duties and ordinances, that he may loath himself and his very best works. These are the fruits of true grace, and he that is under the teachings of the Holy Spirit will abound in them. The more God does in the heart, the more He humbles it. The great design of His grace is to bring the proud sinner low, and then to *keep him low*.

When He hath brought us low, we do not like to be kept there, we want to get up again: our foolish desire is that He may do something in us for which we may have a good opinion of ourselves; and so with this thought, we are apt to wish, "O that I were more holy! O that I could pray better! O that I was more spiritual in duties! O that I was thankful enough!" If you could come to the true nature of these wishes (specious as they appear), you would find them spring from the secret workings of a proud, self-righteous spirit; take off their cloak of holiness, and their meaning is this: "I wish God would give me something for which I might be pleased with myself." If this was the case, would not the eyes be turned inward upon this very good self, and be drawn off from looking unto Jesus?—and so far as self is made something, Christ is made nothing. You may depend upon this as one of the surest axioms of divinity: Whatsoever it be that makes you pleased with yourself, that is not true grace; and whatsoever makes you displeased with yourself, is not true grace, unless it bring you humble to Christ and make you put more trust in Him.

The Lord teach you these things practically. I have learned them by long experience. Though I know but little, yet I am getting on in Christ's school, and hope soon to be in the lowest form, for there we learn most and fastest; we there depend entirely on the teaching of our Divine Master who reveals His secrets to none but babes. A new-born babe absolutely depends on the care of its parents, so must we depend on God, on Christ our Prophet and Teacher; and when we are brought thus humble, He will then make known to us what He hides from the wise and prudent. I would therefore wish you the humblest man upon earth: then, not only you may know most, but love most. He that feels his sins and miseries, his vileness and unprofitableness—with the deepest loathings of them—is in the fittest way to love Christ. If he is an experienced believer, the feelings of these sins and miseries will make Christ more precious; the more he finds of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the more will he trust in Christ's righteousness; and the more misery he knows, the more he desires salvation: all will make Jesus more dear and lovely. His own vileness sets forth Christ's grace; his unworthiness, the worthiness of the Lamb and the sufficiency of Jesus, who is *all in all*.

When you are going to measure Christ's high grace, do not get upon a mountain, but go down into a valley—lower still, to the belly of hell, from whence Jonah cried: From thence see the height of Jesus' grace, and from thence see how lovely He is. When the Spirit of Jesus is humbling you, showing you your deceitful wicked heart, and laying upon your ruined nature in all its abominable workings, has not this often discouraged you, my friend? And instead of loving Christ more, and trusting Him more, did it not weaken your trust, and lessen your love?—and therefore, you contracted the gracious purpose of Jesus Christ. May He teach you better!—that every future sense of sin may greatly endear the Lamb of God to you, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. —*From a letter by William Romaine (1714-1795).*

OUR SEMI-JUBILEE LETTER

Upon Israel's waging a successful battle against the Philistines, Samuel set up a stone to commemorate their victory and mark where it occurred, calling the name of it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us" (1Sa 7:12). The prophet's object was twofold: First, by his action, he erected a visible and permanent memorial of the overthrow of their enemy, for that stone was designed to keep that notable even before the mind of the Nation. Second, by his words, Samuel expressed his own deep gratitude and placed the honour where it rightfully belonged, acknowledging that things had fared very differently with Israel, had not Jehovah come to their aid. At an earlier date, the Lord had wrought gloriously for His people, "They soon forgot his works" (Psa 106:13). Such is the deplorable tendency with all of us. How often do we give him occasion to say, "Do ye not yet understand, *neither remember* the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?" (Mat 16:9)!

Upon the completion of twenty-five years' editing and publishing of this magazine, we feel that we cannot do less than gratefully raise our Ebenezer and thankfully own the Lord's abounding goodness and mercy unto us. As we review the difficulties surmounted, the amount of work accomplished, the thousands of pounds God has sent in answer to prayer, the tight corners out of which we were delivered, we can but exclaim, "This is *the LORD'S doing*; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psa 118:23). The limited space at our disposal does not permit us to give anything like a complete account of God's many gracious interpositions; we can but make a brief selection from the wondrous ways in which He has constantly undertaken for us. Nor is this an easy task, for it obliges us to make far more reference unto ourselves than we like to do. Our sole purpose therein is to magnify God's enabling grace, to testify unto His unchanging faithfulness, to demonstrate that only by His help could we have maintained this ministry; and this, in order that our Christian friends may be encouraged and their hearts drawn out to unite with us in praising Him who alone "doeth great things" (Job 5:9).

After twelve years in the pastorate, the Lord called us into Bible conference work, traveling almost all over the U.S.A., holding special meetings in many of its principal churches, preaching frequently to from one to two thousand people, and at times, lecturing before one hundred preachers. By 1921, seven of our books and numerous booklets had appeared in print, when our publisher urged us to start a monthly magazine. Having already written so much, that seemed no small order, but after spreading the matter before the Lord, and upon our publisher agreeing to look after the clerical side of the work, together we launched forth. That first year, the Lord gave us just over one thousand subscribers, and we closed with a small credit balance. Toward the close of the second year, our partner resigned at a time when we were much exercised over the virtual cessation of preaching engagements, for we were made to prove that "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Ecc 1:18)—our messages meeting with less acceptance by professing Christians.

Neither myself nor my wife had any experience of typing, and living in a village where no typist could be hired, it looked as though the magazine would have to close down; and, shame upon himself, the writer had no hope to the contrary, and was in complete despair. But in His grace and mercy, the Lord wrought faith and hope in his wife, and as the result of her noble efforts, we moved from that village to the city of Philadelphia. There, the Lord had moved a young couple—to whom we were almost strangers—to open their home to us until we could get suitably located, the wife typing our articles and giving Mrs. Pink a few pointers, until after a while, she was able to take over. It was a most signal interposition of the Lord on our behalf: such an evident token He would have us continue with this printed ministry that from then until now, the editor's faith has never wavered that God would supply all our need.

At the beginning of 1925, the Lord indicated that He would have the editor engage in oral ministry in Australia, though we were acquainted with only one person there, with whom we had exchanged but a couple of letters. To respond unto that leading of Providence presented a task of no small dimensions; yea, one utterly beyond our own unaided powers. But again, God helped us in a manifest manner, enabling us to get sufficiently ahead with our work so as to provide the American printer with enough manuscript for four issues, and our good friend in Philadelphia kindly undertook to address all envelopes and mail out the copies. Though almost wrecked on the voyage, the Lord landed us safely in Sydney, where we spent three and a half of our happiest and busiest years, preaching five and six times every week—often in great heat. To

write so many articles for the Studies at that time and attend to all the correspondence necessitated our working most nights until 2 A.M., but the Lord sustained us, and we suffered no ill effects.

When God made it clear that the work for which He took us to Australia was finished, the editor felt it his duty to visit his aged parents, whom he had not seen for thirteen years, hoping he might be permitted to settle in England. Only one who has carried the entire responsibility of editing and publishing a monthly magazine can appreciate what it involves to arrange for it to be printed without any hiatus and for each issue to arrive promptly in the hands of its readers during a move from one side of the world to the other—to say nothing of packing and transferring a huge library such a distance. Our stay in England lasted but a few months, for though the Baptists and the Presbyterians would have opened their pulpits had we joined their denomination and the “Brethren” given us a welcome were we prepared to restrict ourselves to their circle; yet, because we felt the Lord would have us remain outside the camp and be free to mingle with His people at large, every door was closed against us. At the time, it was a sore trial; but today, we are thankful to have been kept apart “from the strife of tongues” (Psa 31:20).

In the first half of 1929, the “pillar of cloud” moved toward the U.S.A.; and once more, the arduous task of packing, a long and difficult journey, and transferring of the publication of the Studies from one country to another was undertaken. Yet again, the Lord’s gracious help failed us not; rough places were made smooth, assistance was rendered from unexpected quarters, health and strength vouchsafed for the taxing undertaking, and the magazines all posted to the readers without any break or even delay. But other trials awaited us, for we found that those who had run well twelve years previously did so no longer; and instead of enjoying happy fellowship with them, we were a thorn in their sides. We were reminded anew that “here have we no continuing city” (Heb 13:14), first having to move all our effects a distance of over two thousand miles, and later, on a distance of nearly three thousand; yet those wanderings provided opportunities for us to sow the Seed in widely separated places.

Soon after our arrival in the U.S.A., there occurred one of the greatest financial collapses that ever struck that country, being followed by an acute and protracted industrial depression, which so seriously affected the nation that for some years, there were upwards of ten million workers out of employment and without any “dole.” During those years, our faith was put to the severest test it had encountered; we were firmly resolved to cease publishing rather than contract any debt, and so were kept on our faces before Jehovah-jireh (Gen 22:14), looking to Him for the needed funds. Nor did He fail us; though more than once after promptly paying our printer’s bill, we were left with only a few shillings in hand. 1930 was our most trying year: on the morning of Nov. 30th (the day our financial year closes), we lacked \$1:75 (7/-); and there was nothing in the post! There was an afternoon delivery, though it scarcely ever brought us anything; but that afternoon, there was one letter, and it had \$3 in it, so we closed with a credit balance of 5/-. Of course we did: God never confounds those who confidently rely upon Him!

In the autumn of 1934, we returned to Great Britain, where we were now virtually strangers—the editor having spent almost all of the previous twenty-five years in other lands, and his wife being a Kentuckian. We had not a single Christian relative or old friend in the British Isles. During the next two years, we moved twice—a distance of five hundred miles on each occasion—before we settled down in Hove, where we were privileged to continue our devotions and studies in peace, and permitted to publish the magazine without strain; yet not without those trials and exercises of heart which God sees are so necessary for our discipline. The world over spiritual conditions were deteriorating, and as the apostasy of Christendom developed, the number of those who really desired solid food for their souls steadily diminished; and though the Lord gave us messages for our articles month by month, and caused the donations to come in so freely that we were spared any financial anxiety, yet our mailing list continued to shrink, until it reached the place where it appeared that we should soon be no longer justified in publishing for such a handful.

Today, we regard it as far from being the least of those ways in which the Lord has helped us, that, all through these years, He has continued to prepare sufficient hearts to receive His messages via our pen—especially in view of the fact that the last decade has witnessed one of the worst declensions Christendom has suffered for centuries. As a private person, having no ecclesiastical connections, without any denomination or organization behind him—and during those years, cut off from any oral ministry (where we used to meet those who welcomed spiritual literature)—we have had to look entirely to the Lord and beg Him to bring us into touch with hungry souls, and move our readers to introduce the Studies to the notice of their Christian associates. A few kind friends co-operated; others sought to, but were unsuccessful;

the majority appeared indifferent. Each year, a number were called Home, and others dropped out because displeased by our teaching; yet new ones were provided to replace them.

During 1940, we were tried in a different manner. Residing in Hove (which adjoins Brighton), part of "The Battle of Britain" was fought right over our heads, for we were only ten minutes air distance from France, where the German squadrons were assembled, and from which it was expected our coast would be invaded by their army. We lay in the direct route of the enemy bombers as they came to and from London, passing over us nightly: the warning siren was sounded at 9 or 10 p.m., and the "all clear" not until 4 to 6 a.m. An occasional one unloaded his devilish freight on Hove. At that time, there was no "shelter" within reach, and Hove had no anti-aircraft guns. The house in which we resided was a jerry-built one, incapable of resisting blast or incendiaries. On July 1st, our bedroom was machine-gunned from the air, so from July 2nd to Sept. 20th, both of us spent every night lying fully dressed on the hall-floor downstairs. Yet the whole of the second half of Vol. 19 was composed and typed out during those months, and a heavy correspondence attended to! Did not *the Lord* "help" us!

But it seems to the writer the most remarkable way in which the Lord has helped us has been in supplying the necessary Seed for the sower. Scores of the first subscribers are still on our list, and at least one hundred have received 20 out of the 25 volumes: it is therefore no small order to continue writing four or five articles each month, year after year, for the *same* readers. During this quarter of a century, almost 7,000 pages have come from our pen, comprising no less than 1,700 articles of varying lengths, averaging four pages each. Among them have been the following: on John's Gospel, 72 articles; on Exodus, 72; on Hebrews, 127; the Sermon on the Mount, 65; the Life of David, 96; of Elijah, 36, of Elisha, 30. Doctrinal articles have been on: The Atonement, 24; Justification, 10; Sanctification, 34; Election, 24; Impotency of Man, 24; Perseverance of Saints, 26; Reconciliation, 36; The Divine Covenants, 50; The Antichrist, 22; Union and Communion, 25; Dispensationalism, 18; The Law, 21; The Sabbath, 19; Faith, 18; Assurance, 14; Profiting from the Word, 10.

On the Attributes of God, we wrote 24 articles; on the Glories of Christ, 41; on The Person and Work of the Spirit, 65; on The Heart, 10; Spiritual Growth, 30; Prayer, 20; and The Prayers of the Apostles, (to date) 36. That is only a list of series, though bare figures cannot convey any idea of the immense amount of work involved in preparing, nor my dear wife's in typing them out amid her domestic duties. Many scores of others were written and typed: some on long train-journeys, others while crossing oceans. During those years, the editor was permitted to write by hand well over 20,000 letters. Now, dear reader, have we not abundant cause to raise our Ebenezer and joyfully acknowledge, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us" (1Sa 7:12)! And will not all Christian friends give thanks unto Him for His goodness—especially that by His sustaining power, not a single article was ever delayed by sickness, nor a bill left unpaid twenty-four hours. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

The future is in the hand of Him whose we are and whom we serve. We know not what a day may bring forth, nor do we desire to. If the God of all grace has ordained this little monthly messenger shall be continued a season—be it long or short—neither man nor devil can prevent its publication, until His purpose is fulfilled. If He deigns to make further use of our unworthy pen in seeking to expose empty professors, encourage seeking sinners, comfort mourners, strengthen feeble knees, stir unto a closer and more obedient walk with God, and endeavour to lead some of His people into a better-balanced apprehension of His Truth: then—providing we earnestly seek fresh supplies of grace and Christian friends continue to hold up our hands by prayer—without a shadow of doubt, the requisite strength and wisdom will be vouchsafed us, needed funds sent in, sufficient readers supplied, and our Printer moved to continue printing for us.

We are very sorry that several of this year's issues were so late, and that the September and October ones were unusually delayed; and we thank our friends for being so patient in refraining from writing to inquire the reason why their copies had not arrived. Our Printers wrote us on October 18th: "We have not been able to obtain the necessary paper as heretofore. License and order for the paper have now been in for almost four months, but conditions are very bad; in fact, they are worse than in 1940." May we make two comments upon this: First, possibly the Lord has permitted the delays to bring home to our friends in the U.S.A. just *how bad* conditions are in Great Britain. Second, to make clear the need of definite and *united prayer* that God will provide our Printers with everything needful for the "Studies."

May we also point out that in these days when so many "workers" have become *shirkers*, our Printers (like many other business firms) are heavily handicapped by absenteeism. Moreover, they are printing this

magazine as *a favour to us*, as an old and privileged customer—and not for any profit they make from the work, for the job is too small, and the special price they make is too low (though we now pay them double the amount we did in 1910) to allow them scarcely any margin. Hence, there are times when our little monthly may justly be shelved for a week or two while they work on a more important order. In the past, those who had sent us a donation for the year were warranted to expect their copies to arrive promptly. But conditions have sadly deteriorated, and the reader should no longer complacently assume his copies *will* arrive in due course. He needs to pray for God to make it possible for each issue to be printed!

Nor do we expect things to improve, or conditions become easier: rather, the reverse. But if in the course of the year, the reader receives all twelve issues—even though at *irregular* intervals—he should be grateful. Many are praying for the editor and for God’s blessing on this work, for which we are deeply thankful. Now the time has come for them to also supplicate God that He will continue giving our Printers a heart to do this work and supply them with labour and paper. Delay will not be our fault. The whole of the first six copies for 1947 are now ready for the Printers, and the January and February issues are already in their hands. But let not even English readers expect to receive them earlier than late February. The 1946 bound volume will be available *D.V.* for 7/6 (\$1.75) post paid, though probably not much before March 1st.

If it be the good pleasure of our God that this printed ministry go on a while longer—as some hundreds of our readers ardently desire and as we certainly hope it may—then doubtless further trials and testings await us. But if we seek grace to endure, and the Lord deigns to sanctify them unto us, we shall be the gainers, and not the losers. He changes not, and His faithfulness and goodness to us in the past is a sure earnest of His continued lovingkindness. The more difficult things are for any of us, the better opportunity do they afford to prove the sufficiency of our God. O that to the mercies of the past quarter of a century this favour too may be granted: that if permitted to publish, at the close of each remaining year, we may be able to raise a fresh Ebenezer. And when the hour of departure from this scene arrives, may we be found still leaning on the everlasting arms as we are conducted to that Place where we shall behold the King in His beauty and exclaim, “Worthy is the Lamb” (Rev 5:12).

—*With hearty Christian greeting, yours by Divine Mercy, A. W. and V. E. Pink.*

