

Monergism



THE DOCTRINE OF
SALVATION

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by A. W. Pink

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Regeneration, or the New Birth

Introduction

"The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

Two chief obstacles lie in the way of the salvation of any of Adam's fallen descendants: bondage to the guilt and penalty of sin, bondage

to the power and presence of sin; or, in other words, their being bound for Hell and their being unfit for Heaven. These obstacles are, so far as man is concerned, entirely insurmountable. This fact was unequivocally established by Christ, when, in answer to His disciples' question, "Who then can be saved?", He answered, "with men this is impossible." A lost sinner might more easily create a world than save his own soul. "But" (forever be His name praised), the Lord Jesus went on to say, "with God all things are possible" (Mat 19:25-26). Yes, problems which completely baffle human wisdom, are solvable by Omniscience; tasks which defy the utmost efforts of man, are easily accomplished by Omnipotence. Nowhere is this fact more strikingly exemplified than in God's saving of the sinner.

Introduction As intimated above, two things are absolutely essential in order to salvation: deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin, deliverance from the power and presence of sin. The one is secured by the mediatorial work of Christ, the other is accomplished by the effectual operations of the Holy Spirit. The one is the blessed result of what the Lord Jesus did for God's people; the other is the glorious consequence of what the Holy Spirit does in God's people. The one takes place when, having been brought to lie in the dust as an empty-handed beggar, faith is enabled to lay hold of Christ, God now justifies from all things, and the trembling, penitent, but believing sinner receives a free and full pardon. The other takes place gradually, in distinct stages, under the Divine blessings of regeneration, sanctification, and glorification.

In regeneration, indwelling sin receives its death-wound, though not its death. In sanctification, the regenerated soul is shown the sink of corruption that dwells within, and is taught to loathe and hate himself. At glorification both soul and body will be forever delivered from every vestige and effect of sin. Now a vital and saving knowledge of these Divine truths cannot be acquired by a mere study of them. No amount of pouring over the Scriptures, no painstaking examination of the soundest doctrinal treatises, no exercise of the intellect, is able to secure the slightest spiritual insight into them.

True, the diligent seeker may attain a natural knowledge, an intellectual apprehension of them, just as one born blind may obtain a notional knowledge of the colorings of the flowers or of the beauties of a sunset; but the natural man can no more arrive at a spiritual knowledge of spiritual things, than a blind man can a true knowledge of natural things, yes, than a man in his grave can know what is going on in the world he has left. Nor can anything short of Divine power bring the proud heart to a felt realization of this humbling fact; only as God supernaturally enlightens, is any soul made conscious of the awful spiritual darkness in which it naturally dwells. The truth of what has just been said is established by the plain and solemn declaration of 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Alas that so many evade the sharp point of this verse by imagining that it applies not to them, mistaking an intellectual assent to spiritual things for an experimental acquaintance of them.

An external knowledge of Divine truth, as revealed in Scripture, may charm the mind and form ground for speculation and conversation, but unless there is a Divine application of them to the conscience and heart, such knowledge will be of no more avail in the hour of death than the pleasing images of our dreams are of any satisfaction when we awake. How awful to think that multitudes of professing Christians will awaken in Hell to discover that their knowledge of Divine truth was no more substantial than a dream! While it be true that no man by searching can find out God (Job 11:7), and that the mysteries of His kingdom are sealed secrets until He deigns to reveal them to the soul (Mat 13:11), nevertheless, it is also true that God is pleased to use means in the conveyance of heavenly light to our sin-darkened understandings. It is for this reason that He commissions His servants to preach the Word, and, by voice and pen, expound the Scriptures; nevertheless, their labors will produce no eternal fruits unless He condescends to bless the seed they sow and give it an increase. Thus, no matter how faithfully, simply, helpfully a sermon

be preached or an article written, unless the Spirit applies it to the heart, the hearer or reader is no spiritual gainer.

Then will you not humbly entreat God to open your heart to receive whatever is according to His holy Word in this small booklet? In what follows, we shall, as God enables, seek to direct attention to what we have referred to at the beginning of this booklet as the second of those two humanly insurmountable obstacles which lie in the way of a sinner's salvation, and that is, the fitting of him for Heaven, by the delivering of him from the power and presence of sin. Such a work is a Divine one, and therefore it is miraculous. Regeneration is no mere outward reformation, no mere turning over a new leaf and endeavoring to live a better life. The new birth is very much more than going forward and taking the preacher's hand. It is a supernatural operation of God upon man's spirit, a transcendent wonder. All of God's works are wonderful. The world in which we live is filled with things which amaze us. Physical birth is a marvel, but, from several standpoints, the new birth is more remarkable. It is a marvel of Divine grace, Divine wisdom, Divine power, and Divine beauty. It is a miracle performed upon and within ourselves, of which we may be personally cognizant; it will prove an eternal marvel.

Because regeneration is the work of God, it is a mysterious thing. All God's works are shrouded in impenetrable mystery. Life, natural life, in its origin, in its nature, its processes, baffles the most careful investigator. Much more is this the case with spiritual life. The Existence and Being of God transcends the finite grasp; how then can we expect to understand the process by which we become His children? Our Lord Himself declared that the new birth is a thing of mystery: "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The wind is something about which the most learned scientist knows next to nothing. Its nature, the laws which govern it, the causation, all lie beyond the purview of human inquiry. So it is with the new birth: it

is profoundly mysterious. Regeneration is an intensely solemn thing. The new birth is the dividing line between Heaven and Hell. In God's sight there are but two classes of people on this earth: those who are dead in sins, and those who are walking in newness of life. In the physical realm there is no such thing as being between life and death. A man is either dead or alive. The vital spark may be very dim, but while it exists, life is present. Let that spark go out altogether, and though you may dress the body in beautiful clothes, nevertheless, it is nothing more than a corpse. So it is in the spiritual realm. We are either saints or sinners, spiritually alive or spiritually dead, children of God or children of the Devil. In view of this solemn fact, how momentous is the question, Have I been born again? If not, and you die in your present state, you will wish you had never been born at all.

1. Its Necessity

1. Natural degeneration The need for regeneration lies in our natural degeneration. In consequence of the fall of our first parents, all of us were born alienated from the Divine life and holiness, despoiled of all those perfections with which man's nature was at first endowed. Ezekiel 16:4-5 gives a graphic picture of the terrible spiritual plight at our entrance into this world: cast out to the loathing of our persons, rolling ourselves in our own filth, impotent to help ourselves. That "likeness" of God (Gen 1:26) which was at first stamped on man's soul, has been effaced, aversion from God and an inordinate love of the creature having displaced it. The very fountain of our beings is polluted, continually sending forth bitter springs, and though those streams take several courses and wander in various channels, yet are they all brackish. Therefore the "sacrifice" of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD (Pro 15:8), and his very plowing "sin" (Pro 21:4). There are but two states, and all men are included therein: the one a state of spiritual life, the other a state of spiritual death; the one a state of righteousness, the other a state of sin; the one saving, the other damning; the one a state of enmity, wherein men have their inclinations contrary to God, the other a state of friendship and

fellowship, wherein men walk obediently unto God, and would not willingly have an inward notion opposed to His will. The one state is called darkness, the other light: "For you were [in your unregenerate days, not only in the dark, but] sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8). There is no medium between these conditions: all are in one of them. Each man and woman now on earth is either an object of God's delight or of His abomination.

The most benevolent and imposing works of the flesh cannot please Him, but the faintest sparks proceeding from that which grace has kindled are acceptable in His sight. By the fall man contracted an unfitness to that which is good. Shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), man is a "transgressor from the womb" (Isa 48:8): "they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Psalm 58:3), and "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen 8:21). He may be civilized, educated, refined, and even religious, but at heart he is "desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9), and all that he does is vile in the sight of God, for nothing is done from love to Him, and with a view to His glory. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Mat 7:18). Until they are born again, all men are "unto every good work reprobate" (Ti 1:16). By the fall man contracted an unwillingness to that which is good. All motions of the will in its fallen estate; through defect of a right principle from whence they flow and a right end to which they tend, are only evil and sinful. Leave man to himself, remove from him all the restraints which law and order impose, and he will swiftly degenerate to a lower level than the beasts, as almost any missionary will testify. And is human nature any better in civilized lands? Not a whit. Wash off the artificial veneer and it will be found that "as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man" (Pro 27:19).

The world over, it remains solemnly true that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7). Christ will prefer the same charge in a coming day as when He was here on earth: "Men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). Men will not come to Him that they

might have "life." By the fall man contracted an inability to that which is good. He is not only unfitted and unwilling, but unable to do that which is good. Where is the man that can truthfully say he has measured up to his own ideals? All have to acknowledge there is a strange force within dragging them downward, inclining them to evil, which, notwithstanding their utmost endeavors against it, in some form or other, more or less, conquers them. Despite the kindly exhortations of friends, the faithful warnings of God's servants, the solemn examples of suffering and sorrow, disease and death on every side, and the vote of their own conscience, yet they yield. "They that are in the flesh [in their natural condition] cannot please God" (Rom 8:8). Thus it is evident that the need is imperative for a radical and revolutionary change to be wrought in fallen man before he can have any fellowship with the thrice holy God. Since the earth must be completely changed, because of the curse now resting on it, before it can ever again bring forth fruit as it did when man was in a state of innocence; so must man, since a general defilement from Adam has seized upon him, be renewed, before he can "bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom 7:4). He must be grafted upon another stock, united to Christ, partake of the power of His resurrection: without this he may bring forth fruit, but not "unto God." How can any one turn to God without a principle of spiritual motion? How can he live to God who has no spiritual life? How can he be fit for the kingdom of God who is of a brutish and diabolical nature? 2. Total depravity The need for regeneration lies in man's total depravity. Every member of Adam's race is a fallen creature, and every part of his complex being has been corrupted by sin. Man's heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9).

His mind is blinded by Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4) and darkened by sin (Eph 4:18), so that his thoughts are only evil continually (Gen 6:5). His affections are prostituted, so that he loves what God hates, and hates what God loves. His will is enslaved from good (Rom 6:20) and opposed to God (Rom 8:7). He is without righteousness (Rom 3:10), under the curse of the law (Gal 3:10) and is the captive of the Devil. His condition is truly deplorable, and his case desperate. He

cannot better himself, for he is "without strength" (Rom 5:6). He cannot work out his salvation, for there dwells no good thing in him (Rom 7:18). He needs, then, to be born of God, "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal 6:15). Man is a fallen creature. It is not that a few leaves have faded, but that the entire tree has become rotten, root and branch. There is in every one that which is radically wrong. The word "radical" comes from a Latin one which means "the root," so that when we say a man is radically wrong, we mean that there is in him, in the very foundation and fiber of his being, that which is intrinsically corrupt and essentially evil. Sins are merely the fruit, there must of necessity be a root from which they spring. It follows, then, as an inevitable consequence that man needs the aid of a Higher Power to effect a radical change in him. There is only One who can effect that change: God created man, and God alone can re-create him. Hence the imperative demand, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). Man is spiritually dead and naught but almighty power can make him alive. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men" (Rom 5:12).

In the day that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he died spiritually, and a person who is spiritually dead cannot beget a child who possesses spiritual life. Therefore, all by natural descent enter this world "alienated from the life of God" (Eph 4:18), "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). This is no mere figure of speech, but a solemn fact. Every child is born entirely destitute of a single spark of spiritual life, and therefore if ever it is to enter the kingdom of God, which is the realm of spiritual life (Rom 14:17), it must be born into it. The more clearly we are enabled to discern the imperative need of regeneration and the various reasons why it is absolutely essential in order to a fallen creature being fitted for the presence of the thrice holy God, the less difficulty are we likely to encounter when we endeavor to arrive at an understanding of the nature of regeneration, what it is which takes place within a person when the Holy Spirit renews him. For this reason particularly, and also because such a cloud of error has been cast upon this vital truth, we feel that a

further consideration of this particular aspect of our subject is needed. Jesus Christ came into this world to glorify God and to glorify Himself by redeeming a people unto Himself. But what glory can we conceive that God has, and what glory would accrue to Christ, if there be not a vital and fundamental difference between His people and the world? And what difference can there be between those two companies but in a change of heart, out of which are the issues of life (Pro 4:23): a change of nature or disposition, as the fountain from which all other differences must proceed—sheep and goats differ in nature. The whole mediatorial work of Christ has this one end in view.

His priestly office is to reconcile and bring His people unto God; His prophetic, to teach them the way; His kingly, to work in them those qualifications and bestow upon them that loveliness which is necessary to fit them for the holy converse and communion with the thrice holy God. Thus does He "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Ti 2:14). "Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived" (1 Corinthians 6:9). But multitudes are deceived, and deceived at this very point, and on this most momentous matter. God has warned men that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9), but few will believe that this is true of them. Instead, tens of thousands of professing Christians are filled with a vain and presumptuous confidence that all is well with them. They delude themselves with hopes of mercy while continuing to live in a course of self-will and self-pleasing. They fancy they are fitted for Heaven, while every day that passes finds them the more prepared for Hell. It is written of the Lord Jesus that "he shall save his people from their sins" (Mat 1:21), and not in their sins: save them not only from the penalty, but also from the power and pollution of sin. To how many in Christendom do these solemn words apply, "For he flatters himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful" (Psalm 36:2).

The principle device of Satan is to deceive people into imagining that they can successfully combine the world with God, allow the flesh while pretending to the Spirit, and thus "make the best of both worlds." But Christ has emphatically declared that "no man can serve two masters" (Mat 6:24). Many mistake the force of those searching words: the true emphasis is not upon "two," but upon "serve"—none can serve two masters. And God requires to be "served"—feared, submitted unto, obeyed; His will regulating the life in all its details, see 1 Samuel 12:24-25. "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve" (Mat 4:10). 3. Man's unsuitedness to God

The need for regeneration lies in man's unsuitedness to God. When Nicodemus, a respectable and religious Pharisee, yes, a "master in Israel," came to Christ, He told him plainly that "except a man be born again" he could neither see nor enter the "kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5)—either the Gospel-state on earth or the Glory-state in Heaven. None can enter the spiritual realm unless he has a spiritual nature, which alone gives him an appetite for and capacity to enjoy the things pertaining to it; and this, the natural man has not. So far from it, he cannot so much as "discern" them (1 Corinthians 2:14). He has no love for them, nor desire after them (John 3:19). Nor can he desire them for his will is enslaved by the lusts of the flesh (Eph 2:2-3). Therefore, before a man can enter the spiritual kingdom, his understanding must be supernaturally enlightened, his heart renewed, and his will emancipated. There can be no point of contact between God and His Christ with a sinful man until he is regenerated. There can be no lawful union between two parties who have nothing vital in common. A superior and an inferior nature may be united together, but never contrary natures.

Can fire and water be united, a beast and a man, a good angel and vile devil? Can Heaven and Hell ever meet on friendly terms? In all friendship there must be a similarity of disposition; before there can be communion there must be some agreement or oneness. Beasts and men agree not in a life of reason, and therefore cannot converse together. God and men agree not in a life of holiness, and therefore can have no communion together (Condensed from Stephen

Charnock, 1628-1680). We are united to the "first Adam" by a likeness of nature; how then can we be united to the "last Adam" without a likeness to Him from a new nature or principle? We were united to the first Adam by a living soul, we must be united to the last Adam by a quickening Spirit. We have nothing to do with the heavenly Adam without bearing an heavenly image (1 Corinthians 15:48-49). If we are His members, we must have the same nature which was communicated to Him, the Head, by the Spirit of God, which is holiness (Luke 1:35). There must be one "spirit" in both: thus it is written, "he who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). And again God tells us, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom 8:9).

Nor can anything be vitally united to another without life. A living head and a dead body is inconceivable. There can be no communion with God without a renewed soul. God is unable on His part, with honor to His law and holiness, to have fellowship with such a creature as fallen man. Man is incapable on his part, because of the aversion rooted in his fallen nature. Then how is it possible for God and man to be brought together without the latter experiencing a thorough change of nature? What communion can there be between Light and darkness, between the living God and a dead heart? "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). God loathes sin, man loves it; God loves holiness, man loathes it. How then could such contrary affections meet together in an amicable friendship? Sin has alienated from the life of God (Eph 4:18), and therefore from His fellowship; life, then, must be restored to us before we can be instated in communion with Him. Old things must pass away, and all things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Gospel-duties cannot be performed without regeneration. The first requirement of Christ from His followers is that they shall deny self. But that is impossible to fallen human nature, for men are "lovers of their own selves" (2 Timothy 3:2). Not until the soul is renewed, will self be repudiated. Therefore is the new-covenant promise, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19). All Gospel duties require a pliability and tenderness of heart. Pride

was the condemnation of the Devil (1 Timothy 3:6), and our first parents fell through swelling designs to be like unto God (Gen 3:5). Ever since then, man has been too aspiring and too well opinionated of himself to perform duties in an evangelical strain, with that nothingness in himself which the Gospel requires. The chief design of the Gospel is to beat down all glorying in ourselves, that we should glory only in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:29-31); but this is not possible until grace renews the heart, melts it before God, and molds it to His requirements. Without a new nature we cannot perform Gospel-duties constantly.

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (Rom 8:5). Such a mind cannot long be employed upon spiritual things. Prickings of conscience, terrors of Hell, fears of death, may exert a temporary influence, but they do not last. Stony-ground may bring forth blades, yet for lack of root they quickly wither away (Mat 13:20). A stone may be flung high into the air, but ultimately it falls back to the earth; so the natural man may for a time mount high in religious fervor, but sooner or later it shall be said of him, as it was of Israel, "their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant" (Psalm 78:37). Many seem to begin in the Spirit, but end in the flesh. Only where God has wrought in the soul, will the work last forever (Ecc 3:14; Phi 1:6). As regeneration is indispensably necessary to a Gospel-state, so it is to a state of heavenly glory. It seems to be typified by the strength and freshness of the Israelites when they entered into Canaan. Not a decrepit and infirm person set foot in the promised land: none of those that came out of Egypt with an Egyptian nature, and desires for the garlic and onions thereof, with a suffering to their old bondage, but dropped their carcasses in the wilderness; only the two spies who had encouraged them against the seeming difficulties. None that retain only the old man, born in the house of bondage; but only a new regenerate creature, shall enter into the heavenly Canaan. Heaven is the inheritance of the sanctified, not of the filthy: "that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Act 26:18). Upon Adam's

expulsion from paradise, a flaming sword was set to stop his reentering into that place of happiness. As Adam, in his forlorn state, could not possess it, we also, by what we have received from Adam, cannot expect a greater privilege than our root. The priest under the law could not enter into the sanctuary until he was purified, nor the people into the congregation: neither can any man have access into the Holiest until he be sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, Hebrews 10:22 (S. Charnock). Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Said Christ, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

For whom? For those who have, in heart, "forsaken all" to follow Him (Mat 19:27). For those who love God (1 Corinthians 2:9), love the things of God: they perceive the inestimable value and beauty of spiritual things. And they who really love spiritual things, deem no sacrifice too great to win them (Phi 3:8). But in order to love spiritual things, the man himself must be made spiritual. The natural man may hear about them and have a correct idea of the doctrine of them, but he receives them not spiritually in the love of them (2 Thessalonians 2:10), and finds not his joy and happiness in them. But the renewed soul longs after them, not by constraint, but because God has won his heart. His confession is, "Whom have I in Heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you" (Psalm 73:25). God has become his chief good, His will his only rule, His glory his chief end. In such an one, the very inclinations of the soul have been changed. The man himself must be changed before he is prepared for Heaven. Of the regenerate it is written, "giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12). None are "made meet" while they are unholy, for it is the inheritance of the saints; none are fitted for it while they are under the power of darkness, for it is an inheritance in light. Christ Himself ascended not to Heaven to take possession of His glory until after His resurrection from the dead, nor can we enter Heaven unless we have been resurrected from sin. "He who has wrought [polished] us for the selfsame thing [to be clothed with our Heavenly house] is God," and the proof that He has done this is, the giving unto us "the earnest of the Spirit" (2

Corinthians 5:5); and where the Spirit of the Lord is, "there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17), liberty from the power of indwelling sin, as the verse which follows clearly shows. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Mat 5:8).

To "see" God is to be introduced into the most intimate fellowship with Him. It is to have that "thick cloud" of our transgressions blotted out (Isa 44:22), for it was our iniquities which separated between us and our God (Isa 59:2). To "see" God, here has the force of enjoy, as in John 3:36. But for this enjoyment a "pure heart" is indispensable. Now the heart is purified by faith (Act 15:9), for faith has to do with God. Thus, a "pure heart" is one that has its affections set upon things above, being attracted by "the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 96:9). But how could he enjoy God who cannot now endure the imperfect holiness of His children, but rails against it as unnecessary "strictness" or puritanic fanaticism? God's face is only to be beheld in righteousness. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). None can dwell with God and be eternally happy in His presence unless a radical change has been wrought in him, a change from sin to holiness. This change must be, like that introduced by the fall, one which reaches to the very roots of our beings, affecting the entire man — removing the darkness of our minds, awakening and then pacifying the conscience, spiritualizing our affections, converting the will, reforming our whole life. And this great change must take place here on earth. The removal of the soul to Heaven is no substitute for regeneration. It is not the place which conveys likeness to God. When the angels fell, they were in Heaven, but the glory of God's dwelling place did not restore them. Satan entered Heaven (Job 2:1), but he left it still unchanged. There must be a likeness to God wrought in the soul by the Spirit before it is fitted to enjoy Heaven. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). If the body must be changed before it can enter Heaven, how much more so the soul, for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles" (Rev 21:27).

And what is the supreme glory of Heaven? Is it freedom from toil and worry, sickness and sorrow, suffering and death? No. Heaven is the place where there is the full manifestation of Him who is "glorious in holiness"—that holiness which the wicked, while presumptuously hoping to go to Heaven, despise and hate here on earth. The inhabitants of Heaven are given a clear sight of the ineffable purity of God and are granted the most intimate communion with Him. But none are fitted for this unless their inner being (as well as outer lives) have undergone a radical, revolutionizing, supernatural change. Can it be thought that Christ will prepare mansions of glory for those who refuse to receive Him into their hearts and give Him the first place in their lives down here? No, indeed; rather will He laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear comes (Pro 1:26). The instrument of the heart must be tuned here on earth to fit it to produce the melody of praise in Heaven. God has so linked together holiness and happiness (as He has sin and wretchedness) that they cannot be separated. Were it possible for an unregenerate soul to enter Heaven, it would find there no sanctuary from the lashings of conscience and the tormenting fire of God's holiness. Many suppose that nothing but the merits of Christ are needed to qualify them for Heaven. But this is a great mistake. None receive remission of sins through the blood of Christ, who are not first "turned from the power of Satan unto God" (Act 26:18).

God subdues their iniquities whose sin He casts into the depths of the sea (Mic 7:19). Pardoning sins and purifying the heart are as inseparable as the blood and water which flowed from the Savior's side (John 19:34). Our being renewed in the spirit of our mind and our putting on of the new man "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:2-24), is as indispensable to a fitness for Heaven, as an having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us is for a title thereto. "A malefactor, by pardon, is in a capacity to come into the presence of a prince and serve him at his table, but he is not in the fitness until his noisome garments, full of vermin be taken off" (S. Charnock). It is both a fatal delusion and wicked presumption for one who is living to please self, to imagine

that his sins have been forgiven by God. It is "the washing of regeneration" which gives evidence of our being justified by grace (Ti 3:5-7). When Christ saves, He indwells (Gal 2:20), and it is impossible for Him to reside in a heart which yet remains spiritually cold, hard, and lifeless. The supreme pattern of holiness cannot be a Patron of licentiousness. Justification and sanctification are inseparable: where one is absolved from the guilt of sin, he is also delivered from the dominion of sin, but neither the one nor the other can be until the soul is regenerated. Just as Christ's being made in the likeness of sin's flesh was indispensable for God to impute to Him His people's sins (Rom 8:3), so it is equally necessary for us to be made new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) before we can be, legally, made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). The need of our being made "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) is as real and as great as Christ's taking part in human nature, before He could save us (Heb 2:14-17). Except God be born, He cannot come into the kingdom of sin. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of righteousness.

And Divine power—the power of the Holy Spirit, the plenipotentiary and executant of all the will of Godhead—achieves the incarnation of God and the regeneration of man, that the Son of God may be made sin, and the sons of God made righteous" (H. Martin). How could one possibly enter a world of ineffable holiness who has spent all his time in sin, that is, pleasing self? How could he possibly sing the song of the Lamb if his heart has never been tuned unto it? How could he endure to behold the awful majesty of God face to face who never before so much as saw Him "through a glass darkly" by the eye of faith? And as it is excruciating torture for the eyes that have been long confined to dismal darkness, to suddenly gaze upon the bright beams of the midday sun, so it will be when the unregenerate behold Him who is Light. Instead of welcoming such a sight "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev 1:7); yes, so overwhelming will be their anguish, they will call to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev 6:16). And, my reader, that will be

your experience, unless God regenerates you! When the Lord Jesus said "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6)

He not only intimated that every man born into this world inherits a corrupt and fallen nature, and therefore is unfit for the kingdom of God, but also that this corrupt nature can never be anything else but corrupt, so that no culture can fit it for the kingdom of God. Its tendencies may be restricted, its manifestations modified by education and circumstances, but its sinful tendencies and affections are still there. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, prune and trim it as you may. For good fruit, you must have a good tree or graft from one. Therefore did our Lord go on to say, "And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This brings us to consider.

2. Its Nature

We have now arrived at the most difficult part of our subject. Necessarily so, for we are about to contemplate the workings of God. These are ever mysterious, and nothing whatever can be really known about them, save what He Himself has revealed thereon in His Word. In endeavoring to ponder what He has said on His work of regeneration, two dangers need to be guarded against: first, limiting our thoughts to any isolated statement thereon or any single figure the Spirit has employed to describe it. Second, reasoning from what He has said by carnalizing the figures He has employed. When referring to spiritual things, God has used terms which were originally intended (by man) to express material objects, hence we need to be constantly on our guard against transferring to the former erroneous ideas carried over from the latter. From this we shall be preserved if we diligently compare all that has been said on each subject. In treating of the nature of regeneration, much damage has been wrought, especially in recent years, by men confining their attention to a single figure, namely, that of the "new birth," which is only one out of many expressions used in the Scriptures to denote that mighty and miraculous work of God within His people which fits them for communion with Him. Thus, in Colossians 1:12-13 the same

vital experience is spoken of as God's having "made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Regeneration is the commencement of a new experience, which is so real and revolutionizing that the one who is the subject of this Divine begetting is spoken of as a "new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

A new spiritual life has been imparted to the soul by God, so that the one receiving it is vitally implanted into Christ. The nature of regeneration can, perhaps, be best perceived by comparing and contrasting it with what took place at the fall, for though the person who is renewed by the Spirit receives more than what Adam lost by his rebellion, yet, the one is, really, God's answer to the former. Now it is most important that we should clearly recognize that no faculty was lost by man when he fell. When man was created, God gave unto him a spirit, soul and body. Thus, man was a tri-partite being. When man fell, the Divine threat "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die" was duly executed, and man died spiritually. But that does not mean that either his spirit or soul or any part thereof, ceased to be, for in Scripture "death" never signifies annihilation, but is a state of separation. The prodigal son was "dead" while he was in the far country (Luke 15:24), because he was separated from his father. "Alienated from the life of God" (Eph 4:18) describes the fearful state of one who is unregenerated, so does "she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives" (1 Timothy 5:6): that is, dead spiritually, dead Godwards, while alive in sin— the spirit, and soul and body, each being active against God.

That which took place at the fall was not the destruction of either portion of man's three-fold being, but the vitiating or corrupting of them. And that, by the introduction of a new principle within him, namely, sin, which is more of a quality than a substance. But let it be stated very emphatically that a "nature" is not a concrete entity, but rather that which characterizes and impels an entity or creature. It is

the nature of gravitation to attract, it is the nature of the wind to blow, it is the nature of fire to burn. A "nature" is not a tangible thing, but a principle of operation, a power impelling to action. Thus, when we say that fallen man possesses a "sinful nature," it must not be understood that something as substantial as his soul or spirit was added to his being, but instead, that the principle of evil entered into him, which polluted and defiled every part of his constitution, as frost entering fruit spoils it. At the fall, man lost none of the faculties with which the Creator had originally endowed him, but he lost the power to use his faculties Godwards. All desire Godwards, all love for his Maker, all real knowledge of Him, was lost. Sin possessed him: sin as a principle of evil, as a power of operation, as a defiling influence, took complete charge of his spirit and soul and body, so that he became the "servant" or slave "of sin" (John 8:34). As such, man is no more capable of producing that which is good, spiritual, and acceptable to God, than frost can burn or fire freeze: "they that are in the flesh [remain in their natural and fallen condition] cannot please God" (Rom 8:8). They have no power to do so, for all their faculties, every part of their being, is completely under the dominion of sin. So completely is fallen man beneath the power of sin and spiritual death, that the things of the Spirit of God are "foolishness" unto him, "neither can he know them" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Now that which takes place at regeneration is the reversing of what happened at the fall. The one born again is, through Christ, and by the Spirit's operation, restored to union and communion with God; the one who before was spiritually dead, is now spiritually alive: John 5:24. Just as spiritual death was brought about by the entrance into man's being of the principle of evil, so spiritual life is the introduction of a principle of holiness. God communicates a new principle, as real and as potent as sin. Divine grace is now imparted. A holy disposition is wrought in the soul. A new temper of spirit is bestowed upon the inner man. But no new faculties are created within him, rather are his original faculties enriched, ennobled, and empowered. Just as man did not become less than a threefold being when he fell, so he does not become more than a threefold being

when he is renewed. Nor will he in Heaven itself: his spirit and soul and body will simply be glorified, that is, completely delivered from every taint of sin, and perfectly conformed to the image of God's Son. At regeneration a new nature is imparted by God. But again we need to be closely on our guard lest we carnalize our conception of what is denoted by that expression. Much confusion has been caused through failure to recognize that it is a person, and not merely a "nature" which is born of the Spirit: "you must be born again" (John 3:7), not merely something in you must be: "he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). The same person who was spiritually dead—his whole being alienated from God—is now made spiritually alive: his whole being reconciled to God. This must be so, or otherwise there would be no preservation of the identity of the individual. It is the person, and not simply a nature which is born of God: "Of his own will begat he us" (Jam 1:18). It is a new birth of the individual himself, and not of something in him. The nature is never changed, but the person is — relatively, not absolutely.

The person of the regenerate man is essentially the same as the person of the unregenerate: each having a spirit, and soul and body. But just as in fallen man there is also a principle of evil which has corrupted every part of his threefold being, which "principle" is his "sinful nature" (so-called because it expresses his evil disposition and character as it is the "nature" of swine to be filthy), so when a person is born again another and new "principle" is introduced into this being, a new "nature" or disposition, a disposition which propels him Godwards. Thus, in both cases, "nature" is a quality rather than a substance. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" must not be conceived of as something substantial, distinct from the soul of the regenerate, like one portion of matter added to another; rather is it that which spiritualizes all his inward faculties, as the "flesh" had carnalized them.

Again; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" is to be carefully distinguished from that "spirit" which every man has in addition to his soul and body: (see Num 16:22; Ecc 12:7; Zechariah 12:1). That

which is born of the Spirit is not something tangible, but that which is spiritual and holy, and that is a quality rather than a substance. In proof of this compare the usage of the word "spirit" in these passages: in James 4:5 the inclination and disposition to envy is called "the spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy." In Luke 9:55 Christ said to His disciples, "you know not what manner of spirit you are of," thereby signifying, you are ignorant of what a fiery disposition is in your hearts. (See also Num 5:14; Hos 4:12; 2 Timothy 1:7.) That which is born of the Spirit is a principle of spiritual life, which renovates all the faculties of the soul. Some help upon this mysterious part of our subject is to be obtained by noting that in such passages as John 3:6, etc., "spirit" is contrasted from the "flesh." Now it should scarcely need saying that "the flesh" is not a concrete entity, being quite distinct from the body. When the term "flesh" is used in a moral sense, the reference is always to the corruption of fallen man's nature. In Galatians 5:19-21 the "works of the flesh" are described, among them being "hatred" and "envying," in connection with which the body (as distinguished from the mind) is not implicated—clear proof that the "flesh" and the "body" are not synonymous terms. In Galatians 5 the "flesh" is used to designate those evil tendencies and affections which result in the sins there mentioned.

Thus, the "flesh" refers to the degenerate state of man's spirit and soul and body, as the "spirit" refers to the regenerate state of the spirit and soul—the regeneration of the body being yet future. The privative (darkness is the privative of light) or negative side of regeneration, is that Divine grace gives a mortal wound to indwelling sin. Sin is not then eradicated nor totally slain in the believer, but it is divested of its reigning power over his faculties. The Christian is no longer the helpless slave of sin, for he resists it, fights against it, and to speak of a helpless victim "fighting," is a contradiction in terms. At the new birth sin receives its death-blow, though its dying struggles within us are yet powerful and acutely felt. Proof of what we have said is found in the fact that while sin's solicitations were once agreeable to us, they are now hated. This aspect of regeneration is

presented in Scripture under a variety of figures, such as the taking away of the heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26), the binding of the strong man (Mat 12:29), etc. The absolute dominion of sin over us is destroyed by God (Rom 6:14). The positive side of regeneration is that Divine grace effects a complete change in the state of the soul, by infusing a principle of spiritual life, which renovates all its faculties. It is this which constitutes its subject a "new creature," not in respect of his essence, but of his views, his desires, his aspirations, his habits.

Regeneration or the new birth is the Divine communication of a powerful and revolutionizing principle in the soul and spirit, under the influence of which all their native faculties are exercised in a different manner from that in which they were formerly employed, and in this sense "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). His thoughts are "new," the objects of his choice are "new," his aims and motives are "new," and thereby the whole of his external deportment is changed. "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). The reference here is to subjective grace. There is an objective grace, inherent in God, which is His love, favor, goodwill for His elect. There is also a subjective grace which terminates on them, whereby a change is wrought in them. This is by the infusion of a principle of spiritual life, which is the spring of the Christian's actions. This "principle" is called "a new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezekiel 36:26). It is a supernatural habit, residing in every faculty and power of the soul, as a principle of holy and spiritual operation. Some have spoken of this supernatural experience as a "change of heart." If by this expression be meant that there is a change wrought in the fallen nature itself, as though that which is natural is transformed into that which is spiritual, as though that which was born of the flesh ceased to be "flesh," and became that which is born of the Spirit, then, the term is to be rejected.

But if by this expression be meant, an acknowledgment of the reality of the Divine work, which is wrought in those whom God regenerates, it is quite permissible. When treating of regeneration

under the figure of the new birth, some writers have introduced analogies from natural birth which Scripture by no means warrants, in fact disallows. Physical birth is the bringing forth into this world of a creature, a complete personality, which before conception had no existence whatever. But the one who is regenerated had a complete personality before he was born again. To this statement it may be objected, not a spiritual personality! What is meant by this? Spirit and matter are opposites, and we only create confusion if we speak or think of that which is spiritual as being something concrete. Regeneration is not the creating of a person which hitherto had no existence, but the renewing and restoring of a person whom sin had unfitted for communion with God and this by the communication of a nature or principle of life, which gives a new and different bias to all his old faculties. It is altogether an erroneous view to regard a Christian as made up of two distinct personalities. As "justification" describes the change in the Christian's objective relationship to God, so "regeneration" denotes that intrinsic subjective change which is wrought in the inclinations and tendencies of their souls Godwards.

This saving work of God within His people is likened unto a "birth" because it is the gateway into a new world, the beginning of an entirely new experience, and also because as the natural birth is an issuing from a place of darkness and confinement (the womb) into a state of light and liberty, so is the experience of the soul when the Spirit quickens us. But the very fact that this revolutionizing experience is also likened unto a resurrection (1 John 3:14) should deliver us from forming a one-sided conception of what is meant by the "new birth" and the "new creature," for resurrection is not the absolute creation of a new body, but the restoration and glorification of the old body. Regeneration is also called a Divine "begetting" (1 Peter 1:3), because the image or likeness of the Begetter is conveyed and stamped upon the soul. As the first Adam begat a son in his own image and likeness (Gen 5:3), so the last Adam has an "image" (Rom 8:29) to convey to His sons: (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). It has often been said that in the Christian there are two distinct and diverse "natures," namely, the "flesh" and the "spirit" (Gal 5:17). This is true,

yet care must be taken to avoid regarding these two "natures" as anything more than two "principles" of action. Thus in Romans 7:23 the two "natures" or "principles" in the Christian are spoken of as "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." The flesh and the spirit in the believer must be conceived of as something very different from the "two natures" in the blessed person of our Redeemer, the God-man. Both the Deity and humanity were substantial entities in Him.

Moreover, the "two natures" in the saint result in a necessary conflict (Gal 5:17), whereas in Christ there was not only complete harmony, but one Lord. The faculties of the Christian's soul remain the same in their essence, substance, and natural powers, as before he was "renewed," but these faculties are changed in their properties, qualities and inclinations. It may help us to obtain a clearer conception of this if we illustrate by a reference to the waters at Marah (Exo 15:25-26). Those "waters" were the same waters still, both before and after their cure. Of themselves in their own nature, they were "bitter," so as the people could not drink of them; but in the casting of a tree into them, they were made sweet and useful. So too with the waters at Jericho (2 Kings 2:20-21), which were cured by the casting of salt (emblem of grace, Col 4:6) into them. In like manner the Christian's affections continue the same as they were in their nature and essence, but they are cured or healed by grace, so that their properties, qualities, and inclinations, are "renewed" (Tit 3:5), the love of God now being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5).

What man lost by the fall was his original relation to God, which kept all his faculties and affections within proper exercise of that relation. At regeneration the Christian received a new life, which gave a new direction to his faculties, presenting new objects before them. Yet, let it be said emphatically, it is not merely the restoration of the life which Adam lost, but one of unspeakably higher relations: he received the life which the Son of God has in Himself, even "eternal life." But the old personality still remains. This is clear from Romans

6:13, "but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The members of the same individual are now to serve a new Master. Regeneration is that which alone fits a fallen creature to fulfill his one great and chief duty, namely, to glorify his Maker. This is to be the aim and the end in view in all that we do: "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). It is the motive actuating us and the purpose before us which gives value to each action: "When your eye [figure of the soul looking outward] is single [having only one object in view—the glory of God], your whole body also is full of light; but when your eye is evil, your body also is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34). If the intention be evil, as it certainly is when the glory of God is not before us, there is nothing but "darkness," sin, in the whole service.

Now fallen man has altogether departed from what ought to be his chief end, aim, or object, for instead of having before him the honor of God, himself is his chief concern; and instead of seeking to please God in all things, he lives only to please himself or his fellow-creatures. Even when, through religious training, the claims of God have been brought to his notice and pressed upon his attention, at best he only parcels out one part of his time, strength, and substance to the One who gave him being and daily loads him with benefits, and another part for himself and the world. The natural man is utterly incapable of giving supreme respect unto God, until he becomes the recipient of a spiritual life. None will truly aim at the glory of God until they have an affection for Him. None will honor Him supremely whom they do not supremely love. And for this, the love of God must be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5), and this only takes place at regeneration. Then it is, and not until then, that self is dethroned and God enthroned; then it is that the renewed creature is enabled to comply with God's imperative call, "My son, give me your heart" (Pro 23:26). The salient elements which comprise the nature of regeneration may, perhaps, be summed up in these three words: impartation, renovation, subjugation. God communicates something to the one who is born

again, namely, a principle of faith and obedience, a holy nature, eternal life. This though real, palpable, and potent, is nothing material or tangible, nothing added to our essence, substance or person. Again, God renews every faculty of the soul and spirit of the one born again, not perfectly and finally, for we are "renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16), but so as to enable those faculties to be exercised upon spiritual objects. Again, God subdues the power of sin indwelling the one born again. He does not eradicate it, but He dethrones it, so that it no longer has dominion over the heart. Instead of sin ruling the Christian, and that by his own willing subjection, it is resisted and hated.

Regeneration is not the improvement or purification of the "flesh," which is that principle of evil still with the believer. The appetites and tendencies of the "flesh" are precisely the same after the new birth as they were before, only they no longer reign over him. For a time it may seem that the "flesh" is dead, yet in reality it is not so. Often its very stillness (as an army in ambush) is only awaiting its opportunity or a gathering up of its strength for a further attack. It is not long before the renewed soul discovers that the "flesh" is yet very much alive, desiring to have its way. But grace will not suffer it to have its sway. On the one hand the Christian has to say, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18). On the other hand, he is able to declare, "Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Some people find it very difficult to conceive of the same person bringing forth good works who before brought forth nothing but evil works, the more so when it be insisted upon that no new faculty is added to his being, that nothing substantial is either imparted or taken from his person. But if we rightly introduce the factor of God's mighty power into the equation, then the difficulty disappears. We may not be able to explain (in fact we are not) how God's power acts upon us, how He cleanses the unclean (Act 10:15) and subdues the wolf so that it dwells with the lamb (Isa 11:6), any more than we can thoroughly understand His working upon and within us without

destroying our own personal agency; nevertheless, both Scripture and experience testify to each of these facts. It may help us a little at this point if we contemplate the working of God's power in the natural realm.

In the natural realm every creature is not only entirely dependent upon its Maker for its continued existence, but also for the exercise of all its faculties, for "in Him we live, and move [Greek, 'are moved'], and have our being" (Act 17:28). Again; as the various parts of creation are linked together, and afford each other mutual support—as the heavens fertilize the earth, the earth supplies its inhabitants with food, its inhabitants propagate their kind, rear their offspring, and co-operate for the purpose of society—so also the whole system is supported, sustained and governed by the directing providence of God. The influences of providence, the manner in which they operate on the creature, are profoundly mysterious: on the one hand, they are not destructive of our rational nature, reducing us to mere irresponsible automatons: on the other hand they are all made completely subservient to the Divine purpose. Now the operation of God's power in regeneration is to be regarded as of the same kind with its operation in providence, although it be exercised with a different design. God's energy is one, though it is distinguished by the objects on which, and the ends for which, it is exerted. It is the same power that creates as upholds in existence: the same power that forms a stone, and a sunbeam: the same power that gives vegetable life to a tree, animal life to a brute, and rational life to a man. In like manner, it is the same power that assists us in the natural exercise of our faculties, as it is which enables us to exercise those faculties in a spiritual manner. Hence "grace" as a principle of Divine operation in the spiritual realm, is the same power of God as "nature" is, His process of operation in the natural world.

The grace of God in the application of redemption to the hearts of His people is indeed mighty, as is evident from the effects produced. It is a change of the whole man: of his views, motives, inclinations and pursuits. Such a change no human means are able to

accomplish. When the thoughtless are made to think, and to think with a seriousness and intensity which they never formerly did; when the careless are, in a moment, affected with a deep sense of their most important interests; when lips which are accustomed to blaspheme, learn to pray; when the proud are brought to assume the lowly attitude and language of the penitent; when those who were devoted to the world give evidence that the object of their desires and aims is a heavenly inheritance; and when this revolution, so wonderful, has been effected by the simple Word of God, and by the very Word which the subject of this radical change had often heard unmoved, it is proof positive that a mighty influence has been exerted, and that influence is nothing less than Divine—God's people have been made willing in the day of His power (Psalm 110:3). Many figures are used in Scripture, various expressions are employed by the Spirit, to describe the saving work of God within His people. In 2 Peter 1:4 the regenerated are said to be "partakers of the Divine nature," which does not mean of the very essence or being of God, for that can neither be divided nor communicated—in Heaven itself there will still be an unmeasurable distance between the Creator and the creature, otherwise the finite would become infinite, No, to be "partakers of the Divine nature" is to be made the recipients of inherent grace, to have the lineaments of the Divine image stamped upon the soul: as the remainder of that verse shows.

Being "partakers of the Divine nature" is the antithesis of "the corruption that is in the world through lust." In 2 Corinthians 3:18, this transforming miracle of God's grace in His people is declared to be a "changing" into the image of Christ. The Greek word there for "change" is the one rendered "transfigured" in Matthew 17:2. At Christ's transfiguration no new features were added to the Savior's face, but His whole countenance was irradiated by a new light; so in 2 Corinthians 4:6 regeneration is likened unto a "light" which God commands to shine in us—note the whole context of 2 Corinthians 3:18 is treating of the Spirit's work by the Gospel. In Ephesians 2:10, this product of God's grace is spoken of as His "workmanship," and is said to be "created," to show that He, and not man, is the Author of

it. In Galatians 4:19, this same work of God in the soul is termed Christ's being "formed" in us—as the parents' seed is formed or molded in the mother's womb, the "likeness" of the parent being stamped upon it. We cannot here attempt a full list of the numerous figures and expressions which the Holy Spirit has employed to set forth this saving work of God in the soul.

In John 6:44 it is spoken of as a being "drawn" to Christ. In Acts 16:14 as the heart being "opened" by the Lord to receive His Truth. In Acts 26:18 as the opening of our eyes, a turning us from darkness unto light, and the power of Satan unto God. In 2 Corinthians 10:5 as the "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." In Ephesians 5:8 as being "light in the Lord." In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 it is designated the "sanctification of the Spirit." In Hebrews 8:10 as God's putting His laws into our mind and writing them on our heart—contrast the figure in Jeremiah 17:1! Thus it should be most apparent that we lose much by limiting our attention to one figure of it. All we have given, and still others not mentioned, need to be taken into consideration, if we are to obtain anything approaching an adequate conception of the nature of that miracle of grace which is wrought in the soul and spirit of the elect, enabling them to henceforth live unto God.

As man was changed in Adam from what he was by a state of creation, so man must be changed in Christ from what he is by a state of corruption. This change which fits him for communion with God, is a Divine work wrought in the inclinations of the soul. It is a being renewed in the spirit of our minds (Eph 4:23). It is the infusion of a principle of holiness into all the faculties of our inner being. It is the spiritual renovation of our very persons, which will yet be consummated by the regeneration of our bodies. The whole soul is renewed, according to the image of God in knowledge, holiness and righteousness. A new light shines into the mind, a new power moves the will, a new object attracts the affections. The individual is the same, and yet not the same. How different the landscape when the

sun is shining, than when the darkness of a moonless night is upon it—the same landscape, and yet not the same. How different the condition of him who is restored to health and vigor after having been brought very low by sickness; yet it is the same person. The very fact that the Holy Spirit has employed the figures of "begetting" and "birth" to the saving work of God in the soul, intimates that the reference is only to the initial experience of Divine grace: "He which has begun a good work in you" (Phi 1:6). As an infant has all the parts of a man, yet none of them have come to maturity; so regeneration gives a perfection of parts, which yet have need to be developed. A new life has been received, but there needs to be growth of it: "grow in grace" (2 Peter 3:18). As God was the Giver of this life, He only can feed and strengthen it.

Thus, Titus 3:5 speaks of "the renewing" and not the "renewal" of the Holy Spirit. But it is our responsibility and bounden duty to use the Divinely-appointed means of grace which promote spiritual growth: "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2); as it is our obligation to constantly avoid everything which would hinder our spiritual prosperity: "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom 13:14; cf Mat 5:29-30; 2 Corinthians 7:1). God's consummating of the initial work which we experience at the new birth, and which He renews throughout the course of our earthly lives, only takes place at the second coming of our Savior, when we shall be perfectly and eternally conformed to His image, both inwardly and outwardly. First, regeneration; then our gradual sanctification; finally our glorification. But between the new birth and glorification, while we are left down here, the Christian has both the "flesh" and the "spirit," both a principle of sin and a principle of holiness, operating within him, the one opposing the other (see Gal 5:16-17). Hence his inward experience is such as that which is described in Romans 7:7-25. As life is opposed to death, purity to impurity, spirituality to carnality, so is now felt and experienced within the soul a severe conflict between sin and grace. This conflict is perpetual, as the "flesh" and "spirit" strive for

mastery. From hence proceeds the absolute necessity of the Christian being sober, and to "watch unto prayer."

Finally, let it be pointed out that the principle of life and obedience (the "new nature") which is received at regeneration, is not able to preserve the soul from sins, nevertheless, there is full provision for continual supplies of grace made for it and all its wants in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are treasures of relief in Him, whereunto the soul may at any time repair and find necessary support against every incursion of sin. This new principle of holiness may say to the believer's soul, as David did unto Abiathar when he fled from Doeg: "Abide you with me, fear not: for he who seeks my life seeks your life: but with me you shall be in safeguard" (1 Samuel 22:23). Sin is the enemy of the new nature as truly as it is of the Christian's soul, and his only safety lies in heeding the requests of that new nature, and calling upon Christ for enablement. Thus we are exhorted in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." If it ever be a time of need with the soul, it is so when it is under the assaults of provoking sins, when the "flesh" is lusting against the "spirit." But at that very time there is suitable and seasonable help in Christ for support and relief. The new nature begs, with sighs and groans, for the believer to apply to Christ. To neglect Him, with all His provision of grace, while He stands calling on us, "Open to me...for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" (Song 5:2), is to despise the sighing of the poor prisoner, the new nature, which sin is seeking to destroy, and cannot but be a high provocation against the Lord.

At the beginning, God entrusted Adam and Eve with a stock of grace in themselves, but they cast it away, and themselves into the utmost misery thereby. That His children might not perish a second time, God, instead of imparting to them personally the power to overcome sin and Satan, has laid up their portion in Another, a safe Treasurer; in Christ are their lives and comforts secured (Col 3:3). And how must Christ regard us, if instead of applying to Him for relief, we

allow sin to distress our conscience, destroy our peace, and mar our communion? Such is not a sin of infirmity which cannot be avoided, but a grievous affront of Christ. The means of preservation from it is at hand. Christ is always accessible. He is ever ready to "support them that are tempted" (Heb 2:18). O to betake ourselves to Him more and more, day by day, for everything. Then shall each one find "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (Phi 4:13). All men are by nature the children of wrath, and do belong unto the world, which is the kingdom of Satan (1 John 5:19), and are under the power of darkness. In this state men are not the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and have no fitness for Heaven. From this terrible state they are unable to deliver themselves, being "without strength" (Rom 5:6). Out of this state God's elect are supernaturally "called" (1 Peter 2:9), which call effectually delivers them from the power of Satan and translates them into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col 1:13). This Divine "call," or work of grace, is variously denominated in Scripture: sometimes by "regeneration" (Ti 3:5), or the new birth, sometimes by illumination (2 Corinthians 4:6), by transformation (2 Corinthians 3:18), by spiritual resurrection (John 5:24). This inward and invincible call is attended with justification and adoption (Rom 8:30; Eph 1:5), and is carried on by sanctification in holiness. This leads us to consider:

3. Its Effects

"The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Though the wind be imperious in its action, man being unable to regulate it; though it be mysterious in its nature, man knowing nothing of the cause which controls it; yet its presence is unmistakable, its effects are plainly evidenced: so it is with every one that is born of the Spirit. His secret but powerful operations lie beyond the reach of our understanding. Why God has ordained that the Spirit should quicken this person and not that, we know not, but the transforming results of His working are plain and palpable. What they are, we shall now endeavor to describe.

1. The illumination of the understanding

As it was in the old creation, so it is in connection with the new. "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth" (Gen 1:1). That was the original creation. then came degeneration: "And the earth was [Hebrews became] without form, and void [a desolate waste]; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Next came restoration: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." So it is when God begins to restore fallen man: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). The Divine illumination which the mind receives at the new birth is not by means of dreams or visions, nor does it consist in the revelation of things to the soul which have not been made known in the Scriptures. Not so, the only means or instrument which the Holy Spirit employs is the written Word: "The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).

Hitherto, God's Word may have been read attentively, and much of its teaching intellectually apprehended; but because there was a "veil" upon the heart (2 Corinthians 3:15) and so no spiritual discernment (1 Corinthians 2:14), the reader was not inwardly affected thereby. But now the Spirit removes the veil, opens the heart to receive the Word (Act 16:14), and powerfully applies to the mind and conscience some portion of it. The result is that, the one renewed is able to say "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). To particularize: The sinner is now enlightened in the knowledge of his own terrible condition. He may, before this, have received much scriptural instruction, subscribed to a sound creed, and believed intellectually in "the total depravity of man"; but now the solemn declarations of God's Word concerning the state of the fallen creature are brought home in piercing power to his own soul. No longer does he compare himself with his fellows, but measures himself by the rule of God. He now discovers that he is unclean, that

his heart is "desperately wicked," and that he is altogether unfit for the presence of the thrice holy God. He is powerfully convicted of his own awful sins, feels that they are more in number than the hairs of his head, and that they are high provocations against Heaven, which call for Divine judgment on him. He now realizes that there is "no soundness" (Isa 1:6) in him, and that all his best performances are only as "filthy rags" (Isa 64:6), and that he is deserving of nothing but the everlasting burnings.

By the spiritual light which God communicates in regeneration the soul now perceives the infinite demerits of sin, that its "wages" can be nothing less than eternal death, or the loss of Divine favor and a dreadful suffering under the wrath of God. The equity of God's law and the fact that sin righteously calls for such punishment is humbly acknowledged. Thus his mouth is "stopped" and he confesses himself to be guilty before God, and justly liable to His awful vengeance, both for the plague of his own heart and his numerous transgressions. He now realizes that his whole life has been lived in utter independence of God, having had no respect for His glory, no concern whether he pleased or displeased Him. He now perceives the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its awful malignity, as being in its nature contrary to the law of God. How to escape the due reward of his iniquity, he knows not. "What must I do to be saved?" is his agonizing cry. He is convinced of the absolute impossibility of contributing anything to his deliverance. He no longer has any confidence in the flesh; he has been brought to the end of himself. By means of this illumination the renewed soul, under the guidance of the Spirit through the Word, now perceives how well-suited is Christ to such a poor, worthless wretch as he feels himself to be.

The prospect of obtaining deliverance from the wrath to come through the victorious life and death of the Lord Jesus, keeps his soul from being overwhelmed with grief and from sinking into complete despondency because of the sight of his sins. As the Spirit presents to him the infinite merits of Christ's obedience and righteousness, His tender compassion for sinners, His power to save, desire for an

interest in Christ, now possess his heart; and he is resolved to look for salvation in no other. Under the benign influences of the Holy Spirit, the soul is drawn by some such words as, "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," or "him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out," and he is led to apply to Him for pardon, cleansing, peace, righteousness, and strength. Other acts besides turning unto Christ flow from this new principle received at regeneration, such as repentance, which is a godly sorrow for sin, an abhorring of it as sin, and an earnest desire to forsake and be completely delivered from its pollution. In the light of God, the renewed soul now perceives the utter vanity of the world, and the worthlessness of these paltry toys and perishing trifles which the godless strive so hard to acquire. He has been awakened from the dream-sleep of death, and things are now seen in their true nature. Time is precious and not to be frittered away. God in His awesome Majesty is an object to be feared. His law is accepted as holy, just and good. All of these perceptions and actions are included in that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. In some these actions are more vigorous than in others, and consequently, are more perceptible to a man's self. But the fruits of them are visible to others in external acts.

2. The elevation of the heart

Rightly does the Lord claim the first place: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Mat 10:37). "My son, give me your heart" (Pro 23:26) expresses God's claim: they "first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Corinthians 8:5) declares the response of the regenerate. But it is not until they are born again that any are spiritually capacitated to do this, for by nature men are "lovers of their own selves" and "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2, 4). When a sinner is renewed, his affections are taken off his idols and fixed on the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Hence it is written "with the heart [the affections] man believes unto righteousness" (Rom 10:10). And hence, also, it is written, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed" (1

Corinthians 16:22). "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the LORD your God with all your heart" (Deu 30:6). The "circumcising" of the heart is the "renewing" of it, severing its love from all illicit objects. None can truly love God supremely until this miracle of grace has been wrought within him. Then it is that the affections are refined and directed to their proper objects. He who once was despised by the soul, is now beheld as the "altogether lovely" One. He who was hated (John 15:18), is now loved above all others. "Whom have I in Heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you" (Psalm 73:25) is now their joyous confession. The love of God has become the governing principle of the life (2 Corinthians 5:13). What before was drudgery is now a delight. The praise of man is no longer the motive which stimulates action; the approbation of the Savior is the Christian's highest concern. Gratitude moves a hearty compliance with His will. "How precious also are your thoughts unto me, O God!" (Psalm 139:17) is now his language.

And again, "The desire of our soul is to your name, and to the remembrance of you. With my soul have I desired you in the night; yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early" (Isa 26:8,9). So too the heart is drawn out to all the members of His family, no matter what their nationality, social position, or church-connection: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren (1 John 3:14).

3. The emancipation of the will

By nature, the will of fallen man is free in only one direction: away from God. Sin has enslaved the will, therefore do we need to be "made free" (John 8:36). The two states are contrasted in Romans 6: "free from righteousness" when dead in sin (v20); "free from sin" now that we are alive unto God (v18). At the new birth the will is liberated from the "bondage of corruption" (Rom 8:21 and cf 2 Peter 2:19) and rendered conformable to the will of God (Psalm 119:97). In our degenerate state the will was naturally rebellious, and its

practical language was, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?" (Exo 5:2). But the Father promised the Son, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power" (Psalm 110:3), and this is accomplished when God "works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phi 2:13 and cf Heb 13:21). "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. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). This is a new-covenant promise (Heb 8:10), and is made good in each renewed soul. The will is so emancipated from the power of indwelling sin as to be enabled to answer to the Divine commands according to the tenor of the new covenant. The regenerated freely consent to and gladly choose to walk in subjection to Christ, being anxious now to obey Him in all things. His authority is their only rule, His love the constraining power: "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23).

4. The rectification of the conduct

A tree is known by its fruits. Faith is evidenced by works. The principle of holiness manifests itself in a godly walk. "If you know that he is righteous, you know that every one that does righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29). The deepest longing of every child of God is to please his heavenly Father in all things, and though this longing is never fully realized in this life—"not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (Phi 3:12)—nevertheless he continues "reaching forth unto those things which are before." "You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereto you were delivered" (Rom 6:17 mar.). The Greek word for "form" here signifies "mold." Observe how this figure also presupposes the same faculties after the new birth as before. Metal which is molded remains the same metal it was previously, only the fashion or form of it is altered. That metal which before was a dish, is now turned into a cup, and thus a new name is given to it: cf Revelation 3:12. By regeneration the faculties of the soul are made

suitable to God and His precepts, just as the mold and the thing molded fit one another. As before the heart was at enmity against every commandment, it is now molded to them. Does God say, "Fear Me," the renewed heart answers, "I desire to fear your name" (Neh 1:11).

Does God say, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," the heart answers, "The Sabbath is my delight" (Isa 58:13). Does God say, "Love one another," the new creature finds an instinct begotten within him to do so, so that real Christians are said to be "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:9). A change will take place in the deportment of the most moral unconverted man as soon as he is born from above. Not only will he be far less eager in his pursuit of the world, more scrupulous in the selection of his company, more cautious in avoiding the occasions to sin and the appearance of evil, but he realizes that the holy eye of God is ever upon him, marking not only his actions, but weighing his motives. He now bears the sacred name of Christ, and his deepest concern is to be kept from everything which would bring reproach upon it. His aim is to let his light so shine before men that they may see his good works and glorify his Father which is in Heaven.

That which occasions him the deepest distress is not the sneers and taunts of the ungodly, but that he fails to measure up to the standard God has set before him and the conformity to it after which he so much yearns. Though Divine grace may preserve him from outward falls, yet he is painfully conscious of many sins within: the rising of unbelief, the swellings of pride, the opposition of the "flesh" to the desires of the "spirit." These occasion him deep exercises of heart and lead to humble and sorrowful confessions unto God. It is of great importance that the Christian should have clear and scriptural views of what he is both as the subject of sin and of grace. Though the regenerate are delivered from the absolute dominion of sin (Rom 6:14), yet the principle of sin, the "flesh," is not eradicated. This is clear from Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof:" that exhortation

would be meaningless if there were no indwelling sin seeking to reign, and no lusts demanding obedience. Yet this is far from saying that a Christian must go on in a course of sinning; "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9), the reference there being to the regular practice and habit of sinning. Nevertheless, prayerful heed needs to be constantly paid to this word, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (1 Corinthians 15:34). The experiences of Paul, both as a subject of sin and of grace, are recorded in Romans 7.

A careful reading of verses 14-24 reveals the fact that grace had neither removed nor purified the "flesh" in him. And as the Christian today compares his own inner conflicts, he finds that Romans 7 describes them most accurately and faithfully. He discovers that in his "flesh" is no good thing and he cries "O wretched man that I am." Though he longs for fuller conformity to the image of Christ, though he hungers and thirsts after righteousness, though he is under the influence and reign of grace, and though he enjoys real fellowship with God, yet, at seasons (some more acutely felt than others) he feels that though with the mind he serves the law of God, yet with the flesh the law of sin. Yes, every experience of reading the Word, prayer, meditation, proves to him that he is, in his fallen nature, "carnal, sold under sin," and that when he would do good, evil is present with him. This is a matter of great grief to him, and causes him to "groan" (Rom 8:23) and yearn the more for release from this body of death. But ought not the Christian to "grow in grace?" Yes, indeed. Yet let it be said emphatically that growing "in grace" most certainly does not mean an increasing satisfaction with myself. No, it is the very opposite. The more I walk in the light of God, the more plainly can I see "flesh" within me, and there will be an ever-deepening abhorrence of what I am by nature.

"For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18) is not the confession of an unbeliever, nor even of a babe in Christ, but of the most enlightened saint. The only relief from this distressing discovery and the only peace for the

renewed heart is to look away from self to Christ and His perfect work for us. Faith empties of all self-complacency and gives an exalted estimate of God in Christ. A growth "in grace" is defined, in part by the words that immediately follow: "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). It is the growing realization of the perfect suitability of Christ to a poor sinner, the deepening conviction of his fitness to be the Savior of such a vile wretch as the Spirit daily shows me I am. It is the apprehension of how much I need His precious blood to cleanse me, His righteousness to clothe me, His arm to support me, His advocacy to answer for me on High, His grace to deliver me from all my enemies both inward and outward. It is the Spirit revealing to me that there is in Christ everything that I need both for earth and Heaven, time and eternity. Thus, growing in grace is an increasing living outside of myself, living upon Christ. It is a looking to Him for the supply of every need. The more the heart is occupied with Christ, the more the mind is stayed upon Him by trusting in Him (Isa 26:3), the more will faith, hope, love, patience, meekness, and all spiritual graces be strengthened and drawn forth into exercise and act to the glory of God. The manifestation of growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ is another thing.

The actual process of growing is not perceptible either in the natural or in the spiritual sphere; but the results of it are—mainly so to others. There are definite seasons of growth, and generally the Christian's spiritual graces are growing the most while the soul is in distress through manifold temptations, mourning on account of indwelling sin. It is when we are enjoying God and are in conscious communion with Him, feasting upon the perfections of Christ, that the fruits of the Spirit in us are ripened. The chief evidences of spiritual growth in the Christian are a deepening hatred of sin and loathing of self, a higher valuation of spiritual things, and yearning after them, a fuller recognition of our deep need and dependency on God to supply it. Regeneration is substantially the same in all who are the subjects of it: there is a spiritual transformation, the conforming of the soul unto the image of God: "that which is born of

the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6). But although every regenerated person is a new creature, has received a principle of faith and holiness which acts on every faculty of his being, and is indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit, yet God does not communicate the same measure of grace (Rom 12:3; 2 Corinthians 10:13; Eph 4:16) or the same number of talents to all alike. God's children differ from each other as children do at their natural birth; some of whom are more lively and vigorous than others. God, according to His sovereign pleasure, gives to some a fuller knowledge, to others stronger faith, to others warmer affections—natural temperament has much to do with the form and color which the manifestation of the "spirit" takes through us. But there is no difference in their state: the same work has been performed in all, which radically differentiates them from worldlings. "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (I Corinthians 6:2).

Does not this clearly denote, yes, require, that the "saints" shall exercise a distinguishing holiness and live quite otherwise than the world? Could one who now takes the Lord's name in vain be righteously appointed to sit in judgment upon those who profane it? Could one who lives to please self be a fit person to judge those who have loved pleasure more than God? Could one who has despised and ridiculed 'puritanic strictness of living,' sit with Christ as a judge on those who lived in rebellion against Him? Never; instead of being the judges of others, all such will find themselves condemned and executed as malefactors in that Day. "The LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). "Grace and glory" are inseparably connected: they differ not in nature, but in degree. "Grace" is glory begun; "glory" is grace elevated to the acme of perfection. 1 John 3:2 tells us that the saints shall be "like him," and this, because they will "see him as he is." The immediate vision of the Lord of glory will be a transforming one, the bright reflections of God's purity and holiness cast upon the glorified will make them perfectly holy and blessed. But this resemblance to God, His saints do here, in measure, bear upon them: there are some outlines, some lineaments of God's image stamped

upon them, and this, too, is through beholding Him. True, it is (comparatively speaking) through a glass darkly, yet "beholding," we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory [from one degree of it to another], as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

In conclusion, let both writer and reader test and search himself in the presence of God, by these questions. How stands my heart affected toward sin? Is there a deep humiliation and godly sorrow after I have yielded thereto? Is there a genuine detestation of it? Is my conscience tender, so that my peace is disturbed by what the world calls "trifling faults" and "little things?" Am I humbled when conscious of the rising of pride and self-will? Do I loathe my inward corruption? What engages my mind in seasons of recreation? Are my affections dead toward the world and alive toward God? Do I find spiritual exercises pleasant and joyous or irksome and burdensome? Can I truthfully say, "How sweet are your words unto my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103)? Is communion with God my highest joy? Is the glory of God dearer to me than all the world?

4. The Essence of Regeneration

Regeneration is that which alone fits a fallen creature to fulfill his one great and chief duty, namely, to glorify his Maker. This is to be the aim and end in view in all that we do: "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). It is the motive actuating us and the purpose before us which gives value to each action: "When your eye [figure of the soul looking outward] is single [having only one object in view—the glory of God], the whole body is full of light; but when your eye is evil, the body is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34). If the intention be evil, as it certainly is when the glory of God is not before us, there is nothing but "darkness," sin, in the whole service.

Now fallen man has altogether departed from what ought to be his chief end, aim, or object, for instead of having before him the honor of God, himself is his chief concern; and instead of seeking to please God in all things, he lives only to please himself or his fellow creatures. Even when, through religious training, the claims of God have been brought to his notice and pressed upon his attention, at best he only parcels out one part of his time, strength, and substance to the One who gave him being and daily loads him with benefits, and another part for himself and the world. The natural man is utterly incapable of giving supreme respect unto God, until he becomes the recipient of a spiritual life. None will truly aim at the glory of God until they have an affection for Him, none will honor Him supremely whom they do not supremely love. And for this, the love of God must be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), and this only takes place at regeneration. Then it is, and not until then, that self is dethroned and God is enthroned; then it is that the renewed creature is enabled to comply with God's imperative call, "My son, give me your heart" (Proverbs 23:26).

The salient elements which comprise the nature of regeneration may, perhaps, be summed up in these three words: impartation, renovation, and subjugation. God communicates something to the one who is born again, namely, a principle of faith and obedience, a holy nature, eternal life. This, though real, palpable, and potent, is nothing material or tangible, nothing added to our essence, substance, or person. Again, God renews every faculty of the soul and spirit of the one born again, not perfectly and finally, for we are "renewed day by day" (II Corinthians 4: 16), but so as to enable those faculties to be exercised upon spiritual objects. Again, God subdues the power of the sin indwelling the one born again. He does not eradicate it, but He dethrones it, so that it no longer has dominion over the heart. Instead of sin ruling the Christian, and that by his own willing subjection, it is resisted and hated.

Regeneration is not the improvement or purification of the "flesh," which is that principle of evil still with the believer. The appetites

and tendencies of the "flesh" are precisely the same after the new birth as they were before; only they no longer reign over him. For a time it may seem that the "flesh" is dead, yet in reality it is not so. Often its very stillness (as an army, in ambush) is only awaiting its opportunity or a gathering up of its strength for a further attack. It is not long before the renewed soul discovers that the "flesh" is yet very much alive, desiring to have its way. But grace will not suffer it to have its sway. On the one hand the Christian has to say, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18). On the other hand, he is able to declare, "Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Some people find it very difficult to conceive of the same person bringing forth good works who before brought forth nothing but evil works, the more so when it be insisted upon that no new faculty is added to his being, that nothing substantial is either imparted or taken from his person. But if we rightly introduce the factor of God's mighty power into the equation, then the difficulty disappears. We may not be able to explain, in fact we are not, how God's power acts upon us, how He cleanses the unclean (Acts 10:15) and subdues the wolf so that it dwells with the lamb (Isaiah 11:6), any more than we can thoroughly understand His working upon and within us without destroying our own personal agency; nevertheless, both Scripture and experience testify to each of these facts. It may help us a little at this point if we contemplate the workings of God's power in the natural realm.

In the natural realm every creature is not only entirely dependent upon its Maker for its continued existence, but also for the exercise of all its faculties, for "in him we live, and move [Greek "are moved"] and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Again, as the various parts of creation are linked together, and afford each other mutual support—as the heavens fertilize the earth, the earth supplies its inhabitants with food, its inhabitants propagate their kind, rear their offspring,

and cooperate for the purpose of society—so also the whole system is supported, sustained, and governed by the directing providence of God. The influences of providence, the manner in which they operate on the creature, are profoundly mysterious; on the one hand, they are not destructive of our rational nature, reducing us to irresponsible automatons; on the other hand, they are all made completely subservient to the divine purpose.

Now, the operation of God's power in regeneration is to be regarded as of the same kind with its operation in providence, although it be exercised with a different design. God's energy is one, though it is distinguished by the objects on which, and the ends for which, it is exerted. It is the same power which creates as which upholds in existence: the same power which forms a stone and a sunbeam, the same power which gives vegetable life to a tree, animal life to a brute, and rational life to a man. In like manner, it is the same power, which assists us in the natural exercise of our faculties, as it is which enables us to exercise those faculties in a spiritual manner. Hence "grace" as a principle of divine operation in the spiritual realm is the same power of God as "nature" is His process of operation in the natural world.

The grace of God in the application of redemption to the hearts of His people is indeed mighty, as is evident from the effects produced. It is a change of the whole man: of his views, motives, inclinations, and pursuits. Such a change no human means are able to accomplish. When the thoughtless are made to think and to think with a seriousness and intensity which they never formerly did; when the careless are, in a moment, affected with a deep sense of their most important interests; when lips which were accustomed to blaspheme, learn to pray; when the proud are brought to assume the lowly attitude and language of the penitent; when those who were devoted to the world give evidence that the object of their desires and aims is a heavenly inheritance; and when this revolution, so wonderful, has been effected by the simple Word of God, and by the very Word which the subjects of this radical change had often heard

unmoved, it is proof positive that a mighty influence has been exerted, and that that influence is nothing less than divine—God's people have been made willing in the day of His power (Psalm 110:3).

Many figures are used in Scripture; various expressions are employed by the Spirit, to describe this saving work of God within His people. In II Peter 1:4 the regenerated are said to be "partakers of the divine nature," which does not mean of the very essence or being of God, for that can neither be divided nor communicated—in Heaven itself there will still be an immeasurable distance between the Creator and the creature, otherwise the finite would become infinite. No, to be "partakers of the divine nature" is to be made the recipients of inherent grace, to have the lineaments of the divine image stamped upon the soul: as the remainder of the verse shows, being "partakers of the divine nature" is the antithesis of "the corruption that is in the world through lust."

In II Corinthians 3: 18 this transforming miracle of God's grace in His people is declared to be a "changing" into the image of Christ. The Greek word there for "change" is the one rendered "transfigured" in Matthew 17:2. At Christ's transfiguration no new features were added to the Savior's face, but His whole countenance was irradiated by a new light; so in II Corinthians 4:6 regeneration is likened unto a "light" which God commands to shine in us—note the whole context of II Corinthians 3:18 is treating of the Spirit's work by the gospel. In Ephesians 2:10 this product of God's grace is spoken of as His "workmanship," and is said to be "created," to show that He, and not man, is the author of it. In Galatians 4:19 this same work of God in the soul is termed Christ's being "formed" in us—as the parents' seed is formed or molded in the mother's womb, the "likeness" of the parent being stamped upon it.

We cannot here attempt a full list of the numerous figures and expressions, which the Holy Spirit has employed to set forth this saving work of God in the soul. In John 6:44 it is spoken of as a being "drawn" to Christ. In Acts 16:14 as the heart being "opened" by the

Lord to receive His truth. In Acts 26: 18 as an opening of our eyes, a turning us from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. In II Corinthians 10:5 as the "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." In Ephesians 5:8 as being "light in the Lord." In II Thessalonians 2: 13 it is designated the "sanctification of the Spirit." In Hebrews 8:10 as God's putting His laws into our mind and writing them on our hearts—contrast the figure in Jeremiah 17:1! Thus it should be most apparent that we lose much by limiting our attention to only one figure of it. All we have given, and still others not mentioned, need to be taken into consideration, if we are to obtain anything approaching an adequate conception of the nature of that miracle of grace which is wrought in the soul and spirit of the elect, enabling them henceforth to live unto God.

As man was changed in Adam from what he was by a state of creation, so man must be changed in Christ from what he is by a state of corruption. This change, which fits him for communion with God, is a divine work wrought in the inclinations of the soul. It is a being renewed in the spirit of our minds (Ephesians 4:23). It is the infusion of a principle of holiness into all the faculties of our inner being. It is the spiritual renovation of our very persons, which will yet be consummated by the regeneration of our bodies. The whole soul is renewed according to the image of God in knowledge, holiness, and righteousness. A new light shines into the mind, a new power moves the will, and a new object attracts the affections. The individual is the same, and yet not the same. How different the landscape when the sun is shining, than when the darkness of a moonless night is upon it—the same landscape, and yet not the same. How different the condition of him who is restored to fullness of health and vigor after having been brought very low by sickness; yet it is the same person.

The very fact that the Holy Spirit has employed the figures of "begetting" and "birth" to the saving work of God in the soul,

intimates that the reference is only to the initial experience of divine grace: "He which has begun a good work in you" (Philippians 1:6). As an infant has all the parts of a man, yet none of them as yet mature, so regeneration gives a perfection of parts, which yet have need to be developed. A new life has been received, but there needs to be a growth of it: "grow in grace" (II Peter 3:18). As God was the Giver of this life, He only can feed and strengthen it. Thus, Titus 3:5 speaks of "the renewing" and not the "renewal" of the Holy Spirit. But it is our responsibility and bounden duty to use the divinely appointed means of grace which promote spiritual growth: "Desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2); as it is our obligation to constantly avoid everything which would hinder our spiritual prosperity: "Make not provision for the flesh to the lusts" (Romans 13:14; cf. Matthew 5:29-30; II Corinthians 7:1).

God's consummating of the initial work which we experience at the new birth, and which He renews throughout the course of our earthly lives, only takes place at the second coming of our Savior, when we shall be perfectly and eternally conformed to His image, both inwardly and outwardly. First, regeneration; then our gradual sanctification; finally our glorification. But between the new birth and glorification, while we are left down here, the Christian has both the "flesh" and the "spirit," both a principle of sin and a principle of holiness, operating within him, the one opposing the other (see Galatians 5:16-17). Hence his inward experience is such as that which is described in Romans 7:7-25. As life is opposed to death, purity to impurity, spirituality to carnality, so is now felt and experienced within the soul a severe conflict between sin and grace. This conflict is perpetual, as the "flesh" and "spirit" strive for mastery. From hence proceeds the absolute necessity of the Christian being sober, and to "watch unto prayer."

Finally let it be pointed out that the principle of life and obedience (the new "nature") which is received at regeneration is not able to preserve the soul from sins, nevertheless, there is full provision for continual supplies of grace made for it and all its wants in the Lord

Jesus Christ. There are treasures of relief in Him, whereunto the soul may at any time repair and find necessary support against every incursion of sin. This new principle of holiness may say to the believer's soul, as did David unto Abiathar when he "Abide then with me, fear not; for him that seeks my life, seeks your life; but with me you shall be in safeguard" (I Samuel 22:23). Sin is the enemy of the new nature as truly as it is of the Christian's soul, and his only safety lies in heeding the requests of that new nature, and calling upon Christ for enablement. This we are exhorted to in Hebrews 4: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

If ever there be a time of need with the soul, it is so when it is under the assaults of provoking "flesh" is lust "spirit." But at that very time there is suitable and seasonable help in Christ for support and relief. The new nature begs, with sighs and groans, for the believer to apply to Christ. To neglect Him, with all His provision of grace, while He stands "Open to me. . . . for my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of the night" (Song of Sol. 5:2), is to despise the sighing of the poor prisoner, the new nature, which sin is seeking to destroy, and cannot but be a high provocation against the Lord.

At the beginning, God entrusted Adam and Eve with a stock of grace in themselves, but they cast it away, and themselves into the utmost misery thereby. That His children might not perish a second time, God, instead of imparting to them personally the power to overcome sin and Satan, has laid up their portion in Another, a safe Treasurer; in Christ are their lives and comforts secured (Colossians 3:3). And how must Christ regard us, if, instead of applying to Him for relief, we allow sin to distress our conscience, destroy our peace, and mar our communion? Such is not a sin of infirmity, which cannot be avoided, but a grievous affront of Christ. The means of preservation from it is at hand. Christ is always accessible. He is "succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). O to betake ourselves to Him more and more, day by day, for everything. Then shall each "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Repentance

What do the Scriptures say?

Introduction

One of the Divinely predicted characteristics of the "perilous times" in which we are now living is that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). The deeper reference of these words is to spiritual seducers and deceivers. Men with captivating personalities, men who occupy a prominent place in Christendom, men with an apparently deep reverence for Holy Writ, are beguiling souls with fatal error. Not only are evolutionists, higher critics and modernists deluding multitudes of our young people with their sugar-coated lies, but some who pose as the champions of orthodoxy and boast of their ability to "rightly divide the Word of truth" are poisoning the minds of many to their eternal destruction.

Such a charge as we have just made is indeed a serious one, and one which is not to be readily received without proof. But proof is easily furnished. The Word of God teaches plainly that in this dispensation, equally with preceding ones, God requires a deep and sincere repentance before He pardons any sinner. Repentance is absolutely necessary to salvation, just as necessary as is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). "Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). "For godly sorrow works repentance, not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7:10). It is impossible to frame language more explicit than that. Therefore, in view of these verses, and others yet to be quoted, we cannot but sorrowfully regard those who are now affirming that repentance is not, in this dispensation, essential unto salvation, as being deceivers of souls, blind leaders of the blind.

A careful comparison of the prominent place which is given to repentance in the New Testament with the very small place it has in present-day teaching, even in so-called "orthodox" pulpits, brings to light one of the most significant and solemn "signs of the times." Some of the most prominent of those pleased to style themselves "teachers of dispensational truth" insist that repentance belongs to a past period, being altogether "Jewish," and deny in toto that, in this age, God demands repentance from the sinner before he can be saved, thus blankly repudiating Acts 17:30: "But now commands all men everywhere to repent." When it is borne in mind that these men are most diligent students of Scripture, we can but sorrowfully see in them the fulfillment of those words "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

Others, in their recoil from salvation by reformation, have failed to duly preserve the balance of truth, and give proper place to such Scriptures as "He who covers his sins shall not prosper; but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13), and "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon Him" (Isaiah 55:7). It is not that there is anything meritorious in a sinner's compliance with this righteous demand of God, but that the claims of the Holy One must be pressed on those who have transgressed against Him. Yet that is just the thing the haughty rebel desires to hear about least of all, and the sad thing is that so many are now, wittingly or unwittingly, withholding that which is unpalatable to men but which is honoring to God. How widespread this withholding is, may be quickly discovered by an examination of present-day tracts purporting to explain how a sinner may be saved: in most of them not a word is said about repentance.

Even where it is held that repentance is necessary before a sinner can be saved, only too often the most shallow and superficial views are entertained of what repentance really is. In many circles it is assumed that if a person sheds tears or appears to be broken-hearted on account of the evil course he has followed, this is clear proof that a

saving work of Divine grace has begun in that person's heart. But this by no means follows. The prickings of an uneasy conscience are not the same as the conviction of sin which is produced by the Holy Spirit. Esau wept, and wept bitterly, yet he was not regenerated. Felix trembled under the preaching of Paul, but there is no hint in Scripture that he has gone to Heaven. Multitudes are deceived on this very point, and there is very little in present-day ministry which is calculated to undeceive them. Every one of us who values his soul and is concerned about his eternal destiny, will do well to carefully examine his repentance in the light of Scripture and ascertain whether it be of man or from God, natural or supernatural.

The first occurrence of the word "repent" furnishes the key to its meaning and scope. In Genesis 6:6 we read: "And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth." The language is figurative, for He who is infinite in wisdom and immutable in counsel never changes His mind. This is plain from "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent" (Num.23:19), and "The strength of Israel will not lie nor repent, for He is not a man that He should repent" (I Samuel 15:29); and again, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Thus, in the light of these definite statements we are compelled to conclude that in Genesis 6:6 (and similar passages) the Almighty condescends to accommodate Himself to our mode of speaking, and express Himself after a human manner — as He does in Psalm 78:65; 87:6; Isaiah 59:16, etc.

Now by carefully noting the setting of this word in Genesis 6:6 and attentively observing what follows, we discover: first, that the occasion of repentance is sin, for in Genesis 6:5 we read that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth": thus repentance is a realization of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Second, that the nature of repentance consists in a change of mind: a new decision is formed in view of the deplorable conditions existing — "it repented the Lord that He had made man." Third, that genuine repentance is accompanied by a real sorrow for sin, for that which

necessitated the change of mind: "and it grieved Him at His heart" — cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10. Fourth, that the fruit or consequence of repentance appears in a determination to undo (forsake, and rectify as far as possible) that which is sorrowed over: "and the Lord said, I will destroy man" (verse 7). All of these elements are found in a repentance which has been produced in the heart by the gracious and supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit. Let us now consider:

1. Its Necessity

This is discovered by a contemplation of the law, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Where there is no expounding and enforcing of the holy law of God there can be no true, deep saving knowledge of sin. As the apostle Paul so plainly affirms, "I had not known sin, but by the law" (Romans 7:7). The exceeding sinfulness of sin (Romans 7:13) is only exposed when the Spirit turns the light of God's law upon our conscience and heart. But this is preeminently an age of lawlessness, and that in every respect. And it cannot be otherwise: where the law of God is flouted, where thousands of preachers are declaring that the law has no place in this dispensation of grace, we cannot expect people to have much respect for human law. God has caused the people to reap that which they have sown: having sown the wind, they are now reaping the whirlwind. Bolshevism and anarchy are the inevitable rebound from having slighted and rejected the Ten Commandments!

Practical godliness consists in conformity of heart and life to the Law of God, and in a sincere compliance with the Gospel of Christ. But it is only as we rightly understand both the Law and the Gospel that we can discern wherein a conformity to the one and a compliance with the other really consists. Now the requirements of the Law are summed up in that word, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5, and cf. Matthew 22:37). Observe carefully the three things here specified: First, the duty required, namely, love to God. Second, the ground or reason for this, namely, because He is

the Lord our God. Third, the measure or extent of this duty, namely, to love Him with all the heart. Nothing other than this, nothing less than this, will ever meet the righteous claims of God upon us.

Now that which is implied in and required unto a real love to God is, first a true knowledge of Him. If our apprehensions of God are wrong, if they are not formed by Scripture, then it is obvious we have but a false image of Him, framed by our own fancy. By a true knowledge of God (John 17:3; I John 5:20) we mean far more than a correct theoretical notion of His perfections: there must be a heartfelt realization of His personal loveliness, His ineffable glory. And where that truth truly exists, there will be a delighting of ourselves in Him (Psalm 37:4) and a desire and a determination to please Him. As self-love naturally causes us to magnify self and seek to promote our own interests, so a true love to God causes us to put Him first and seek His interests.

In repentance sin is the thing to be repented of, and sin is a transgression of the law (I John 3:4). And the first and chief thing required by the law is supreme love to God. Therefore, the lack of supreme love to God, the heart's disaffection for His character and rebellion against Him (Romans 8:7) is our great wickedness which we have to repent of. But it will never be in our hearts to repent unless we truly see our blame. And we can never truly see our blame until we perceive that which chiefly renders us to blame. It is the excellency of God, the infinite perfections of His glorious being which renders Him worthy of and entitled to our supreme love and fullest obedience; and this it is which chiefly renders us to blame, for not having loved and served Him. Not to love so lovable an Object as the God of love is the crime of crimes.

The Evil Of Sin What is sin? Sin is saying, I renounce the God who made me; I disallow His right to govern me. I care not what He says to me, what commandments He has given, nor how He expostulates: I prefer self-indulgence to His approval. I am indifferent to all He has done to and for me; His blessings and gifts move me not: I am

going to be lord of myself. Sin is rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven. It is to treat the Almighty with contempt. O how vastly different a thing is sin from what the world supposes! How insensible are the unregenerate to the glory of God and that which is due unto Him from us!

The natural man supposes that the great evil of sin consists in its being so injurious to us. For a creature which is absolutely dependent to assume an attitude of haughty independence, is the sin of sins. To despise One who is infinitely glorious and infinitely worthy of honor, love and obedience, is an awful abomination. To be more concerned about pleasing fellow-rebels than to seek the favor of God is turpitude of the blackest dye. O reader, if you have never seen the great evil of sin, then you are a stranger to God and blind to His surpassing loveliness; you are under the blinding power of sin.

Weigh well what is now being presented if you value your soul, dear friend. The "deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13) may hitherto have closed your eyes to the terrible condition you are in. If so, are you now willing to be undeceived? Are you willing to really see yourself? Then make no mistake upon this point: never was any sinner pardoned while he was impenitent; and never was a soul truly penitent while insensible of the great evil of sin; and never did a sinner perceive the great evil of sin until he became acquainted with the infinitely great and glorious God against whom he has sinned. You may indeed have been sorry for sin on other accounts — as exposing you to shame before men, as having injured your reputation, or because it has brought down God's chastening hand upon your body or temporal affairs. But if you have never seen the great evil of sin as it is against that God who is infinitely glorious in Himself, then your repentance was not genuine, and God has not pardoned you.

"Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight" (Psalm 51:4). A sense of the great evil of sin is essential to true repentance. We cannot be suitably affected toward things unless we

see them as they are. No matter how lovely a thing or person may be, if their excellency be not perceived the heart is untouched. Even the infinite glory of God will not excite our esteem and love if we have no sense of it. So, on the other hand, let sin be never so evil, yet if this be not realized we are not suitably affected toward it. Though it deserves to be hated with perfect hatred, and though there be every reason why we should be horrified on account of it and abase ourselves before God, mourning it in bitterness of heart, fearing it, watching against it as the greatest of all evils, yet we shall never do so until we see sin in its real hideousness. Thus a deep sense of the infinite evil of sin is plainly essential to repentance, yes, it is from this that repentance immediately springs.

The evil of sin arises from our obligations to do otherwise, namely, our being under obligation to love and serve Him who is infinitely glorious. But unless I clearly see this, there will not be, there cannot be any deep repentance. The language of ever sinner's heart is, I care not what God requires. I am going to have my own way. I care not what be God's claim upon me, I refuse to submit unto His authority. I care not what He has threatened to do unto those that defy Him, I will not be intimidated. His eyes may be upon me, but I am not going to be restrained thereby; I care not what He loves and what He hates, I shall please myself. But when the Holy Spirit enlightens and convicts a soul, his language is, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight."

What Repentance Is Thus, true repentance issues from a realization in the heart, wrought therein by the Holy Spirit, of the sinfulness of sin, of the awfulness of ignoring the claims of God and defying His authority. It is therefore a holy horror and hatred of sin, a deep sorrow for it, an acknowledgment of it before God, and a complete heart-forsaking of it. Not until this is done will God pardon us. Whoever will take the trouble to search through the Scriptures on this point will find that it is plainly and uniformly taught by Moses and the Prophets, by Christ and His apostles. Begin with what God demanded on the day of Atonement: "whatever soul it be that shall

not be afflicted in the same day," so far from the sacrifice removing his sins, "he shall be cut off from his people" (Leviticus 23:29).

Weigh well the teaching of these verses: "If they shall bethink themselves in the land where they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto You in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; And return unto You with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto You... Then hear You their prayer and their supplication...and forgive Your people that have sinned against You" (I Kings 8:47-50). No change in dispensation has wrought any change in the character of the thrice holy God. His claims are ever the same.

For the teachings of the Prophets see Psalm 32:3-5; Proverbs 28:13; Jeremiah 4:4; Ezekiel 18:30-32; Hosea 5:15; Joel 2:12-18. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, preached saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). This was as though he said, "Such is the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, so holy is it, that no impenitent sinner, while such, can be a member of it and share its blessings. The promised One is on the eve of making His appearance: therefore repent you, and thus be prepared to receive Him." Thus did John preach, and many did he turn the Lord their God: Luke 1:16, 17.

The Lord Jesus taught and constantly pressed the same truth. His call was, "Repent you, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15): the Gospel cannot be savingly believed until there is genuine repentance — as the ground must be plowed before it is capable of receiving the seed, so the heart must be melted before it will welcome the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore did He declare, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4), and announce that He had been sent "to heal the broken-hearted" (Luke 4:18). He came here to "call sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32), and insisted that "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). He illustrated this truth at length in the parable of the prodigal son,

who "came to himself," repented, left the "far country" and returned to the Father, and so obtained his forgiveness (Luke 15:17-20).

When risen from the dead, Christ commissioned His servants "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations" (Luke 24:47), and Acts 5:31 tells us that He has been exalted on high to communicate these blessings in the same order, namely, to give repentance to (the spiritual) Israel and forgiveness of sins." Accordingly we find the Apostles, who were filled with the Holy Spirit, thus carrying out His command. On the Day of Pentecost when many were "pricked in their hearts" and asked "what shall we do?", Peter did not say, Do nothing but rest upon the finished work of Christ. Instead, he said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Again, in Acts 3:19 we find him saying, "Repent you therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out!"

When Paul was converted and sent to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, it was to "open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 26:18); hence we find he went everywhere and preached to men that they should "repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20), "testifying to both Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). As to those who shut their eyes, stopped their ears, hardened their hearts, and were given up to destruction in the days of the Prophets (Isaiah 6:10), of Christ (Matthew 13:15), and of the Apostles (Acts 28:27), their sentence ran thus: "Lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them," which compared with Mark 4:12 signifies, "and their sins should be forgiven them".

Against these clear and consistent testimonies of Holy Writ, certain men have insisted that the Divine call to repentance was never made

to any except those who were in covenant relationship with God. But as we have shown, Acts 17:30 and 26:20 clearly expose this error. Some have pointed out that the word "repent" is not once found in all John's Gospel, and in view of 20:31 have reasoned that it is not necessary unto salvation. But John's Gospel is plainly addressed unto those who are saved (see 1:16). It is that Gospel which sets forth the Son in relation to the sons of God. John 20:31 obviously means that this Gospel is written to strengthen the faith of believers; as I John 5:13 (addressed to those who already knew they were saved: see 2:3 etc.) signifies the purpose of that epistle was to deepen assurance. Others have drawn a false inference from the very infrequent mention of repentance in the Epistles, but they also are addressed to the saints; yet 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 3:9 manifestly confirm the fact that repentance is required throughout this dispensation.

"There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9), nor is the present-day denial of the necessity of repentance for salvation any twentieth century novelty. In proof of this statement we could fill page after page with quotations from Antinomians and others who lived long before "dispensational truth" was first heard of. No, it is an old device of Satan's yet under a new dress. But woe unto those who accept his lie. God must cease to exist before He will lower His claims and cease demanding repentance from all who have rebelled against Him. Make no mistake upon this point, dear reader: it is turn or burn — turn from your course of self-will and self-pleasing; turn in broken-heartedness unto God, seeking His mercy in Christ; turn with full purpose to please and serve Him, or be tormented day and night forever and ever in the Lake of Fire.

2. Its Nature

"Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). In view of these solemn words it is tremendously important that each of us should seek and obtain from God the repentance which He requires, not resting content with anything short of this. Hence, there needs to

be the most diligent and prayerful examination as to the character of our repentance. Multitudes are deceived thereon. Many are perplexed by the conflicting teaching of men on the subject; but instead of that discouraging, it should stir up to a more earnest searching of the Scriptures. Before turning to the positive side of this branch of our theme, let us first point out some of the features of a non-saving repentance.

1. Trembling beneath the preaching of God's Word is not repentance. True there are thousands of people who have listened unmoved to the most awe-inspiring sermons, and even descriptions of the torments of the damned which have struck no terror to their hearts. Yet on the other hand, many who were deeply stirred, filled with alarm, and moved to tears, are now in Hell. I have seen the faces of strong men pale under a searching message, yet next day all its effects had left them. Felix "trembled" (Acts 24:25) under the preaching of Paul!

2. Being "almost persuaded" is not repentance. Agrippa (Acts 26:28) is a case in point. A person may give full assent to the messages of God's servants, admire the Gospel, yes, "receive the Word with joy," and after all be only a stony-ground hearer (Matthew 13:20, 21). Not only so, he may be conscious of his evil-doing and acknowledge the same. Pharaoh owned "I have sinned against the Lord your God" (Exodus 10:16). A man may realize that he ought to yield himself to the claims of God and become a Christian, yet never be more than "almost persuaded."

3. Humbling ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God is not repentance. People may be deeply moved, weep, go home and determine to reform their lives, and yet return to their sins. A solemn example of this is found in Ahab. That wicked king of Israel coveted Naboth's vineyard, plotted to secure it, and gained his end by causing him to be murdered. Then the servant of God met him and said, "Have you killed and also taken possession?" And we are told that he "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted...and

went softly" (I Kings 21:27-29). Yet in the very next chapter we find him again rebelling against God, and that he was cut off by Divine judgment. Ah, my reader, you may have humbled yourself before God for a time, and yet remain the slave of your lusts. You may be afraid of Hell, and yet not of sinning. If Hell were extinguished, so would be the repentance of many church members. O mistake not fear of the wrath to come for a holy hatred and horror of sin.

4. Confessing sins is not repentance. Thousands have gone forward to the "altar" or "mourners' bench" and have told God what vile creatures they were, enumerating a long list of transgressions, but without any deep realization of the unspeakable awfulness of their sins, or a spark of holy hatred of them. The sequel has shown this, for they now ignore God's commandments as much as they did before. O my reader, if you do not, in the strength of God, resist sin, if you do not turn from it, then your imagined repentance is only whitewash — paint which decorates, but not the grace which transforms into gold.

5. You may even do works meet for repentance, and yet remain impenitent. A sinner may be convinced of the evil of his ways, turn from them, and go so far as to make restitution for the harm which he has wrought, and yet perish notwithstanding. A clear proof of this is furnished in the New Testament. Judas confessed his sins to the priests, and returned their money (Matthew 27:3-5), and then he went out from the presence of these evil men. Was he saved? No, he went and hanged himself! O how this ought to make each of us tremble and search our hearts.

The Greek word "metanoeo," which occurs most frequently as the word rendered "repent," signifies a change of mind: Matthew 21:29 both illustrates and confirms that definition. Yet let it be said very emphatically that saving repentance means far more than a mere change of opinions: it is a changed mind which leads to action. Now this changed mind is not brought about by any intellectual process, but is the result of the understanding being wrought upon by the conscience, and that, as the conscience has been supernaturally

ploughed up by the Holy Spirit. In consequence of this there is a judging or condemning of self, a taking sides with God against myself.

Fallen man is not on trial, but is a criminal already under sentence (John 3:18). "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10-12). That is God's indictment against each of us. No pleading will avail, no excuses will be accepted. The present issue between God and the sinner is, Will man bow to, or endorse with his heart, God's righteous verdict?

It is just here that the Gospel meets us. It comes to us as those who are already lost, as those who are "ungodly" "without strength," at "enmity against God." When the Gospel first comes to the sinner it finds him in a state of apostasy from God, both as sovereign Ruler and our supreme Good, neither obeying and glorifying Him, nor enjoying and finding satisfaction in Him. Hence the demand for "repentance toward God" before "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). True repentance towards God removes this disaffection of our minds and hearts toward Him, under both these characters. In saving repentance the whole soul turns to Him and says: I have been a disloyal and rebellious creature: I have scorned Your high authority and most rightful law. I will live no longer thus. I now desire and determine with all my might to serve and obey You as my only Lord. I subject myself unto You, to submit to Your will.

Nor is the above all that a truly penitent soul says unto God. He goes on: Hitherto I have been a miserable and forlorn creature, destitute of anything which could satisfy or make me truly happy. My heart has been set upon a vain world which could not meet my real needs; it has flattered and mocked me often, but never contented me; it has "pierced me through with many sorrows." I forsook the Fountain of living waters and turned to broken cisterns which held none. I own

and bewail my folly: I unsparingly condemn myself for my madness. I now betake myself to You as my present and everlasting Portion.

The Gospel proclaims the amazing grace of God, which is the guilty and condemned sinner's only hope. Yet that grace will never be really welcomed until the sinner truly bows beneath God's sentence against him. This is why both repentance and faith are demanded of us. The two must never be separated. When our Lord was speaking to the chief priests and elders about their rejection of John's message, the charge preferred against them was: "you repented not afterward, that you might believe in him" (Matthew 21:32). Repentance is the heart's acknowledgment of the justice of God's sentence of condemnation; faith is the heart's glad acceptance of the grace and mercy which are extended to us through Christ. Repentance is not simply the turning over of a new leaf and vowing that I will mend my ways: rather is it a setting to my seal that God is true when He declares I am "without strength"; that in myself my case is hopeless; that I am no more capable of "doing better" than I am of creating a world. Not until this is believed on the authority of God's Word shall I really turn to Christ and welcome Him — not as Helper, but as a Savior!

Repentance is more than conviction of sin or terror of the wrath to come. This is clear from Acts 2:37, 38. Under Peter's searching message the Jews were made to realize their awful guilt before God: they were made conscious of the awful fact that they had murdered the Prince of life, and so were in terrible fear of being cast into Hell. Nevertheless, though already "pricked in their hearts," when they cried out "What shall we do?" Peter said, "Repent." To a superficial mind, such a demand might appear needless yet was it seasonable counsel. Their being "pricked in their heart" was legal terror, whereas saving "repentance" is an evangelical judging of self, mourning over sin out of a sense of God's grace and goodness.

A careful and prayerful pondering of Acts 2:37, 38 should correct more than one error which is now current in various circles. When the hearers of Peter were affrighted by their awful crime and fearful

of the wrath to come, pricked in their heart — as though a sword had been run through their vitals — they cried out in anguish "What shall we do?" The apostle did not say, "Be passive, there is nothing you can do," thus encouraging the fatal inertia of hyper-Calvinists. Nor did he say "Believe your sins are blotted out," which is the counsel of many "physicians of no value" in our day. No, his reply was far otherwise, in substance amounting to this: Take all the blame which belongs to you. Own the whole truth unto God. Do not gloss over, but confess your awful wickedness; let your uncircumcised hearts be truly humbled before Him. And then look by faith to the free grace of God through the blood of Christ for pardon, and in token that all your dependence is on His meditation and merits, be baptized in His name, and that shall be to you an eternal sign of the remission of your sins.

"It is manifest from the nature of the case, that he who has his eyes opened to see the glory of the Divine nature, the beauty of the Divine law, the infinite evil of sin, the need of an infinite atonement, and so to see his need of Christ: and at the same time, views God as the supreme, all-sufficient Good, ready to receive every sinner that returns Him through Christ: it is manifest, I say, that every one who is thus taught of God, will repent and turn to God as his sovereign Lord and supreme Good, and return through Jesus Christ, who is the way to the Father, and the only way, in the view of one thus Divinely enlightened. For in the clearer light the glory of the Divine nature and law is seen, in exact proportion will be the sense of the infinite evil of sin, and the need of Christ's infinite atonement and perfect righteousness. And so 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' will be naturally implied in each other.

"He who repents in view of the glory of God, the glory of the law, and of the atonement, will in his repentance look only to free grace through Jesus Christ for mercy, in a view of the glory of God, law, atonement, and will in doing so, take the whole blame of his disaffection to the Divine character, as exhibited in the law, and on the cross of Christ, to himself, judging and condemning himself, and

in the very act of faith, repent and be converted. When therefore it is said 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved' (Acts 16:31), the same (inclusive) thing is meant as when it is said, 'Repent you therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out' (Acts 3:19). For the apostolic faith implies repentance, and sometimes both together; but the same thing is always intended. For in the view of the apostles, repentance and faith were mutually implied in each other" (Jos. Bellamy, 1750).

A Full and Formal Definition of Repentance

Giving a more full and formal definition of repentance, we would say: Repentance is a supernatural and inward revelation from God, giving a deep consciousness of what I am in His sight, which causes me to loathe and condemn myself, resulting in a bitter sorrow for sin, a holy horror and hatred for sin, a turning away from or forsaking of sin. It is the discovery of God's high and righteous claims upon me, and of my lifelong failure to meet those claims. It is the recognition of the holiness and goodness of His law, and my defiant insubordination thereto. It is the perception that God has the right to rule and govern me, and of my refusal to submit unto Him. It is the apprehension that He has dealt in goodness and kindness with me, and that I have evilly repaid Him by having no concern for His honor and glory. It is the realization of His gracious patience with me, and how that instead of this melting my heart and causing me to yield loving obedience to Him, I have abused His forbearance by continuing a course of self-will.

Evangelical repentance is a heart-apprehension of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is the recognition of the chief thing wherein I am blameworthy, namely, in having so miserably failed to render unto God that which is His rightful due. As the Holy Spirit sets before me the loveliness of the Divine character, as I am enabled to discern the exalted excellency of God, then I begin to perceive that to which He is justly entitled, namely, the homage of my heart, the unrestricted love of my soul, the complete surrender of my whole being to Him. As I

perceive that, from the moment I drew my first breath, God has sought only my good, that the One who gave me being has constantly ministered to my every creature need, and that the least I can do in return is to acknowledge His abounding mercies by doing that which is pleasing in His sight; I am now overwhelmed with anguish and horror as I realize I have treated Him more vilely than my worst enemy.

Oftentimes example is better than the most accurate definition. The N. T. furnishes quite a number of concrete instances even where the term itself is not found. When the "publican" stood afar off and would not so much as lift up his eyes unto Heaven, but smote his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13), we behold repentance in action. He recognized that awful moral distance which sin had taken him from God; he was deeply conscious of his utter unworthiness to gaze upon the Holy One; he unsparingly judged himself; he realized that his only hope lay in the sovereign mercy of God. So too the thief on the cross: in his words to his hardened companion, "Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation, and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds" (Luke 23:40, 41). There was no self-examination, but ready owning of his sinnership and his desert to be punished.

Mark carefully the expressions of penitence used by David in Psalm 51. He talks not of his "failures," "mistakes" or infirmities, but instead of "my transgressions" (verse 1), "my sin" (verse 2), "his evil" (verse 4), "my iniquity" (verse 9), and expressly mentions the worst feature of his crime, namely, his "blood-guiltiness" (verse 14). True repentance abhors gentle names for sin, nor does it seek to cloak wickedness. That which, while being tempted, is thought of as no great offence, when (later) is truly repented of, is acknowledged to be heinous. Sin before its commission often appears unto the mind as a very small evil, but when grace acts in a way of repentance for it, then the false glamour disappears and it is viewed in its dreadful malignity and loathed accordingly.

The Accompaniment of True Repentance

True repentance is always accompanied by a deep longing and a sincere determination to forsake that course which is displeasing to God. With what honesty could any man seek God's pardon while he continued to defy Him and would not part with that which He forbids? Would any king pardon a traitor, though he seemed never so humble, if he saw that he would be a traitor still? True, God is infinitely more merciful than any human king, yet in the very passage where He first formally proclaimed His mercy, He at once added "that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:5-7), that is, guilty-hearted, those with false and disloyal hearts toward Himself, who would not be subject to Him in all things, and declined to have their every thought brought into captivity to obedience unto Him (2 Corinthians 10:5).

What has just been said needs to be strongly emphasized in this day of lawlessness, when, on every side, the very "grace of God" is being "turned into lasciviousness" (Jude 4). Many are the scriptures which set forth truth, that there must be a forsaking of sin before God will pardon offenders. "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." (Psalm 130:4). Were God to grant pardon unto those in whom there was no change of heart to fear and obey Him, then there would be mercy with Him that He might be insulted and dishonored still further. God's mercy is never exercised at the expense of His holiness! God never displays one of His attributes so as to dishonor another. To pity a thief, while continuing a thief, would be folly, not wisdom. Well did the Puritan Thomas Goodwin say, "Resolve either to leave every known sin and to submit to every known duty, or else never look to find mercy and favor with God."

Of old it was announced that should any "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart to add drunkenness to thirst [that is, one sin to another]: the Lord will not spare him" (Deuteronomy 29:19, 20). So, on the other hand it was declared, "If My people which are called by My name,

shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14, and cf. 2 Chron, 6:26). And the principles of God's judgment have not changed! The death of Christ has not caused God to lower His standard — how unspeakably horrid and dreadful that any one should suppose that it has! No, what God demanded of old, He demands now.

Thus, repentance is the negative side of conversion. Conversion is a whole-hearted turning unto God, but there cannot be a turning unto without a turning from. Sin must be forsaken before we can draw near unto the Holy One. As it is written, "you turned to God from idols to serve (live for) the living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Thus, repentance is the sinner making his peace with God. We are not unmindful of the fact that that expression is derided by many, yet it is a scriptural one: "let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me" (Isaiah 27:5). It is blessedly true that Christ "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20), yet it is equally true that no sinner ever enters into the saving good of Christ's blood until he makes his peace with God; in other words, until he throws down the weapons of his warfare and ceases fighting against God. The Lord Jesus Himself plainly taught this in Luke 14: let the reader carefully ponder verses 28-33, paying special attention to v. 32 and the "so likewise" of v. 33!

3. Its Implications

"If God is an absolutely perfect, and infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and universal obedience; and if our disaffection to the Divine character and rebellion against God, is altogether inexcusable and infinitely criminal, agreeable to the voice of the Divine law and to the import of the cross of Christ; if God the great Governor of the universe views things in this light, and in this view calls unto us from Heaven to confess our sins, repent and turn unto Him with all our hearts; if these things are so, and they are; then the meaning of God's Word is

certain, the ideas designed to be conveyed by them are determinate. To repent, beyond dispute, is to change our minds as to the Divine character, to lay aside our prejudices, to open our eyes, and begin to look upon God as He is, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and of universal obedience; and in the light of this glory to begin to view our disaffection and rebellion as altogether inexcusable and infinitely criminal, and in the view, cordially take all that blame to ourselves which God lays upon us, and to be affected accordingly.

"Repentance is a saying, 'righteous are You, O Lord, when You speak, and clear when You judge.' Should justice take place, no iniquity should be imputed unto You. It would not be a blemish, but a beauty in Your character, and all Heaven ought forever to love and adore Your glorious majesty, should I receive my just deserts and perish forever. But You can have mercy on whom You will, through Jesus Christ. To Your infinite grace and self-moving goodness through Him I look. 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Repentance stands then in opposition to all our former prejudices against the Divine character; and in opposition to that sin-extenuating, self-justifying, law-hating, God-blaspheming disposition which reigns in every impenitent soul. God is seen in His beauty; the Divine law, as a ministration of condemnation and death, appears glorious, our disaffection and rebellion infinitely criminal. We justify God, approve His law, condemn ourselves, accept the punishment of our iniquity as worthy of God; and thus we confess, repent, and turn unto the Lord, looking only to free grace through Jesus Christ for pardon" (J. Bellamy, 1750).

Repentance, then, presupposes, first, a recognition and acknowledgment of God's claims upon us as our Creator, Governor, Provider and Protector. Because God is who and what He is, namely, the sum and source of all moral and spiritual excellency, and because of our relation to Him as creatures completely dependent upon Him, He is infinitely entitled to be loved with all our hearts, worshiped with fullest adoration, and served with joyous, perfect and

unremitting obedience. Until there is at least some measure of a clear and definite (we do not say full) recognition of this, the mind is yet under the blinding power of Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4) and the heart is yet alienated from God (Ephesians 4:18). Thus, repentance necessarily presupposes regeneration, in which the favored soul is "given an understanding that we may know Him that is true" (1 John 5:20). The first evidence that this supernatural enlightenment has been given, is the inward apprehension of God's excellency and supremacy, accompanied by a horrified consciousness of how dreadfully I have failed, all through my life, to give Him His rightful place in my heart and life.

In the second place, true repentance presupposes a hearty approval of God's law and a full consent to its righteous requirements. "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12): it cannot be otherwise, for God is its Author, and nothing unholy, unjust, or evil could ever proceed from Him. It therefore follows that such a law can never be altered or repealed. Those who affirm that the law of God has been abolished, cast the greatest reproach upon all the perfections of the Divine character. Upon His holiness, whereby He loves the right and hates the wrong: for a repeal of the law would suppose God released His creatures from doing right and allowing them to do wrong. Upon His justice, whereby He gives to every one his due: supposing Him to rescind His righteous claims. Upon His immutability; supposing Him to have been in one mind in the past, and another in the present. Upon His goodness: supposing Him to have cancelled that which was designed for our highest well-being.

God's law Never Repealed

If the reader will only make a determined effort to grasp the fact that the requirements of God's law are all summed up in "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," etc. (Duet. 6:5), he ought to have no difficulty in perceiving how frightful is the teaching that the law has been abrogated. Men must indeed have strange conceptions

of Divine grace and of the Gospel, if they suppose that God is now demanding something other or something less than the supreme place in men's affections and lives. Do they think for a moment that in O. T. times God was asking for more love than was His due? Do they imagine that God does not now deserve as much love as He once did? Such a thought would be the most awful blasphemy. Or, do they suppose that God has relinquished His rights and now freely allows His creatures to despise Him? That He has made a concession to their evil hearts by lowering His standard? Is not the real source of opposition to God's law the "enmity of the carnal mind" (Romans 8:7)?!

Perhaps the reader is inclined to reply, But did not Christ come here to fulfill the law for us, and does not His obedience free us from its demands? Pause, dear friend, and weigh well such a question, and endeavor to see what such a concept plainly involves. Surely you do not mean that the Son of God become incarnate for the purpose of procuring an abatement of the law, or to purchase lawless liberty for His rebellious subjects. What! Could He esteem His Father's interest and glory, the honor of His law and government, so lightly? Did He shed His precious blood so as to persuade the great Governor of the world to slacken the reins of government and grant an impious license to lawlessness? Perish the thought. Such a terrible concept would make the ineffably holy Christ the enemy of God and the friend of sin.

So far from the Son coming to earth for such a purpose, He expressly declared, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For truly I say unto you, Until Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17, 18). If the verses which follow this quotation be carefully pondered, it will be seen that our Lord denounced the Pharisees because they had, by their own traditions and inventions, nullified God's law: while allowing that it condemned some external and gross acts of sin, they denied that it reprehended the first strivings of corruption in the

heart. Therefore did Christ say, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

That the law of God was never to be repealed is taught again and again in Psalm 119: "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness and Your law is the truth...The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting...Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever...Your word is true from the beginning, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever" (verse 142, 144, 152, 160). It was as though the Psalmist said, The duty required by Your law is right and good, everlastingly right and good, and therefore, as Governor of the world. You have by law forever settled and established it as duty and law never to be altered, but endure forever, and forever: therefore, will it endure.

So far from Christ having died to disannul the law, so that now it wholly ceases to be a rule of life to believers, the great and declared design of His coming into the world was to recover His people unto a conformity thereto: see Titus 2:11-13. O how men love their corruptions and hate God's law, desiring to have it cashiered so that they may live as they please, and yet escape the reproaches of their consciences here and eternal punishment hereafter. But "God sits as king forever" (Psalm 29:10) and will assert the rights of His crown, maintain the honor of His majesty and the glory of His great name, and vindicate His injured law. He shall yet say, "But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay before Me" (Luke 19:27).

Herein we may see plainly the imperative and absolute need for regeneration if ever a fallen creature is to be won for God, and a defiant rebel transformed into a loving subject. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7) — such is the terrible condition of every man and woman by nature. Nothing but the supernatural

operation of the all-mighty Spirit of God can produce a change of heart, so that one can truthfully say "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22). But such teaching as this never has been and never will be popular in the world. The false prophets who carry "peace, peace" will be loved, but they who press the high and unchanging claims of a righteous God will be hated and denounced as "legalists," etc.

Christ came into this world and died to answer all the demands of the law, and this, not only that sinners might be saved, but that the law itself might be the more firmly "established," that is, in the consciences and hearts of the redeemed. Therefore did the apostle write "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yes, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31). In this very epistle to the Romans, the apostle, moved by the Holy Spirit, lays it down as a first principle that "the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). From this premise, he goes on to prove that, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (3:19). But is it not clear as a sunbeam that if the law had been repealed at the Cross that none could stand "guilty" before God, for sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13)!

If the law were repealed, what need was there for such a long train of argument to prove that "by deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (3:20)? In such a case it had been quite sufficient to say that a repealed law could neither justify nor condemn anybody. Instead, the apostle shows that the law requires a "patient continuance in well doing" and threatens "tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that does evil" (Romans 2:5,7). This shows that both Jews and Gentiles have sinned and therefore are condemned by the law — brought in guilty — and so the apostle draws the inevitable conclusion that none can be cleared or justified by the law. Is it not obvious then that all this inspired reasoning

supposes that the law is as much enforced as ever! Accordingly he goes on to show Christ's death answered the demands of the law, and that, not to make it void, but to "establish" it.

Hence it is that we find the New Testament Scriptures uniformly speak of those who have no saving interest in Christ's righteousness by faith as being as much under the wrath of God and the curse of the law as though He had never died. As we have seen, Romans 1:18 declares "The wrath of God is (not 'was') revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Again, in Galatians 3:10 we are told, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written: Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them": cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. But if the law had been repealed by the death of Christ, then all the world would have been freed from the curse, for a repealed law can neither bless the righteous nor curse the wicked!

Therefore it is we find that when Christless sinners are really awakened by the Holy Spirit to see and feel what a dreadful state they are in, they are always convinced that they are under the wrath of God and the curse of His law: see Romans 7:9-11, and thereby they are made to understand their dire need of a Savior. But how could the Holy Spirit use the law if it had been repealed? And what of those who are never awakened and convicted by the Spirit, and who continue to despise the claims of God and flout His holy law? Ah, they shall find that after their hardness and impenitent heart they have but treasured up unto themselves "wrath against the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:5).

God the Father, as the Governor of the world, gave the law. God the Son magnified it (Isaiah 42:21) by expounding its purity, by obeying its precepts, by enduring its penalty. God the Holy Spirit honors the law by pressing upon the sinner its holy demands, and using it as a "schoolmaster" to bring him to Christ (Galatians 3:24). It is the

special work of the third person of the Trinity to communicate unto each of the elect a sense of the infinite glory of God, the equity of His law, and the righteousness of His claims upon them. He begets within them a disposition which conforms them unto the discharge of their duties, and this he does by putting the law into their minds and writing it in their hearts (Hebrews 8:10). In this way it becomes their very nature to love God with all their hearts so that they "might serve Him without (servile) fear in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74, 75). Thus do both the Son and the Spirit honor the Father as Supreme Governor, and join in the same design to discountenance sin, humble the sinner, magnify the law, and glorify grace.

But this enforcing of the infinite glory of God, of His governmental supremacy, of His holy law, of His righteous claims, of His demand for loving obedience and an implicit compliance with all His demands, is what is left out of every false religion in the world. And today there are, perhaps, as many false religions inside of Christendom as there are outside — denials of the Truth, perversions of the Truth, half-truths twisted and mangled, lawlessness proclaimed under the pretense of exalting grace. "Pretense" we say, for God's grace never reigns at the expense of righteousness but "through righteousness" (Romans 5:21). Divine grace teaches us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12). It is the ministers of Satan, "deceitful workers" (2 Corinthians 11:13) who are now by their one-sided teaching causing many to "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 4).

Here, then, is the explanation why true repentance is so little preached today. The sense of God's governmental supremacy has been lost, the claims of His righteousness are ignored, the unchanging demands of His holy law are no longer recognized, hence, the unregenerate, not knowing God, having no sense of His infinite glory, and there being practically nothing in present-day preaching to instruct them therein, it follows that all their imagined

reverence for and devotion to God takes its rise from merely selfish considerations, nothing but self love (the natural instinct of self preservation) lying at the bottom of modern "Christianity." As it is natural for unregenerate men to suppose they deserve something for their duties, so it is natural for them to be insensible of the infinite evil of their sins. And hence it is that new gospels are invented, new notions of "The way of salvation" are contrived, to suit the depraved taste of unhumbled and impenitent sinners, who are concerned about their own interests and care not what becomes of God's glory.

In the third place, true repentance presupposes a frank and broken-hearted acknowledgment of our wicked failure to keep God's righteous law. When the Holy spirit opens the eyes of a sinner to see, in some measure, the supreme excellency and loveliness of the Divine character, and shows him how infinitely worthy God is of our sincere adoration: when He assures us of the righteousness and goodness of God's law, and how justly He is entitled to be loved by us with all our hearts; and when He convicts us of our wretched and lifelong failure to respond unto His most just claims upon us; when He makes us feel that so far from having delighted ourselves in this infinitely glorious God, we have sought to dismiss Him from our thoughts, and set our hearts upon the perishing things of time and sense, seeking our satisfaction in them: and that so far from having owned His rightful supremacy over us and His just claim for our lives to be governed by Him, we have scorned His authority, ignored His commandments, and acted only in self-will — then it is for the first time we begin to perceive the infinite evil of sin, and are filled with self-loathing, horror and grief at our terrible course of conduct.

What we have just endeavored to set forth is as different from what the strivings of an uneasy conscience produce as light is from darkness. One who has never been the subject of the supernatural and gracious operations of the Spirit may blame himself for Sabbath-breaking, taking the Lord's name in vain, lying, drunkenness, who has never felt himself to blame for being disaffected to the Divine character. Even the wicked king Saul once acknowledged, "I have

sinned, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly" (1 Samuel 26:21). So has many another since then, who was altogether blind to the chief thing wherein he was to blame. While men are ignorant of the beauty of God's character, of how absolutely worthy He is of being loved; while they perceive not the equity and blessedness of His law, of how absolutely entitled it is to implicit, unremitting, and joyous obedience; it is impossible that they should repent because of their failure to render this to Him.

Just as the absence of love to God, together with disaffection to His holy character, lies at the root of and influences the whole course of wickedness which mankind generally live in, so when Scripture calls upon men to repent of particular sins and turn to God, it is their lack of love for God and their enmity against His law, as manifested in and by their particular sins, which they are required to repent of. There is no sin whatever that any man is guilty of but what it proceeds from a disrespect of God's character and a disregard of His authority. Thus it was said of David's sin that he not only had "despised the commandment of the Lord," but had "despised Me," the Lord (2 Samuel 12:9, 10). Therefore in repentance we are required not only to judge our particular sins, but also that insubordination to God which produced them: we are to unsparingly and bitterly condemn ourselves because we have treated the Lord of glory, the King of the universe, with contempt. That is the crime for which we are, above all things else, to blame. Not until we have realized that our rebellion against God was such that nothing but the death of Christ could possibly atone for it, have we truly repented.

The Design of Repentance

Thus, genuine and saving repentance is a taking sides with God against myself. It is not that our repentance extirpates our sins, for there is nothing meritorious about it. It makes no amends for our past vile conduct, nor does it move God to mercy. Yet is repentance required, yes demanded of us, and Divine mercy is not shown where no repentance is. No, repentance is designed to make the heart

loathe sin, and that through a deep sense of its infinite enormity and dreadful pollution: it is to make us dread sin through a heart-realization of its awful guilt. Only thus is the stubborn will broken and the heart made contrite and prepared to turn unto the Lord Jesus and seek salvation through Him by grace alone.

Three Kinds of Repentance spoken of in Scripture

We trust that sufficient has been said in the previous sections to enable any exercised and prayerful reader to distinguish between a false and a true repentance, between a non-saving and saving one. There are three kinds of repentance spoken of in Scripture. First, that of desperation: Esau, Pharaoh, Ahithophel, and Judas are illustrations. Second, that of reformation: Ahab's and that which was brought about under the preaching of Jonah, are illustrations. Third: that which is unto salvation: Acts 11:18; 2 Corinthians 7:10. It is most important that we learn to discriminate between legal conviction and evangelical repentance. Multitudes are deceived at this point: they suppose that because they have been terrified through contemplation of the wrath to come and have abandoned many of their evil ways, they have repented. This by no means follows. A legal conviction fears Hell, evangelical repentance reveres God: the one dreads punishment, the other hates sin; the one informs the mind, the other melts the heart. Evangelical repentance makes no excuses and has no reserves, but cries "I have dishonored Your name, grieved Your Spirit, abused Your patience."

When a sinner is brought to truly realize that he is in great danger, he earnestly desires and diligently seeks deliverance, but that is from the natural instinct of self-preservation, and not because of supernatural grace at work in his heart. Tell him that nothing is required from him except to believe in Christ, rest on His finished work, and like a stony-ground hearer he at once receives the Word with joy, and no human can make him doubt his salvation. Yet his heart has never been broken before God, nor has he any true love for Him. Such people mend their ways and become zealous religionists.

They pray earnestly, read their Bible frequently, and sometimes become active workers in warning their fellows. But tell such that notwithstanding their tears, zeal, and believing the letter of Scripture, they deserve to be damned as much as they ever did, and that God can justly refuse them mercy, and their enmity against Him is likely to become swiftly apparent.

Thousands of deceived souls in Christendom, deluded by the false gospellers of the day, love a God who has no existence except in their own disordered imagination. And terrible beyond words will be their disillusionment in the next world. "How sad and dreadful thing will it be for such poor sinners when they come to die, and enter into the world of spirits, there to find that the God they once loved and trusted in, was nothing but an image framed in their own fancy! They hated the God of Scripture, and hated His Law, and therefore would not believe that either God or His Law were indeed what they were. They were resolved to have a God and a law more to their own minds. How dreadful will their disappointment be! How terrible their surprise! They would never own that they were enemies to God; now they will see that their enmity was so great as to make them resolutely—notwithstanding the plainest evidence—even to deny Him to be what He was. And how righteous will the ways of the Lord appear to be unto them then, in that He gave such over to strong delusion to believe a lie, because they would not love nor believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (Jos. Bellamy)

While God be considered merely as Creditor and sinners as debtors and Christ is regarded as paying the whole debt of all who believe, it cannot but be that souls will be fatally misled. Because Christ obeyed the law as well as suffered its penalty, it by no means follows that we are discharged from doing our duty. Yet, it is now being taught on every side that Christ has done all, and that there is nothing to do but firmly believe in Him, that Christians have nothing to do with the Law, no, not as a rule of life; that they have been freed from all obligations to any duty. But Scripture affirms that Christ died to "purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus

2:14), and that so far from the Christian being discharged from duty, his obligations are immeasurably increased by the grace of the Gospel: Romans 12: 1. But everything is viewed in a false light today, and instead of Christ being regarded as the Friend of holiness, He is made the Minister of sin.

Spurgeon on Repentance

"Repentance to be sure must be entire. Many will say, Sir, I will renounce this sin and the other, but there are certain darling lusts which I must keep. O sirs, in God's name let me entreat you: it is not the giving up of any one sin, nor fifty sins, which is true repentance; it is the solemn renunciation of every sin. If you do harbor one of these accursed vipers in your heart, your repentance is but a sham; if you do indulge in but one lust and do give up every other, that one lust, like one leak in a ship, will sink your soul. Think it not sufficient to give up your outward vices, fancy it not enough to cut off the more corrupt sins of your life: it is all or none which God demands. 'Repent' says He, and when He bids you repent, He means repent of all your sins, otherwise He can never accept your repentance as being real. He says, 'Guild you as you will, O sinner, I abhor you! Yes, make yourself gaudy, like the snake in its azure scales, I hate you still, for I know your venom, and I will flee from you when you come to Me in your most specious garb.' All sin must be given up, or else you shall never have Christ. All transgression must be renounced, or else the gates of Heaven must be barred against you, Let us remember this, that repentance to be sincere, it must be entire.

"True repentance is a turning of the heart, as well as the life; it is the giving up of the whole soul to God to be His forever and ever; it is a renunciation of the sins of the heart, as well as of the crimes of the life. Ah, dear hearers, let none of us fancy we have repented when we have only a false and fictitious repentance; let none of us take that to be the work of the Spirit which is only the work of poor human nature; let us not dream that we have savingly turned unto God, when perhaps we have only turned to ourselves; let us not think it is

enough to have turned from vice to virtue; let us remember it must be a turning of the whole soul to God, so as to be made anew in Christ Jesus; otherwise we have not met the requirements of the text.

"Lastly, upon this point, true repentance must be perpetual. It is not my turning to God during today that will be a proof that I am a true convert; it is forsaking my sins throughout the whole course of my life, until I sleep in the grave. You must not fancy that to be upright for a week will be a proof that you are saved; it is a perpetual abhorrence of evil. The change which God works is neither a transitory nor superficial one; not a cutting off the top of the weed, but an eradication of it; not the sweeping away of the dust of one day, but the taking away of that which is the cause of the dust. You may today go home and pretend to pray, you may today be serious, tomorrow honest, and the next day you may pretend to be devout, but yet, if you return— as Scripture has it, like the dog to its vomit and like the sow to its wallowing in the mire—your repentance shall but sink you deeper into Hell, instead of being a proof of Divine grace in your heart" (from Spurgeon's Sermon on Psalm 7:12). Would that such faithful sermons were being preached in the so-called orthodox and "fundamentalist's" pulpits today.

"To learn by heart that which others say from the heart—to get the outline of a believer's experience, and then to adopt it skillfully to one's self as our own experience—this is a thing so simple that instead of wondering there are hypocrites, I often marvel that there are not ten times more. And then again, the graces—the real graces within—are very easy to counterfeit. There is a repentance that needs to be repented of, and yet approaches near as possible to true repentance. Does repentance make men hate sin? They who have a false repentance may detest some crimes. Does repentance make men resolve that they will not sin? So will this false repentance, for Balaam said: 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I will not go beyond the word of the Lord.' Does true repentance make men humble themselves? So does false repentance, for Ahab humbled himself before God, and yet perished. There is a line of

distinction so fine that an eagle's eye has not seen it; and only God Himself, and the soul that is enlightened by His Spirit, can tell whether our repentance be real or not" (Spurgeon on Luke 13:24).

To help the exercised reader identify true repentance, consider:

4. Its Fruits

First, a real hatred of sin as sin, not merely its consequences. A hatred not only of this or that sin, but of all sin, and particularly of the root itself; self-will. "Thus says the Lord God, Repent, and turn from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations" (Ezekiel 14:6). He who hates not sin, loves it. God's demand is, "You shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that you have committed" (Ezekiel 20:43). One who has really repented can truthfully say, "I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104). He who once thought a course of holy living was a gloomy thing, has another judgment now. He who once regarded a course of self-pleasing as attractive, now detests it and has purposed to forsake all sin forever. This is the change of mind which God requires.

Second, a deep sorrow for sin. The non-saving repentance of so many is principally a distress occasioned by forebodings of Divine wrath; but evangelical repentance produces a deep grief from a sense of having offended so infinitely excellent and glorious a Being as God. The one is the effect of fear, the other of love; the one is only for a brief season, the other is the habitual practice for life. Many a man is filled with regret and remorse for a misspent life, yet has no poignant sorrow of heart for his ingratitude and rebellion against God. But a regenerated soul is cut to the quick for having disregarded and opposed his great Benefactor and rightful Sovereign. This is the change of heart which God requires.

"You sorrowed to repentance: for you were made sorry after a godly manner...for godly sorrow works repentance to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:9,10). Such a sorrow is produced in the heart by the

Holy Spirit and has God for its object. It is a grief for having despised such a God, rebelled against His authority, and been indifferent to His glory. It is this which causes us to "weep bitterly" (Matthew 26:75). He who has not grieved over sin takes pleasure therein. God requires us to "afflict" our souls (Leviticus 16:29). His call is, "Turn you even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful" (Joel 2:12,13). Only that sorrow for sin is genuine which causes us to crucify "the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

Third, a confessing of sin. "He who covers his sins shall not prosper" (Proverbs 28:13). It is "second nature" to the sinner to "deny his sins, directly or indirectly, to minimize, or make excuses for them. It was thus with Adam and Eve at the beginning. But when the Holy Spirit works in any soul, his sins are brought to light, and he, in turn, acknowledges them to God. There is no relief for the stricken heart until he does so: "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Psalm 32:3,4). The frank and brokenhearted owning of our sins is imperative if peace of conscience is to be maintained. This is the change of attitude which God requires.

Fourth, an actual turning from sin. "Surely there is no one here so stupefied with the laudanum of hellish indifference as to imagine that he can revel in his lusts and afterwards wear the white robes of the redeemed in Paradise. If you imagine you can be partakers of the blood of Christ, and yet drink the cup of Belial; if you imagine you can be members of Satan and members of Christ at the same time, you have less sense than one would give you credit for. No, you know that right hands must be cut off and right eyes plucked out—that the most darling sins must be renounced—if you would enter the kingdom of God" (from Spurgeon on Luke 13:24).

Three Greek words are used in the New Testament which represent different phases of repentance. First, "metanoeo," which means a change of mind: Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:15, etc. Second, "metamelomai," which means a change of heart: Matthew 21:29,32; Hebrews 7:21, etc. Third, "metanoia," which means a change of course of life: Matthew 3:8; 9:13; Acts 20:21. These three must go together for a genuine repentance. Many experience a change of mind: they are instructed, and know better, but they continue to defy God. Some are even exercised in heart and conscience, yet they continue in sin. Some amend their ways, yet not from love to God and hatred of sin. Some are informed in mind and uneasy in heart, who never reform their lives. These three must go together.

"He who covers his sins shall not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). He who does not fully in his hearts's desire, and increasingly so in his life, turn from his wicked ways, has not repented. If I really hate sin and sorrow over it, shall I not abandon it? Note carefully the "wherein in time past" of Ephesians 2:2 and "were sometimes" of Titus 3:3! "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him" (Isaiah 55:7). This is the change of course which God requires.

Fifth, accompanied by restitution where that is necessary and possible. No repentance can be true which is not accompanied by a complete amendment of life. The prayer of a genuinely repentant soul is, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). And where one really desires to be right with God, he does so with his fellow men too. One who, in his past life, has wronged another, and now makes no determined effort to do everything in his power to right that wrong certainly has not repented! John G. Paton tells of how after a certain servant was converted, the first thing he did was to restore unto his master all the articles which he had stolen from him!

Sixth, these fruits are permanent. Because true repentance is preceded by a realization of the loveliness and excellency of the Divine character and an apprehension of the exceeding sinfulness of sin for having treated with contempt so infinitely a glorious Being, contrition for and hatred of all evil is abiding. As we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, of our indebtedness and obligations to Him, our repentance deepens, we judge ourselves more thoroughly, and take a lower and lower place before Him. The more the heart pants after a closer walk with God, the more will it put away everything which hinders this.

Seventh, yet repentance is never perfect in this life. Our faith is never so complete that we get to the place where the heart is no more harassed with doubtings. And our repentance is never so pure that it is altogether free from hardness of heart. Repentance is a lifelong act. We need to pray daily for a deeper repentance.

In view of all that has been said, we trust it is now abundantly clear to every impartial reader that those preachers who repudiate repentance are to poor lost souls, "physicians of no value." They who leave out repentance are preaching "another gospel" (Galatians 1:6) than Christ (Mark 1:15, 6:12) and His apostles (Acts 17:30; 20:21) proclaimed. Repentance is an evangelical duty, though it is not to be rested in, for it contributes nothing unto salvation. Those who have never repented are yet in the snare of the Devil (2 Timothy 2:25, 26), and are "treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the Day of wrath" (Romans 2:4,5).

"If, therefore, sinners would take the wisest course to be better for the use of the means of grace, they must try to fall in with God's design and the Spirit's influences, and labor to see and feel their sinful, guilty, undone state. For this end they must forsake vain company, drop their inordinate worldly pursuits, abandon everything which tends to keep them secure in sin and quench the motions of the Spirit; and for this end must they read, meditate and pray; comparing themselves with God's holy law, trying to view

themselves in the same light that God does, and pass the same judgment upon themselves, so that they may be in the way to approve of the Law and admire the grace of the Gospel; to judge themselves and humbly apply to the free grace of God through Jesus Christ for all things, and return through Him to God" (Jos. Bellamy).

Summary

A summary of what has been before us may be helpful to some.

1. Repentance is an evangelical duty, and no preacher is entitled to be regarded as a servant of Christ's if he be silent thereto (Luke 24:47).
2. Repentance is required by God in this dispensation (Acts 17:30) as in all preceding ones.
3. Repentance is in nowise meritorious, yet without it the Gospel cannot be savingly believed (Matthew 21:32; Mark 1:15).
4. Repentance is a Spirit-given realization of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and a taking sides with God against myself.
5. Repentance presupposes a heart approval of God's law and a full consent to its righteous requirements, which are all summed up in "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," etc.
6. Repentance is accompanied by a genuine hatred of and sorrow for sin.
7. Repentance is evidenced by a forsaking of sin.
8. Repentance is known by its permanency: there must be a continual turning away from sin and grieving over each fall thereunto.
9. Repentance, while permanent, is never complete or perfect in this life.

10. Repentance is to be sought as a gift from Christ.

Coming to Christ

Introduction

By way of introduction let us bring before the readers the following Scriptures.

(1) "You will not come to me, that you might have life" John 5:40.

(2) "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" Matthew 11:28.

(3) "No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him" John 6:44.

(4) "All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out" John 6:37.

(5) "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" Luke 14:26,27.

(6) "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious" 1 Peter 2:4.

(7) "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them" Hebrews 7:25.

The first of these passages applies to every unregenerate man and woman on this earth. While he is in a state of nature, no man can come to Christ. Though all excellencies, both Divine and human, are found in the Lord Jesus, though He is "altogether lovely" (Song of Sol. 5:16), yet the fallen sons of Adam see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. They may be well instructed in "the doctrine of Christ," they may believe unhesitatingly all that Scripture affirms concerning Him, they may frequently take His name upon their lips, profess to be resting on His finished work, sing His praises, yet their hearts are far from Him. The things of this world have the first place in their affections. The gratifying of self is their dominant concern. They surrender not their lives to Him. He is too holy to suit their love of sin; His claims are too exacting to suit their selfish hearts; His terms of discipleship are too severe to suit their fleshly ways. They will not yield to His Lordship—true alike with each one of us until God performs a miracle of grace upon our hearts,

The second of these passages contains a gracious invitation, made by the compassionate Savior to a particular class of sinners. The "all" is at once qualified, clearly and definitely, by the words which immediately follow it. The character of those to whom this loving word belongs is clearly defined: it is those who "labor" and are "heavy laden." Most clearly then it applies not to the vast majority of our light-headed, gay-hearted, pleasure-seeking fellows, who have no regard for God's glory and no concern about their eternal welfare. No, the word for such poor creatures is rather, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes: but know you, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). But to those who have "labored" hard to keep the law and please God, who are "heavy laden" with a felt sense of their utter inability to meet His requirements, and who long

to be delivered from the power and pollution of sin, Christ says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The third passage quoted above at once tells us that "coming to Christ" is not the easy matter so many imagine it, nor so simple a thing as most preachers represent it to be. Instead of its so being, the incarnate Son of God positively declares that such an act is utterly impossible to a fallen and depraved creature unless and until Divine power is brought to bear upon him. A most pride-humbling, flesh-withering, man-abasing word is this. "Coming to Christ" is a far, far different thing from raising your hand to be prayed for by some Protestant "priest," coming forward and taking some cheap-jack evangelist's hand, signing some "decision" card, uniting with some "church," or any other of the "many inventions" (Ecclesiastes 7:29) of man. Before any one can or will "come to Christ" the understanding must be supernaturally enlightened, the heart must be supernaturally changed, the stubborn will must be supernaturally broken.

The fourth passage is also one that is unpalatable to the carnal mind, yet is it a precious portion unto the Spirit-taught children of God. It sets forth the blessed truth of unconditional election, or the discriminating grace of God. It speaks of a favored people whom the Father gives to His Son. It declares that every one of that blessed company shall come to Christ: neither the effects of their fall in Adam, the power of indwelling sin, the hatred and untiring efforts of Satan, nor the deceptive delusions of blind preachers, will be able to finally hinder them—when God's appointed hour arrives, each of His elect is delivered from the power of darkness and is translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. It announces that each such one who comes to Christ, no matter how unworthy and vile he be in himself no matter how black and long the awful catalogue of his sins, He will by no means despise or fail to welcome him, and under no circumstances will He ever cast him off.

The fifth passage is one that makes known the terms on which alone Christ is willing to receive sinners. Here the uncompromising claims of His holiness are set out. He must be crowned Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all. There must be the complete heart-renunciation of all that stands in competition with Him. He will brook no rival. All that pertains to "the flesh," whether found in a loved one or in self, has to be hated. The "cross" is the badge of Christian discipleship: not a golden one worn on the body, but the principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice ruling the heart. How evident is it, then, that a mighty, supernatural work of divine grace must be wrought in the human heart, if any man will even desire to meet such terms!

The sixth passage tells us that the Christian is to continue as he began. We are to "come to Christ" not once and for all, but frequently, daily. He is the only One who can minister to our needs, and to Him we must constantly turn for the supply of them. In our felt emptiness, we must draw from His "fullness" (John 1:16). In our weakness, we must turn to Him for strength. In our ignorance we must seek afresh His cleansing. All that we need for time and eternity is stored up in Him: refreshment when we are weary (Isaiah 40:3 1), healing of body when we are sick (Exodus 15:26), comfort when we are sad (1 Peter 5:7), deliverance when we are tempted (Hebrews 2:18). If we have wandered away from Him, left our first love, then the remedy is to "repent and do the first works" (Rev. 2:5), that is, cast ourselves upon Him anew, come just as we did the first time we came to Him—as unworthy, self-confessed sinners, seeking His mercy and forgiveness.

The seventh passage assures us of the eternal security of those who do come. Christ saves "unto the uttermost" or "for evermore" those who come unto God by Him. He is not of one mind to day and of another tomorrow. No, He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1), and blessedly does He give proof of this, for "He ever lives to make intercession for

them." inasmuch as His prayers are effectual, for He declares that the Father hear Him "always" (John 11:42), none whose name is indelibly stamped on the heart of our great High Priest can ever perish. Hallelujah!

Having sought to thus introduce some of the leading aspects of the subject which is to engage our attention, we now propose to enter into some detail as the Spirit of Truth is pleased to grant us His much-needed assistance. Let us consider some of the obstacles in coming to Christ.

Obstacles in Coming to Christ

Under this head it will be our endeavor to show why it is that the natural man is unable to "come to Christ." As a starting point let us again quote John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him." The reason why this is such a "hard saying," even unto thousands who profess to be Christians, is because they utterly fail to realize the terrible havoc which the Fall has wrought; and, it is greatly to be feared, because they are themselves strangers to "the plague" of their own hearts (1 Kings 8:38). Surely if the Spirit had ever awakened them from the sleep of spiritual death, and given them to see something of the dreadful state they were in by nature, and they had been brought to feel that the carnal mind in them was "enmity against God" (Romans 8:7), then they would no longer cavil against this solemn word of Christ's. But the spiritually dead can neither see nor feel spiritually.

Wherein lies the total inability of the natural man?

1. It is not in the lack of the necessary faculties. This needs to be plainly insisted upon, or otherwise fallen man would cease to be a responsible creature. Fearful as were the effects of the Fall, yet they deprived man of none of the faculties with which God originally endowed him. True it is that the coming in of sin took away from man all power to use those faculties aright, that is, to employ them

for the glory of his Maker. Nevertheless, fallen man possesses identically the same threefold nature, of spirit and soul and body, as he did before the Fall. No part of man's being was annihilated, though each part was defiled and corrupted by sin. True, man died spiritually, but death is not extinction of being: spiritual death is alienation from God (Ephesians 4:18): the spiritually dead one is very much alive and active in the service of Satan.

No, the inability of fallen man to come to Christ" lies in no physical or mental defect. He has the same feet to take him unto a place where the Gospel is preached, as he has to walk with to a picture-show. He has the same eyes by which to read the Holy Scriptures, as he has to read the world's newspapers. He has the same lips and voice for calling upon God, as he now uses in idle talk or foolish song. So too he has the same mental faculties for pondering the things of God and the concerns of eternity, as he now uses so diligently in connection with his business. It is because of this that man is "without excuse.' It is the misuse of the faculties with which the Creator has endowed him which increases man's guilt. Let every servant of God see to it that these things are constantly pressed upon their unsaved hearers.

2. We have to search deeper in order to find the seat of man's spiritual impotency. His inability lies in his corrupt nature. Through Adam's fall, and through our own sin, our nature has become so debased and depraved, that it is impossible for any to "come to Christ," to "love and serve Him," to esteem Him more highly than all the world put together and submit to His rule, until the Spirit of God renews him, and implants a new nature. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet waters, nor an evil tree produce good fruit. Let us try and make this still clearer by an illustration. It is the nature of a vulture to feed upon carrion: true, it has the same bodily members to feed upon the wholesome grain as the hens do, but it lacks the disposition and relish for it. It is the nature of a sow to wallow in the mire: true, it has the same legs as a sheep, to conduct it to the meadow, but it lacks the desire for the green pastures. So it is with

the unregenerate man. He has the same physical and mental faculties as the regenerate have for the things and service of God, but he has no love for them.

"Adam. . . begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Genesis 5:3). What an awful contrast is found here from that which we read two verses before: 'God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.' In the interval, Adam had fallen, and a fallen parent could beget only a fallen child, transmitting unto him his own depravity. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4). Therefore do we find the sweet singer of Israel declaring, "Behold I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Psalm 51:5). Though, later, grace made him the man after God's own heart, yet by nature David (as we) was a mass of iniquity and sin. How early does this corruption of nature appear in children. "Even a child is known by his doings" (Proverbs 20:11): the evil bias of its heart is soon manifested—pride, self-will, vanity, lying, averseness to good, are the bitter fruits which quickly appear on the tender but vitiated twig.

3. The inability of the natural man to "come to Christ" lies in the complete darkness of his understanding. This leading faculty of the soul has been despoiled of its primitive glory, and covered over with confusion. Both mind and conscience are defiled: "there is none that understands" (Romans 3:11). Solemnly did the apostle remind the saints: "you were sometimes darkness" (Ephesians 5:8), not merely "in darkness," but "darkness" itself. "Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness is over all the region: it is the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is your case, whoever you are, that are not born again" (Thomas. Boston, 1680). "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jeremiah 4:22).

"The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). There is in the unregenerate an opposition to spiritual things and an aversion against them. God has made a revelation of His will unto sinners touching the way of salvation, yet they will not walk therein. They hear that Christ alone is able to save, yet they refuse to part with those things that hinder their coming to Him. They hear that it is sin which slays the soul, and yet they cherish it in their bosoms. They heed not the threatenings of God. Men believe that fire will burn them, and are at great pains to avoid it; yet they show by their actions that they regard the everlasting burnings as a mere scarecrow. The Divine commandments are "holy, just, and good," but men hate them, and observe them only so far as their respectability among men is promoted.

4. The inability of the natural man to "come to Christ" lies in the complete corruption of his affections. "Man as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If you want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which does not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is Christ Jesus so little beloved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God" (C.H. Spurgeon, Sermon on John 6:44).

The affections of the unrenewed man are wholly depraved and distempered. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). Solemnly did the Lord Jesus affirm that the affections of fallen man are a mother of abominations: "For from within (not from the Devil!) out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21,22). "The natural man's affections are wretchedly misplaced; he is a spiritual monster. His heart is where his feet should be, fixed on the earth: his heels are lifted up against Heaven, which his heart should be set on: Acts 9:5. His face is towards Hell, his back towards Heaven; and therefore God calls him to turn. He joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in; glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor: Proverbs 2:13-15"(From Boston's "Fourfold State").

5. The inability of the natural man to "come to Christ" lies in the total depravity of his will. "Oh!" said the Arminian, 'men may be saved if they will.' We reply, 'My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if they will that is the difficulty.' We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ Himself declares it—'You will not come to me that you might have life' (John 5:40); and as long as that 'you will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will. It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. 'Now,' says one, 'I believe men can be saved if they will.' My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare upon scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human being will ever be constrained towards Christ" (C.H. Spurgeon).

"Now here is a threefold cord against Heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken; a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly, distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says the man should not stoop; and the corrupt affections rising against the Lord, in defense of the corrupt will, says, he shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, until a day of power come, in which he is made a new creature" (T. Boston). Perhaps some readers are inclined to say, Such teaching as this is calculated to discourage sinners and drive them to despair. Our answer is, first, it is according to God's Word! Second, O that it may please Him to use this article to drive some to despair of all help from themselves. Third, it makes manifest the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit's working with such depraved and spiritually helpless creatures, if they are ever to savingly come to Christ. And until this is clearly perceived, His aid will never be really sought in earnest!

There are some souls greatly distressed and puzzled to know exactly what is signified by "coming to Christ." They have read and heard the words often, and perhaps many a preacher has bidden them to 'come to Him," yet without giving a scriptural explanation of what that term connotes. Such as have been awakened by the Spirit, shown their woeful condition, convicted of their high-handed and lifelong rebellion against God, and brought to realize their dire need of Christ, and who are truly anxious to come savingly to Him, have found it a task altogether beyond their powers. Their cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" (Job 23:3). True, there are not many who pass through such an experience, for God's 'flock" is but a "little" one (Luke 12:32). True, the vast majority of professing Christians claim that the found "coming to Christ" a very simple matter. But in the clear light of John 6:44 we must assure you, dear reader, that if you found "coming to Christ" to be easy, then it is proof you have never come to Him at all in a spiritual and saving way.

What, then, is meant by "coming to Christ"? First, and negatively, let it be pointed out that it is not an act which we perform by any of our

bodily members. This is so obvious that there should be no need for us to make the statement. But in these awful days of spiritual ignorance and the carnal perversion of the holy things of God, explanation of the most elementary truths and terms is really required. When so many precious souls have been deluded into thinking that a going forward to a "mourner's bench" or "penitent form," or the taking of some preacher's hand, is the same thing as coming to Christ, we dare not pass over the defining of this apparently simple term, nor ignore the need for pointing out what it does not signify.

Second, the word "come," when used in this connection, is a metaphorical one: that is to say, a word which expresses an act of the body is transferred to the soul, to denote its act. To "come to Christ" signifies the movement of a Spirit-enlightened mind toward the Lord Jesus—as Prophet, to be instructed by Him; as Priest, whose atonement and intercession are to be relied upon; as King, to be ruled by Him. Coming to Christ implies a turning of our back upon the world, and a turning unto Him as our only Hope and Portion. It is a going out of self so as to rest fl() longer on anything in self. It is the abandoning of every idol and of all other dependencies, the heart going out to Him in loving submission and trustful confidence. it is the will surrendering to Him as Lord, ready to accept His yoke, take up the cross, and follow Him without reserve.

To "come to Christ" is the turning of the whole soul unto a whole Christ in the exercise of Divine grace upon Him: it is the mind, heart and will being supernaturally drawn to Him, so as to trust, love and serve Him. "It is the duty and interest of weary and heavy-laden sinners to 'come to Jesus Christ'—renouncing all those things which stand in opposition to Him, or in competition with Him; we must accept Him as our Physician and Advocate, and give up ourselves to His conduct and government, freely willing to be saved by Him, in His own way, and on His own terms" (Matthew Henry). Before proceeding further, we would earnestly beg each reader to prayerfully and carefully test and measure himself of herself by what

has been said in this and the preceding paragraph. Take nothing for granted: as you value your soul, seek Divine help to make sure that you have truly "come to Christ."

Now a popish "Christ" is a Christ of wood, and a false preacher's "Christ" is a Christ of words; but Christ Jesus, our Lord, is "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace" (Isaiah 9:6). The Christ of God fills Heaven and earth: He is the One by whom all things exist and consist. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having all power, dominion, and might. He is made higher than the heavens, and unto Him all principalities and powers are subject. At His presence both the earth and the heavens shall yet flee away. Such a Christ is neither to be offered nor offered, sold nor given by sinful men. He is the unspeakable Gift of the Father to as many as He has ordained to eternal life, and none others. This Christ, this Gift of the Father, is supernaturally revealed and applied to the heirs of salvation by the Holy Spirit, when, where, and as He pleases; and not when, where, and how men please.

In the preceding article we dwelt at length upon those words of Christ in John 6:44, "no man can come unto me," seeking to show the nature of the fallen creature's spiritual impotency, or why it is the unregenerate are unable to come to Christ in a spiritual and saving way. Let us now ponder the remainder of our Lord's sentence: "except the Father which sent me draw him." Of what does that "drawing" consist? We answer, first, just as our "coming to Christ" does not refer to any bodily action, so this Divine "drawing" respects not the employment of any external force. Second, it signifies a powerful impulse put forth by the Holy Spirit within the elect, whereby their native impotency for performing spiritual actions is overcome, and an ability for the same is imparted. It is this secret and effectual operation of the Spirit upon the human soul which enables and causes it to come to Christ. This brings us to our next division.

Coming to Christ with our Understanding

1. A knowledge of Christ is essential. There can be no movement towards an unknown object. No man can obey a command until he is acquainted with its terms. A prop must be seen before it will be rested upon. We must have some acquaintance with a person before he will either be trusted or loved. This principle is so obvious it needs arguing no further. Apply it unto the case in hand, the subject before us: the knowledge of Christ must of necessity precede our believing on Him or our coming to Him. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14). "He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). None can come to Christ while they are ignorant about Him. As it was in the old creation, so it is in the new: God first says, "Let there be light."

2. This knowledge of Christ comes to the mind from the Holy Scriptures. Nothing can be known of Him save that which God has been pleased to reveal concerning Him in the Word of Truth. It is there alone that the true "doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9) is to be found. Therefore did our Lord give commandment, "Search the Scriptures.. they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). When He berated the two disciples for their slowness of heart to believe, we are told that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). The Divine Oracles are designed "the word of Christ" (Colossians 3:16) because He is the substance of them. Where the Scriptures have not gone, Christ is unknown: clear proof is this that an acquaintance with Him cannot be gained apart from their inspired testimony.

3. A theoretical knowledge of Christ is not sufficient. Upon this point we must dilate at greater length, for much ignorance concerning it prevails today. A head-knowledge about Christ is very frequently mistaken for a heart-acquaintance with Him. But orthodoxy is not salvation. A carnal judgment about Christ, a mere intellectual knowledge of Him, will never bring a dead sinner to His feet: there must be a living experience—God's word and work meeting together

in the soul, renewing and understanding. As 1 Corinthians 13:2 so plainly and solemnly warns us, I may have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, yet if I have not love, then I am nothing. Just as a blind man may, through labor and diligence, acquire an accurate theoretical or notional conception of many subjects and objects which he never saw, so the natural man may, by religious education and personal effort, obtain a sound doctrinal knowledge of the person and work of Christ, without having any spiritual or vital acquaintance with Him.

Not every kind of knowledge, even God's Truth and His Christ, is effectual and saving. There is a form of knowledge, as well as of godliness, which is destitute of power—"which have the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law" (Romans 2:20). The reference is to the Jews, who were instructed in the Scriptures, and considered themselves well qualified to teach others; yet the Truth had not been written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit. A "form of knowledge" signifies there was a model of it in their brains, so that they were able to discourse freely and fluently upon the things of God, yet were they without the life of God in their souls. O how many have a knowledge of salvation, yet not a knowledge unto salvation, as the apostle distinguishes it in 2 Timothy 3:15—such a knowledge as the latter must be imparted to the soul by the miracle-working operation of the Holy Spirit.

"They proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:3). Of whom was this spoken—of the heathen who were without any written revelation from Him? No, of Israel, who had His law in their hands, His temple in their midst, His prophets speaking to them. They had been favored with many and wondrous manifestations of his majesty, holiness, power and mercy; yet though they had much intellectual knowledge of Him, they were strangers to Him spiritually. So it was when the Son of God became incarnate. How much natural light they had concerning Him: they witnessed His perfect life, saw His wondrous miracles, heard His matchless teaching, were frequently in His immediate presence; yet, though the

Light shone in the darkness, "the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5). So it is today. Reader, you may be a diligent student of the N. T., be thoroughly acquainted with the O. T. types and prophecies, believe all that the Scriptures say concerning Christ, and earnestly teach them to others, and yet be yourself a stranger to Him spiritually.

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), which means that the unregenerate are utterly incapable of discerning the things of God spiritually. True, they may "see" them in a natural way: they may investigate and even admire them theoretically, but to receive them in an experimental and vital way they cannot. As this distinction is of such great importance, and yet so little known today, let us endeavor to illustrate it. Suppose a man who had never heard any music: others tell him of its beauty and charm, and he decides to make a careful study of it. That man might thoroughly familiarize himself with the art of music, learn all the rules of that art, so that he understood the proportions and harmony of it; but what a different thing is that from listening to a grand oratorio—the ear now taking in what before the mind knew only the theory of! Still greater is the difference between a natural and a spiritual knowledge of Divine things.

The apostle declared, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery" (1 Corinthians 2:7). He did not only affirm that it is a mystery in itself, but that it is still spoken "in a mystery." And why is this? Because the unregenerate, even where it is spoken in their hearing, yes, when it is clearly apprehended by them in a notional way, yet they neither know nor apprehend the mystery that is still in it. Proverbs 9:10 declares, "the knowledge of the holy is understanding:" there is no true understanding of Divine things except the "knowledge of the Holy." Every real Christian has a knowledge of Divine things, a personal, experimental, vital knowledge of them, which no carnal man possesses, or can obtain, no matter how diligently he study them. If I have seen the picture of a man, I have an image in my mind of that man according to his picture; but if I see the man

himself, how different is the image of him which is then formed in my mind! Far greater still is the difference between Christ made known in the Scriptures and Christ revealed "in me" (Galatians 1:16).

4. There must be a spiritual and supernatural knowledge of Christ imparted by the Holy Spirit. This is in view in 1 John 5:20, "we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." The faculty must be suited to the object or subject known. The natural understanding is capable of taking in Christ and knowing Him in a natural way, but we must be "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23) before we can know Christ in a spiritual way. There must be a supernatural work of grace wrought upon the mind by the Holy Spirit before there can be any inward and spiritual apprehension of the supernatural and spiritual person of Christ. That is the true and saving knowledge of Christ which fires the affections, sanctifies the will, and raises up the mind to a spiritual fixation on the Rock of ages. It is this knowledge of Him which is "life eternal" (John 17:3). It is this knowledge which produces faith in Christ, love for Him, submission to Him. It is this knowledge which causes the soul to truthfully and joyously exclaim, "Whom have I in Heaven but you? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside you" (Psalm 73:25).

"No man can come unto me, except the Father which has sent me draw him" (John 6:44). It is by the secret and effectual operation of the Spirit that the Father brings each of His elect to a saving knowledge of Christ. These operations of the Spirit begin by His enlightening the understanding, renewing the mind. Observe carefully the order in Ezekiel 37:14, "And shall put my Spirit in you, and you shall live. . .then shall you know that I the Lord have spoken it." No sinner ever comes to Christ until the Holy Spirit first comes to him! And no sinner will savingly believe on Christ until the Spirit has communicated faith to him (Ephesians 2:5; Colossians 2:12); and even then, faith is an eye to discern Christ before it is a foot to approach Him. There can be no act without an object, and there can be no exercising of faith upon Christ until Christ is seen in His

excellency, sufficiency, and suitability to poor sinners. "They that know your name will (not "ought to") put their trust in you" (Psalm 9:10). But again, we say, that knowledge must be a spiritual and miraculous one imparted by the Spirit.

The Spirit Himself, and not merely a preacher, must take of the things of Christ and show them unto the heart. It is only in God's "light" that we truly "see light" (Psalm 36:9). The opening of his eyes precedes the conversion of the sinner from Satan unto God (Acts 26:18). The light of the sun is seen breaking out at the dawn of day, before its heat is felt. It is those who "see" the Son with a supernaturally enlightened understanding that "believe" on Him with a spiritual and saving faith (John 6:40). We behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, before we are changed into His very image (2 Corinthians 3:18). Note the order in Romans 3:11, "there is none that understands" goes before "there is none that seeks after God." The Spirit must shed His light upon the understanding, which light conveys the actual image of spiritual things in a spiritual way to the mind, forming them on the soul; much as a sensitive photographic plate receives from the light the images to which it is exposed. This is the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4).

5. How is this spiritual and vital knowledge to be known from a mere theoretical and notional one? By its effects. Unto the Thessalonians Paul wrote, "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (1 Thessalonians 1:5), which is partly explained in the next verse, "having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit had given that Word an efficacy which no logic, rhetoric, or persuasive power of men could. It had smitten the conscience, torn open the wounds which sin had made, exposed its festering sores. It had pierced them even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. It had slain their good opinion of themselves. It had made them feel the wrath of God burning against them. It had caused them to seriously question if such wretches could possibly

find mercy at the hands of a holy God. It had communicated faith to look upon the great physician of souls. It had given a joy such as this poor world knows nothing of.

The light which the Spirit imparts to the understanding is full of efficacy, whereas that which men acquire through their study is not so. Ordinary and strong mineral water are alike in color, but differ much in their taste and virtue. A carnal man may acquire a theoretical knowledge of all that a spiritual man knows vitally, yet is he "barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8). The light that he has is ineffectual, for it neither purifies his heart, renews his will, nor transforms his life. The head-knowledge of Divine truth, which is all that multitudes of present-day professing Christians possess, has no more influence upon their walk unto practical godliness, than though it was stored up in some other man's brains. The light which the Spirit gives, humbles and abases its recipient; the knowledge which is acquired by education and personal efforts, puffs up and fills with conceit.

A spiritual and saving knowledge of Christ always constrains the soul unto loving obedience. No sooner did the light of Christ shine into Paul's heart, than he at once asked, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Of the Colossians the apostle declared, "The Gospel which is come unto you.. .brings forth fruit... since the day you heard.. .and knew the grace of God in truth" or "in reality" (1:6). But a mere intellectual knowledge of the truth is "held in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). Its possessors are zealous to argue and cavil about it, and look down with contempt upon all who are not so wise as they: yet the lives of these frequently put them to shame. A saving knowledge of Christ so endears Him to the soul that all else is esteemed as dung in comparison with His excellency: the light of His glory has cast a complete eclipse over all that is in the world. But a mere doctrinal knowledge of Christ produces no such effects: while its possessors may loudly sing His praises, yet their hearts are still coveting and eagerly pursuing the things of time and sense.

The natural man may know the truth of the things of God, but not the things themselves. He may thoroughly understand the Scriptures in the letter of them, but not in their spirit. He may discourse of them in a sound and orthodox manner, but in no other way than one can talk of honey and vinegar, who never tasted the sweetness of the one, nor the sourness of the other. There are hundreds of preachers who have accurate notions of spiritual things, but who see and taste not the things themselves which are wrapped in the words of Truth—"understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (1 Timothy 1:7). Just as an astronomer who makes a life-study of the stars, knows their names, positions, and varying magnitudes. yet receives no more personal and special influence from them than do other men; so it is with those who study the Scriptures, but are not supernaturally and savingly enlightened by the Spirit. O my reader, has the Day-star arisen in your heart (2 Peter 1:19)?

We trust that sufficient has been said in the previous articles to make clear unto every Christian reader that the saving "coming to Christ" of a poor sinner is neither a physical nor mental act, but is wholly spiritual and supernatural; that that act springs not from human reason or human-will power, but from the secret and efficacious operations of God the Spirit. We say clear unto "the Christian reader," for we must not expect the unregenerate to perceive that of which they have no personal experience. The distinction pointed out in the second half of the last article (the whole of which may well be carefully re-read) between a sound intellectual knowledge of Christ and a vital and transforming knowledge of Him, between knowing Christ as He is set forth in the Scriptures, and as He is Divinely revealed in us (Galatians 1:16), is not one which will appeal to the carnal mind; rather is it one which will be contemptuously rejected. But instead of being surprised at this, we should expect it.

Were our last article sent to the average "Fundamentalist" preacher or "Bible teacher," and a request made for his honest opinion of it, in all probability he would say that the writer had lapsed into either "mysticism" or "fanaticism." Just as the religious leaders of Christ's

day rejected His spiritual teachings, so the "champions of orthodoxy," those who boast so loudly that they are faithfully and earnestly contending for the faith, will not receive the humbling and searching messages of Christ's servants today. The substance of this article would be ridiculed by them. But their very ridicule only serves to demonstrate the solemn truth of 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him." These words have puzzled some who have thoughtfully pondered them, for they do not seem to square with the patent facts of observation.

We have personally met the most conscienceless men—untruthful, dishonest, not scrupling to use tactics which many a non-professor would scorn—who, nevertheless, ardently proclaimed the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ, salvation by grace alone. We have had personal dealings with men whose hearts were filled with covetousness, and whose ways were worldly almost to the last degree, yet who tiraded against "modernism" and "evolutionism" etc., and "faithfully preached" the Virgin-birth and the blood of Christ as the sinner's only hope. That these men are "natural" or "carnal," that is, unregenerate, is plain and unmistakable if we measure them by the infallible rule of Holy Writ: it would not only be a contradiction in terms, but blasphemy to say such had been made, by God, "new creatures in Christ." Nevertheless, so far from the foundation truths of Scripture being "foolishness" unto these unregenerate characters, they warmly endorse and ardently propagate them.

But what has been said above does not clash, to the slightest degree, with 1 Corinthians 2:14, when that verse be rightly read and understood. Let it be carefully noted that it does not say the "things of God are foolishness" unto the natural man. Had it done so, the writer had been at a complete loss to explain it. No, it declares that the "things of the Spirit of God" are foolishness: and what has been said above only serves to illustrate the minute accuracy of this verse. The "things of God" these men profess to believe; the "things of

Christ," they appear to valiantly champion; but the "things of the Spirit of God they are personal strangers unto; and therefore when His secret and mysterious work upon the souls of God's elect is pressed upon them, they appear to be so much "foolishness" unto them—either "mysticism" or "fanaticism." But to the renewed it is far otherwise.

The Spirit's supernatural operations in the implanting of faith in God's elect (Colossians 2:12) produces a "new creation." Salvation by faith is wrought through the Spirit's working effectually with the Gospel. Then it is that He forms Christ in the soul (Galatians 4:19), and lets the Object of faith through the eye of faith, a real "image" of Christ being directly stamped upon the newly-quicken soul, which quickening has given ability to discern Christ. Thus, Christ is "formed" in the heart, after the manner that an outward object is formed in the eye. When I say that I have a certain man or object in my eye, I do not mean that this man or object is in my eye locally—that is impossible; but they are in my eye objectively—I see them. So, when it is said that Christ is "formed in us," that Christ is in us "the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27), it is not to be understood that He who is now corporeally at the right hand of God, is locally and substantially formed in us. No, but that Christ at the right hand of God, the substance and Object of faith, is by the Spirit let in from above, so that the soul sees Him by the eye of faith, exactly as He is represented in the Word. So Christ is "formed" in us; and thus He "dwell(s) in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:17).

What we have endeavored to set forth above is beautifully adumbrated in the lower and visible world. It is indeed striking to discover how much of God's spiritual works are shadowed out in the material realm. If our minds were but more spiritual, and our eyes engaged in a keener lookout, we should find signs and symbols on every side of the invisible realities of God. On a sunshiny day, when a man looks into clear water, he sees there a face (his own), formed by representation, which directly answers to the face outside and above the water; there are not two faces, but one, original and yet

represented. But only one face is seen, casting its own single image upon the water. So it is in the soul's history of God's elect; "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Oh that His image in us may be more evident to others!

Coming to Christ with our Affections

"All that the Father gives me shall come to me" (John 6:37), declared the Lord Jesus. He who, before the foundation of the world, gave the persons of His people unto Christ, now gives them, in regeneration, a heart for Christ. The "heart" includes the affections as well as the understanding. In the previous chapter we pointed out how that no man will (or can) "come to Christ" while ignorant of Him; it is equally true that no man will (or can) "come to Christ" while his affections are alienated from Him. Not only is the understanding of the natural man shrouded in total darkness, but his heart is thoroughly opposed to God. "The carnal mind is enmity (not merely "at enmity," but "enmity" itself) against God" (Romans 8:7); and "enmity" is something more than a train of hostile thoughts, it is the hatred of the affections themselves. Therefore when the Holy Spirit makes a man a "new creature in Christ," He not only renews his understanding, but He radically changes the heart.

When faith gives us a sight of spiritual things, the heart is warmed with love to them. Note the order in Hebrews 11:13, where, in connection with the patriarchs' faith in God's promises, we are told, "were persuaded of them, and embraced them," which is a term denoting great affection. When the understanding is renewed by the Spirit, then the heart is drawn unto Christ with a tender desire for Him. When the Holy Spirit is pleased to make known in the soul the wondrous love of Christ to me, then love unto Him is begotten and goes out toward Him in return. Observe the order in 1 John 4:16, "And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him;" the

apostle places knowledge (not intellectual, but spiritual) before faith, and both before a union and communion with Divine love. The light and knowledge of Christ and Heaven which we have by tradition, education, hearing or reading, never fires the affections. But when the love of God is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5), O what a difference is produced!

Far too little emphasis has been placed upon this aspect of our subject. In proof of this assertion, weigh carefully the following question: Why is it that "he who believes not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16) is quoted a hundred times more frequently by preachers and tract-writers than "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Corinthians 16:22)? If we are to properly preserve the balance of truth, we must note carefully the manner in which the Holy Spirit has rung the changes on "believe" and "love" in the N. T. Consider the following verses: "all things work together for good to them that (not "trust," but) love God" (Romans 8:28); "the things which God has prepared for them that (not only "believe," but) love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9); "if any love God, the same is known (or "approved") of Him" (1 Corinthians 8:3); "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that (not "believe in," but) love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8); "a crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love Him" (James 1:12); "He who loves not knows not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

"No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him" (John 6:44). In the last chapter we saw that this "drawing" consists, in part, of the Spirit's supernatural enlightenment of the understanding. It also consists in the Spirit's inclining the affections unto Christ. He acts upon sinners agreeably to their nature: not by external force, such as is used on an unwilling animal, but by spiritual influence or power moving their inward faculties: "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11:4)—by rational conviction of their judgment, by showing them that there is infinitely more goodness and blessedness in Christ than in the

creature or the sinful gratification of carnal desire; by winning their hearts to Christ, by communicating to them a powerful sense of His superlative excellency and complete suitability unto all their needs. To them that believe, "he is precious"(1 Peter 2:7)—so precious, they are willing to part with the world and everything, that they may "win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

As was shown at some length in the opening chapter, the affections of the natural man are alienated from God, wedded to the things of time and sense, so that he will not come to Christ. Though God's servants seek to charm him with the lovely music of the Gospel, like the adder he closes his ear. It is as the Lord portrayed it in the parable of the Great Supper: "they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luke 14:18), one preferring his lands, another his merchandise, another his social recreation. And nothing short of the Almighty power and working of the Holy Spirit in the heart can break the spell which sin and Satan has cast over man, and turn his heart from perishing objects to an imperishable one. This He does in God's elect by His secret and invincible operations, sweetly working in and alluring them by revealing Christ to them in the winsomeness of His person and the infinite riches of His grace, by letting down His love into their hearts, and by moving them to lay hold of His kind invitations and precious promises.

Most blessedly is this represented to us in "My beloved put his hand by the hole of the door, and my affections were moved for him" (Song of Sol. 5:4). Here the door of the heart (Acts 16:14), or more specifically, the "door of faith" (Acts 14:27), is seen shut against Christ, and the object of His love being so loath and unwilling as to rise and open to Him. But though unwelcome, His love cannot be quenched, and He gently enters (He does not burst the door open!) uninvited. His "hand" opening the "door" is a figure of His efficacious grace removing every obstacle in the heart of His elect (cf. Acts 11:21), and winning it to Himself. The effect of His gracious entry, by His Spirit, is seen in the "and my affections were moved for him," which is a figure of the stirring of the affections after Him—cf.

Isaiah 63:15, Philemon 12. For the thoughts of this paragraph we are indebted to the incomparable commentary of John Gill on the Song of Solomon.

O what a miracle of grace has been wrought when the heart is truly turned from the world unto God, from self unto Christ, from love of sin unto love of holiness! It is this which is the fulfillment of God's covenant promise in Ezekiel 36:26, "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." There is no man that loves money so much, but that he is willing to part with it, for that which he values more highly than the sum he parts with to purchase it. The natural man esteems material things more highly than he does spiritual, but the regenerated loves Christ more than all other objects beside, and this, because he has been made a "new creature." It is a spiritual love which binds the heart to Christ.

It is not simply a knowledge of the Truth which saves, but a love of it which is the essential prerequisite. This is clear from 2 Thessalonians 2:10, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Close attention must be paid unto these words, or a wrong conclusion may be drawn: it is not a love for the Truth, but a love of the Truth. There are those who have the former, who are destitute of the latter. We have met Russelites, and have boarded with Christadelphians, who put many a real Christian to shame: people who after a long day's work, spent the whole evening in diligently studying the Bible. Nor was it just to satisfy curiosity. Their zeal had lasted for years. Their Bible was as precious to them as a devout Romanist's "beads" or "rosary" are to her. So too there is a natural "love" for Christ, an ardent devotion for Him, which springs not from a renewed heart. Just as one reared among devout Romanists, grows up with a deep veneration and genuine affection for the Virgin; so one carefully trained by Protestant parents, told from infancy that Jesus loves him, grows up with a real but natural love for Him.

There may be a historical faith in all the doctrines of Scripture, where the power of them is never experienced. There may be a fleshly zeal for portions of God's Truth (as there was in the case of the Pharisees) and yet the heart not be renewed. There may be joyous emotions felt by a superficial reception of the Word (as there was in the stony-ground hearers: Matthew 13:20), where the "root of the matter" (Job 19:28) be lacking. Tears may flow freely at the pathetic sight of the suffering Savior (as with the company of women who bewailed Christ as He journeyed to the cross: Luke 23:27, 28), and yet the heart be as hard as the nether millstone toward God. There may be a rejoicing in the light of God's Truth (as was the case with Herod: Mark 6:20), and yet Hell never be escaped from.

Since then there is a "love for the Truth" in contradistinction from a "love of the Truth," and a natural love for Christ in contrast from a spiritual love of Him, how am I to be sure which mine is? We may distinguish between these "loves" thus: first, the one is partial, the other is impartial: the one esteems the doctrines of Scripture but not the duties it enjoins, the promises of Scripture but not the precepts, the blessings of Christ but not His claims, His priestly office but not His kingly rule; but not so with the spiritual lover. Second, the one is occasional, the other is regular: the former balks when personal interests are crossed; not so the latter. Third, the one is evanescent and weak, the other lasting and powerful: the former quickly wanes when other delights compete, and prevails not to control the other affections; the latter rules the heart, and is strong as death. Fourth, the former betters not its possessor; the latter transforms the life.

That a saving "coming to Christ" is the affections being turned to and fixed upon Him, may be further demonstrated from the nature of backsliding, which begins with the heart's departure from Christ. Observe how this is traced to its real source in Revelation 2:4, "You have left (not "lost") your first love." The reality and genuineness of our returning to Christ is evidenced by the effects which the workings of the understanding produce upon the affections. A striking example of this is found in Matthew 26:75, "and Peter

remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, 'Before the rooster crow, you shall deny me thrice.' And he went out, and wept bitterly": that "remembrance" was not merely an historical, but a gracious one—his heart was melted by it. So it ever is when the Holy Spirit works in and "renews" us. I may recall a past sin, without being duly humbled thereby. I may "remember" Christ's death in a mechanical and speculative way, without the affections being truly moved. It is only as the faculty of our understanding is quickened by the Holy Spirit that the heart is powerfully impressed.

Coming to Christ with our Will

The man within the body is possessed of three principal faculties: the understanding, the affections, and the will. As was shown earlier, all of these were radically affected by the Fall: they were defiled and corrupted, and in consequence, they are used in the service of self and sin, rather than of God and of Christ. But in regeneration, these faculties are quickened and cleansed by the Spirit: not completely, but initially, and continuously so in the life-long process of sanctification, and perfectly so at glorification. Now each of these three faculties is subordinated to the others by the order of nature, that is, as man has been constituted by his Maker. One faculty is influenced by the other. In Genesis 3:6 we read, "the woman saw (perceived) that the tree was good for food"—that was a conclusion drawn by the understanding; "and that it was pleasant to the eyes"—there was the response of her affections; "and a tree to be desired"—there was the moving of the will; "she took"—there was the completed action.

Now the motions of Divine grace work through the apprehensions of faith in the understanding, these warming and firing the affections, and they in turn influencing and moving the will. Every faculty of the soul is put forth in a saving "coming to Christ": "If you Believe with all your heart, you may"—be baptized (Acts 8:37). "Coming to Christ" is more immediately an act of the will, as John 5:40 shows; yet the will is not active toward Him until the understanding has been

enlightened and the affections quickened. The Spirit first causes the sinner to perceive his deep need of Christ, and this, by showing him his fearful rebellion against God, and that none but Christ can atone for the same. Secondly, the Spirit creates in the heart a desire after Christ, and this, by making him sick of sin and in love with holiness. Third, as the awakened and enlightened soul has been given to see the glory and excellency of Christ, and His perfect suitability to the lost and perishing sinner, then the Spirit draws out the will to set the highest value on that excellency, to esteem it far above all else, and to close with Him.

As there is a Divine order among the three Persons of the Godhead in providing salvation, so there is in the applying or bestowing of it. It was God the Father's good pleasure appointing His people from eternity unto salvation, which was the most full and sufficient impulsive cause of their salvation, and every whit able to produce its effect. It was the incarnate Son of God whose obedience and sufferings were the most complete and sufficient meritorious cause of their salvation, to which nothing can be added to make it more apt and able to secure the travail of His soul. Yet neither the one nor the other can actually save any sinner except as the Spirit applies Christ to it: His work being the efficient and immediate cause of their salvation. In like manner, the sinner is not saved when his understanding is enlightened, and his affections fired: there must also be the act of the will, surrendering to God and laying hold of Christ.

The order of the Spirit's operations corresponds to the three great offices of Christ, the Mediator, namely, His prophetic, priestly, and kingly. As Prophet, He is first apprehended by the understanding, the Truth of God being received from His lips. As Priest, He is trusted and loved by the heart or affections, His glorious person being first endeared unto the soul by the gracious work which He performed for it. As Potentate, our will must be subdued unto Him, so that we submit to His government, yield to His scepter, and heed His commandments. Nothing short of the throne of our hearts will

satisfy the Lord Jesus. In order to do this, the Holy Spirit casts down our carnal imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), so that we freely and gladly take His yoke upon us; which yoke is, as one of the Puritans said, "lined with love."

"No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him" (John 6:44). This "drawing" is accomplished by the Spirit: first, in effectually enlightening the understanding; secondly, by quickening the affections; third, by freeing the will from the bondage of sin and inclining it toward God. By the invincible workings of grace, the Spirit turns the bent of that will, which before moved only toward sin and vanity, unto Christ. "Your people," said God unto the Mediator, "shall be willing in the day of your power" (Psalm 110:3). Yet though Divine power be put forth upon a human object, the Spirit does not infringe the will's prerogative of acting freely: He morally persuades it. He subdues its sinful intractability. He overcomes its prejudice, wins and draws it by the sweet attractions of grace.

"God never treats man as though he were a brute; He does not drag him with cart ropes; He treats men as men; and when He binds them with cords, they are the cords of love and the bands of a man. I may exercise power over another's will, and yet that other man's will may be perfectly free; because the constraint is exercised in a manner accordant with the laws of the human mind. If I show a man that a certain line of action is much for his advantage, he feels bound to follow it, but he is perfectly free in so doing. If man's will were subdued or chained by some physical process, if man's heart should, for instance, be taken from him and be turned round by a manual operation, that would be altogether inconsistent with human freedom, or indeed with human nature; and yet I think some few people imagine that we mean this when we talk of constraining influence and Divine grace. We mean nothing of the kind; we mean that Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed

to the understanding, by mighty reasons appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul, so to subdue the whole man, that whereas it was once rebellious it becomes obedient; whereas it stood stoutly against the Most High, it throws down the weapons of its rebellion and cries, 'I yield! I yield! subdued by sovereign love, and by the enlightenment which You have bestowed upon me, I yield myself to Your will'" (C. H. Spurgeon, John 6:37).

The perfect consistency between the freedom of a regenerated man's spiritual actions and the efficacious grace of God moving him thereto, is seen in 2 Corinthians 8:16,17. "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation: but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you." Titus was moved to that work by Paul's exhortation, and was "willing of his own accord" to engage therein; and yet it was "God which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus" for them. God controls the inward feelings and acts of men without interfering either with their liberty or responsibility. The zeal of Titus was the spontaneous effusion of his own heart, and was an index to an element of his character; nevertheless, God wrought in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

No sinner savingly "comes to Christ," or truly receives Him into the heart, until the will freely consents (not merely "assents" in a theoretical way) to the severe and self-denying terms upon which He is presented in the Gospel. No sinner is prepared to forsake all for Christ, take up "the cross," and "follow" Him in the path of universal obedience, until the heart genuinely esteems Him "The Fairest among ten thousand," and this none will ever do before the understanding has been supernaturally enlightened and the affections supernaturally quickened. Obviously, none will espouse themselves with conjugal affections to that person whom they account not the best that can be chosen. It is as the Spirit convicts us of our emptiness and shows us Christ's fullness, our guilt and His righteousness, our filthiness and the cleansing merits of His blood,

our depravity and His holiness, that the heart is won and the resistance of the will is overcome.

The holy and spiritual Truth of God finds nothing akin to itself in the unregenerate soul, but instead, everything that is opposed to it (John 15:18; Romans 8:7). The demands of Christ are too humbling to our natural pride, too searching for the callous conscience, too exacting for our fleshly desires. And a miracle of grace has to be wrought within us before this awful depravity of our nature, this dreadful state of affairs, is changed. That miracle of grace consists in overcoming the resistance which is made by indwelling sin, and creating desires and longings Christward; and then it is that the will cries,

"Nay, but I yield, I yield,
I can hold out no more;
I sink, by dying love compelled,
And own You Conqueror."

A beautiful illustration of this is found in Ruth 1:14-18. Naomi, a backslidden saint, is on the point of leaving the far country, and (typically) returning to her Father's house. Her two daughters-in-law wish to accompany her. Faithfully did Naomi bid them "count the cost" (Luke 14:28); instead of at once urging them to act on their first impulse, she pointed out the difficulties and trials to be encountered. This was too much for Orpha: her "goodness" (like that of the stony-ground hearers, and myriads of others) was only "as a morning cloud" and "as the early dew" it quickly went away (Hos. 6:4). In blessed contrast from this we read, "But Ruth cleave unto her. . . saying, Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you: for where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God."

What depth and loveliness of affection was here! What whole-hearted self-surrender! See Ruth freely and readily leaving her own country and kindred, tearing herself from every association of

nature, turning a deaf ear to her mother-in-law's begging her to return to her gods (v. 15) and people. See her renouncing idolatry and all that flesh holds dear, to be a worshiper and servant of the living God, counting all things but loss for the sake of His favor and salvation; and her future conduct proved her faith was genuine and her profession sincere. Ah, naught but a miraculous work of God in her soul can explain this. It was God working in her "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). He was drawing her with the bands of love: grace triumphed over the flesh. This is what every genuine conversion is—a complete surrender of the mind, heart and will to God and His Christ, so that there is a desire to "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Rev. 14:4).

The relation between our understanding being enlightened and the affections quickened by God and the resultant consent of the will, is seen in Psalm 119:34, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart." "The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is the devout reverence for the law and a reverent keeping of it in the heart. The Spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of His love, wisdom, holiness, and majesty; and the result is that we honor the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith. The understanding operates upon the affections; it convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers; and then it reveals the majesty of the law-Giver, and the whole nature bows before His supreme will. He alone obeys God who can say 'My Lord, I would serve You, and do it with all my heart'; and none can truly say this until they have received as a free grant the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit" (C. H. Spurgeon).

Before turning to our final section, a few words need to be added here upon 1 Peter 2:4, "To whom coming as unto a living stone. . .we also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." Has the sovereign grace of God inclined me to come unto Christ? then it is my duty and interest to "abide" in Him (John 15:4). Abide in Him by a life of faith, and letting His Spirit abide in me without grieving Him

(Ephesians 4:30) or quenching His motions (1 Thessalonians 5:19). It is not enough that I once believed on Christ, I must live in and upon Him by faith daily: Galatians 2:20. It is in this way of continual coming to Christ that we are "built up a spiritual house." It is in this way the life of grace is maintained, until it issue in the life of glory. Faith is to be always receiving out of His fullness "grace for grace" (John 1:16). Daily should there be the renewed dedication of myself unto Him and the heart's occupation with Him.

Tests to Validate our Coming to Christ

Unto those who never savingly "came to Christ," He will yet say "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." The contemplation of those awful words ought to almost freeze the very blood in our veins, searching our consciences and awing our hearts. But, alas, it is much to be feared that Satan will blunt their piercing force unto many of our readers, by assuring them that they have already come to Christ, and telling them they are fools to doubt it for a moment. But, O dear friend, seeing that there is no less than your immortal soul at stake, that whether you spend eternity in Heaven with the blessed or in Hell with the cursed, hinges on whether or no you really and truly "come to Christ," will not you read the paragraphs which follow with double care.

1. How many rest on their sound doctrinal views of Christ. They believe firmly in His Deity, His holy humanity, His perfect life, His vicarious death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to God's right hand, His present intercession on high, and His second advent. So too did many of those to whom James addressed his epistle, but he reminded them that the "demons also believe and tremble" (2:19). O my reader, saving faith in Christ is very much more than assenting to the teachings of Scripture concerning Him; it is the giving up of the soul unto Him to be saved, to renounce all else, to yield fully unto Him.

2. How many mistake the absence of doubts for a proof they have savingly come to Christ. They take for granted that for which they have no clear evidence. But, reader, a man possesses not Christ by faith as he does money in a strongbox or title-deeds of land which are preserved by his lawyer, and which he never looks at once in a year. No, Christ is as "bread" which a man feeds upon, chews, digests, which his stomach works upon continually, and by which he is nourished and strengthened: John 6:53. The empty professor feeds upon a good opinion of himself, rather than upon Christ.

3. How many mistake the stirring of the emotions for the Spirit's quickening of the affections. If people weep under the preaching of the word, superficial observers are greatly encouraged, and if they go forward to the "mourners' bench" and sob and wail over their sins, this is regarded as a sure sign that God has savingly convicted them. But a supernatural work of Divine grace goes much deeper than that. Tears are but on the surface, and are a matter of temperamental constitution—even in nature, some of those who feel things the most give the least outward sign of it. It is the weeping of the heart which God requires; it is a godly sorrow for sin which breaks its reigning power over the soul that evidences regeneration.

4. How many mistake a fear of the wrath to come for an hatred of sin. No one wants to go to Hell. If the intellect be convinced of its reality, and the unspeakable awfulness of its torments are in a measure believed, then there may be great uneasiness of mind, fear of conscience, and anguish of heart, over the prospect of suffering its eternal burnings. Those fears may last a considerable time, yes, their effects may never completely wear off. The subject of them may come under the ministry of a faithful servant of God, hear him describe the deep ploughing of the Spirit's work, and conclude that he has been the subject of them, yet have none of that love for Christ which manifests itself in a life, all the details of which seek to honor and glorify Him.

5. How many mistake a false peace for a true one. Let a person who has had awakened within him a natural dread of the lake of fire, whose own conscience has made him wretched, and the preaching he has heard terrify him yet more, then is he not (like a drowning man) ready to clutch at a straw. Let one of the false prophets of the day tell him that all he has to do is believe John 3:16 and salvation is his, and how eagerly will he—though unchanged in heart— drink in such "smooth things." Assured that nothing more is required than to firmly believe that God loves him and that Christ died for him, and his burden is gone: peace now fills him. Yes, and nineteen times out of twenty, that "peace" is nothing but Satan's opiate, drugging his conscience and chloroforming him into Hell. "There is no (true, spiritual) peace, says my God, to the wicked," and unless the heart has been purified no man will see God (Matthew 5:8).

6. How many mistake self-confidence for spiritual assurance. It is natural for each of us to think well and hope well of ourselves, and to imagine with Haman, "I am the man whom the King delights to honor." Perhaps the reader is ready to say, That is certainly not true of me: so far from having a high esteem, I regard myself as a worthless, sinful creature. Yes, and so deceitful is the human heart, and so ready is Satan to turn everything to his own advantage, these very lowly thoughts of self may be feasted on, and rested on to assure the heart that all is well with you. The apostate king Saul began by having a lowly estimate of himself (1 Samuel 9:21).

7. How many make a promise the sole ground of their faith, and look no further than the letter of it. Thus the Jews were deceived by the letter of the law, for they never saw the spiritual meaning of Moses' ministry. In like manner, multitudes are deceived by the letter of such promises as Acts 16:31; Romans 10:13, etc., and look not to Christ in them: they see that He is the jewel in the casket, but rest upon the superscription without, and never lay hold of the Treasure within. But unless the person of Christ be apprehended, unless there be a real surrendering to His Lordship, unless He be Himself

received into the heart, then believing the letter of the promises will avail nothing.

The above paragraphs have been written in the hope that God may be pleased to arouse some empty professors out of their false security. But lest any of Christ's little ones be stumbled, we close with an excerpt from John Bunyan's *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*: "How shall we know that such men are coming to Christ? Answer: do they cry out at sin, being burdened with it, as an exceedingly bitter thing? Do they fly from it, as from the face of a deadly serpent? Do they cry out of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, as to justification in the sight of God? Do they cry out after the Lord Jesus to save them? Do they see more worth and merit in one drop of Christ's blood to save them, than in all the sins of the world to damn them? Are they tender of sinning against Jesus Christ? Do they favor Christ in this world, and do they leave all the world for His sake? And are they willing (God helping them) to run hazards for His name, for the love they bear to Him? Are His saints precious to them? If these things be so, these men are coming to Christ."

A Fourfold Salvation

Introduction

In 1918 we wrote a booklet entitled "A Threefold Salvation," and in 1929 published the same in article form in our Studies in the Scriptures. It was based upon the instruction we had received during our spiritual infancy. Like most of that early teaching, it was defective, because inadequate. As we have continued our study of God's Word, further light has been granted us on this subject—yet, alas, how ignorant we still are—and this has enabled us to see that, in the past, we had started at the wrong point, for instead of beginning at the beginning, we commenced almost in the middle. Instead of salvation from sin being threefold, as once supposed, we now perceive it to be fourfold. How good is the Lord in granting us additional light, yet it is now our duty to walk therein, and, as Providence affords us opportunity, to give it out. May the Holy Spirit so graciously guide us that God may be glorified and His people edified.

The subject of God's "so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3), as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures and made known in Christian experience, is worthy of a life's study. Anyone who supposes that there is now no longer any need for him to prayerfully search for a fuller understanding of the same, needs to ponder, "If any man think that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2). The fact is that the moment any of us really takes it for granted that he already knows all that there is to be known on any subject treated of in Holy Writ, he at once cuts himself off from any further light thereon. That which is most needed by all of us in order to a better understanding of Divine things is not a brilliant intellect, but a truly humble heart and a teachable spirit, and for that we should daily and fervently pray—for we possess it not by nature.

The subject of Divine salvation has, sad to say, provoked age-long controversy and bitter contentions even among professing Christians. There is comparatively little real agreement even upon this elementary yet vital truth. Some have insisted that salvation is by Divine grace, others have argued it is by human endeavor. A number have sought to defend a middle position, and while allowing that the salvation of a lost sinner must be by Divine grace, were not willing to concede that it is by grace alone, alleging that God's grace must be plussed by something from the creature, and very varied have been the opinions of what that "something" must be—baptism, church-membership, the performing of good works, holding out faithful to the end, etc. On the other hand, there are those who not only grant that salvation is by grace alone, but who deny that God uses any means whatever in the accomplishment of His eternal purpose to save His elect— overlooking the fact that the sacrifice of Christ is the grand "means"!

It is true that the Church of God was blessed with super-creation blessings, being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestined unto the adoption of children, and nothing could or can alter that grand fact. It is equally true that if sin had never entered the world, none had been in need of salvation from it. But sin has entered, and the Church fell in Adam and came under the curse and condemnation of God's Law. Consequently, the elect, equally with the reprobate, share in the capital offense of their federal head, and partake of its fearful result: "In Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22), "By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans 5:18). The result of this is that all are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts" (Ephesians 4:18), so that the members of the mystical Body of Christ are "by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3), and hence they are alike in dire need of God's salvation.

Even where there is fundamental soundness in their views upon Divine salvation, yet many have such inadequate and one-sided

conceptions that other aspects of this truth, equally important and essential, are often overlooked and tacitly denied. How many, for example, would be capable of giving a simple exposition of the following texts: "Who has saved us" (2 Timothy 1:9). "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11). Now those verses do not refer to three different salvations, but to three separate aspects of one and unless we learn to distinguish sharply between them, there can be nothing but confusion and cloudiness in our thinking. Those passages present three distinct phases and stages of salvation: salvation as an accomplished fact, as a present process, and as a future prospect.

So many today ignore these distinctions, jumbling them together. Some contend for one and argue against the other two; and vice versa. Some insist they are already saved, and deny that they are now being saved. Some declare that salvation is entirely future, and deny that it is in any sense already accomplished. Both are wrong. The fact is that the great majority of professing Christians fail to see that "salvation" is one of the most comprehensive terms in all the Scriptures, including predestination, regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification. They have far too cramped an idea of the meaning and scope of the word "salvation" (as it is used in the Scriptures), narrowing its range too much, generally confining their thoughts to but a single phase. They suppose "salvation" means no more than the new birth or the forgiveness of sins. Were one to tell them that salvation is a protracted process, they would view him with suspicion; and if he affirmed that salvation is something awaiting us in the future, they would at once dub him a heretic. Yet they would be the ones to err.

Ask the average Christian, Are you saved, and he answers, Yes, I was saved in such and such a year; and that is as far as his thoughts on the subject go. Ask him, to what do you owe your salvation? and "the finished work of Christ" is the sum of his reply. Tell him that each of those answers is seriously defective, and he strongly resents your

aspersion. As an example of the confusion which now prevails, we quote the following from a tract on Philippians 2:12, "To whom are those instructions addressed? The opening words of the Epistle tell us: 'To the saints in Christ Jesus' . . . Thus they were all believers! and could not be required to work for their salvation, for they already possessed it." Alas that so very few today perceive anything wrong in such a statement. Another "Bible teacher" tells us that "save yourself" (1 Timothy 4:16) must refer to deliverance from physical ills, as Timothy was already saved spiritually. True, yet it is equally true that he was then in process of being saved, and also a fact that his salvation was then future.

Let us now supplement the first three verses quoted and show there are other passages in the New Testament which definitely refer to each distinct tense of salvation. First, salvation as an accomplished fact: "Your faith has saved you" (Luke 7:50), "by grace you have been saved" (Greek, and so translated in the R.V.—Ephesians 2:8), "according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). Second, salvation as a present process, in course of accomplishment, not yet completed: "Unto us which are being saved" (1 Corinthians 1:18—R.V. and Bagster Interlinear); "Them that believe to the saving (not 'salvation') of the soul" (Hebrews 10:39). Third, salvation as a future prospect: "Sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14), "receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21), "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). Thus, by putting together these different passages, we are clearly warranted in formulating the following statement: every genuine Christian has been saved, is now being saved, and will yet be saved—how and from what, we shall endeavor to show.

As further proof of how many-sided is the subject of God's great salvation and how that in Scripture it is viewed from various angles, take the following: "by grace are you saved" (Ephesians 2:8), "saved by His (Christ's) life" (that is) by His resurrection life (Romans 5:9),

"your faith has saved you" (Luke 7:50), "the engrafted Word which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21), "saved by hope" (Romans 8:24), "saved yet as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15), "the like figure where unto baptism does also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21). Ah, my reader, the Bible is not the lazy man's book, nor can it be soundly expounded by those who do not devote the whole of their time, and that for years, to its prayerful study. It is not that God would bewilder us, but that He would humble us, drive us to our knees, make us dependent upon His Spirit. Not to the proud—who are wise in their own esteem—are its heavenly secrets opened.

In like manner it may be shown from Scripture that the cause of salvation is not a single one, as so many suppose—the blood of Christ. Here, too, it is necessary to distinguish between things which differ. First, the originating cause of salvation is the eternal purpose of God, or, in other words, the predestinating grace of the Father. Second, the meritorious cause of salvation is the mediation of Christ, this having particular respect to the legal side of things, or, in other words, His fully meeting the demands of the Law on the behalf and in the place of those He redeems. Third, the efficient cause of salvation is the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit which respect the experimental side of it; or, in other words, the Spirit works in us what Christ purchased for us. Thus, we owe our personal salvation equally to each Person in the Trinity, and not to one (the Son) more than to the others. Fourth, the instrumental cause is our faith, obedience, and perseverance: though we are not saved because of them, equally true is it that we cannot be saved (according to God's appointment) without them.

In the opening paragraph we have stated that in our earlier effort we erred as to the starting point. In writing upon a threefold salvation we began with salvation from the penalty of sin, which is our justification. But our salvation does not begin there, as we knew well enough even then: alas that we so blindly followed our erring preceptors. Our salvation originates, of course, in the eternal purpose of God, in His predestinating of us to everlasting glory.

"Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). That has reference to God's decree of election: His chosen people were then saved, completely, in the Divine purpose, and all that we shall now say has to do with the performing of that purpose, the accomplishing of that decree, the actualization of that salvation.

Salvation from the Pleasure of Sin

It is here that God begins in His actual application of salvation unto His elect. God saves us from the pleasure or love of sin before He delivers from the penalty or punishment of sin. Necessarily so, for it would be neither an act of holiness nor of righteousness were He to grant a full pardon to one who was still a rebel against Him, loving that which He hates. God is a God of order throughout, and nothing ever more evidences the perfection of His works than the orderliness of them. And how does God save His people from the pleasure of sin? The answer is by imparting to them a nature which hates evil and loves holiness. This takes place when they are born again, so that actual salvation begins with regeneration. Of course it does: where else could it commence? Fallen man can neither perceive his desperate need of salvation, nor come to Christ for it, until he has been renewed by the Holy Spirit.

"He has made everything beautiful in His time" (Ecclesiastes 3:11), and much of the beauty of God's spiritual handiwork is lost upon us unless we duly observe their "time." Has not the Spirit Himself emphasized this in the express enumeration He has given us in, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestine to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestine, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Romans 8:29, 30)? Verse 29 announces the Divine foreordination; verse 30 states the manner of its actualization. It seems passing strange that with this Divinely-

defined method before them, so many preachers begin with our justification, instead of with that effectual call (from death unto life—our regeneration) which precedes it. Surely it is most obvious that regeneration must first take place in order to lay a foundation for our justification. Justification is by faith (Acts 13:39; Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:8), and the sinner must be Divinely quickened before he is capable of believing savingly.

Ah, does not the last statement made throw light upon and explain what we have said is so "passing strange"? Preachers today are so thoroughly imbued with free-willism that they have departed almost wholly from that sound evangelism which marked our forefathers. The radical difference between Arminianism and Calvinism is that the system of the former revolves around the creature, whereas the system of the latter has the Creator for the center of its orbit. The Arminian allots to man the first place, the Calvinist gives God that position of honor. Thus the Arminian begins his discussion of salvation with justification, for the sinner must believe before he can be forgiven; further back he will not go, for he is unwilling that man should be made nothing of. But the instructed Calvinist begins with election, descends to regeneration, and then shows that being born again (by the sovereign act of God, in which the creature has no part) the sinner is made capable of savingly believing the Gospel.

Saved from the pleasure or love of sin. What multitudes of people strongly resent being told that they delighted in evil! They would indignantly ask if we suppose them to be moral perverts? No indeed: a person may be thoroughly chaste and yet delight in evil. It may be that some of our own readers repudiate the charge that they have ever taken pleasure in sin, and would claim, on the contrary, that from earliest recollections they have detested wickedness in all its forms. Nor would we dare to call into question their sincerity; instead, we point out that it only affords another exemplification of the solemn fact that "the heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9). But this is a matter that is not open to argument: the plain teaching of God's Word deciding the point once and for all,

and beyond its verdict there is no appeal. What, then, say the Scriptures?

So far from God's Word denying that there is any delight to be found therein, it expressly speaks of "the pleasures of sin," yet it immediately warns us that those pleasures are but "for a season" (Hebrews 11:25), for the aftermath is painful and not pleasant; yes, unless God intervenes in His sovereign grace, they entail eternal torment. So, too, the Word refers to those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4). It is indeed striking to observe how often this discordant note is struck in Scripture. It mentions those who "love vanity" (Psalm 4:2), "him that loves violence" (Psalm 11:5) "you love evil more than good" (Psalm 52:3), "scorners delight in their scorning" (Proverbs 1:22), "they which delight in the abominations" (Isaiah 66:3), "their abominations were according as they loved" (Hosea 9:10), "who hate the good and love the evil" (Micah 3:2), "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). To love sin is far worse than to commit it, for a man may be suddenly tripped up and commit it through frailty.

The fact is, my reader, that we are not only born into this world with an evil nature, but with hearts that are thoroughly in love with sin. Sin is a native element. We are wedded to our lusts, and of ourselves no man is able to alter the bent of our corrupt nature any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots. But what is impossible with man is possible with God, and when He takes us in hand this is where He begins —by saving us from the pleasure or love of sin. This is the great miracle of grace, for the Almighty stoops down and picks up a loathsome leper from the dunghill, and makes him a new creature in Christ, so that the things he once loved he now hates, and the things he once hated he now loves. God commences by saving us from ourselves. He does not save us from the penalty until He has delivered us from the love of it.

And how is this miracle of grace accomplished, or rather, exactly what does it consist of? Negatively, not by eradicating the evil nature, nor even by refining it. Positively, by communicating a new nature, a holy nature which loathes that which is evil and delights in all that is truly good. To be more specific. First, God saves His people from the pleasure or love of sin by putting His holy awe in their hearts, for "the fear of the LORD is to hate evil" (Proverbs 8:13), and again, "by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil" (Proverbs 16:6). Second, God saves His people from the pleasure of sin by communicating to them a new and vital principle: "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5), and where the love of God rules the heart, the love of sin is dethroned. Third, God saves His people from the love of sin by the Holy Spirit's drawing their affections unto things above, thereby taking them off the things which formerly enthralled them.

If on the one hand the unbeliever hotly denies that he is in love with sin, many a believer is often hard put to it to persuade himself that he has been saved from the love thereof. With an understanding that has been in part enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he is the better able to discern things in their true colors. With a heart that has been made honest by grace, he refuses to call sweet bitter. With a conscience that has been sensitized by the new birth, he the more quickly feels the workings of sin and the hankering of his affections for that which is forbidden. Moreover, the flesh remains in him, unchanged, and as the raven constantly craves carrion, so this corrupt principle in which our mothers conceived us lusts after and delights in that which is the opposite of holiness. These things are they which occasion and give rise to the disturbing questions that clamor for answers within the genuine believer.

The sincere Christian is often made to seriously doubt if he has been delivered from the love of sin. Such questions as these painfully agitate his mind: Why do I so readily yield to temptation? Why do some of the vanities and pleasures of the world still possess so much attraction for me? Why do I chafe so much against any restraints

being placed upon my lusts? Why do I find the work of mortification so difficult and distasteful? Could such things as these be if I were a new creature in Christ? Could such horrible experiences as these happen if God had saved me from taking pleasure in sin? Well do we know that we are here giving expression to the very doubts which exercise the minds of many of our readers, and those who are strangers thereto are to be pitied. But what shall we say in reply? How is this distressing problem to be resolved?

How may one be assured that he has been saved from the love of sin? Let us point out first that the presence of that within us which still lusts after and takes delight in some evil things is not incompatible with our having been saved from the love of sin, paradoxical as that may sound. It is part of the mystery of the Gospel that those who are saved are yet sinners in themselves. The point we are here dealing with is similar to and parallel with faith. The Divine principle of faith in the heart does not cast out unbelief. Faith and doubts exist side by side within a quickened soul, which is evident from those words "Lord, I believe; help You mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). In like manner the Christian may exclaim and pray, "Lord, I long after holiness, help You my lustings after sin." And why is this? Because of the existence of two separate natures, the one at complete variance with the other within the Christian.

How, then, is the presence of faith to be ascertained? Not by the ceasing of unbelief, but by discovering its own fruits and works. Fruit may grow amid thorns—as flowers among weeds—yet it is fruit, nevertheless. Faith exists amid many doubts and fears. Notwithstanding opposing forces from within as well as from without us, faith still reaches out after God. Notwithstanding innumerable discouragements and defeats, faith continues to fight. Notwithstanding many refusals from God, it yet clings to Him, and says, "Except You bless me I will not let You go." Faith may be fearfully weak and fitful, often eclipsed by the clouds of unbelief, nevertheless the Devil himself cannot persuade its possessor to repudiate God's Word, despise His Son, or abandon all hope. The

presence of faith, then, may be ascertained in that it causes its possessor to come before God as an empty-handed beggar beseeching Him for mercy and blessing.

Now just as the presence of faith may be known amid all the workings of unbelief, so our salvation from the love of sin may be ascertained notwithstanding all the lustings of the flesh after that which is evil. But in what way? How is this initial aspect of salvation to be identified? We have already anticipated this question in an earlier paragraph, wherein we stated that God saved us from delighting in sin by imparting a nature that hates evil and loves holiness which takes place at the new birth. Consequently, the real question to be settled is how may the Christian positively determine whether that new and holy nature has been imparted to him? The answer is by observing its activities, particularly the opposition it makes (under the energizing of the Holy Spirit) unto indwelling sin. Not only does the flesh (the principle of sin) lust against the spirit, but the spirit (the principle of holiness) lusts and wars against the flesh.

First, our salvation from the pleasure or love of sin may be recognized by sin's becoming a burden to us. This is truly a spiritual experience. Many souls are loaded with worldly anxieties who know nothing of what it means to be bowed down with a sense of guilt. But when God takes us in hand, the iniquities and transgressions of our past life are made to lie as an intolerable load upon the conscience. When we are given a sight of ourselves as we appear before the eyes of the thrice holy God, we will exclaim with the Psalmist, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart fails me" (40:12). So far from sin being pleasant, it is now felt as a cruel incubus, a crushing weight, an unendurable load. The soul is "heavy laden" (Matthew 11:28) and bowed down. A sense of guilt oppresses and the conscience cannot bear the weight upon it. Nor is this experience

restricted to our first conviction: it continues with more or less acuteness throughout the Christian's life.

Second, our salvation from the pleasure of sin may be recognized by sin's becoming bitter to us. True, there are millions of the unregenerate who are filled with remorse over the harvest reaped from their sowing of wild oats. Yet that is not hatred of sin, but dislike of its consequences—ruined health, squandered opportunities, financial straitness, or social disgrace. No, what we have reference to is that anguish of heart which ever marks the one the Spirit takes in hand. When the veil of delusion is removed and we see sin in the light of God's countenance; when we are given a discovery of the depravity of our very nature, then we perceive that we are sunk in carnality and death. When sin is opened to us in all its secret workings, we are made to feel the vileness of our hypocrisy, self-righteousness, unbelief, impatience, and the utter filthiness of our hearts. And when the penitent soul views the sufferings of Christ, he can say with Job, "God makes my heart soft" (23:16).

Ah, my reader, it is this experience which prepares the heart to go out after Christ: those that are whole need not a physician, but they that are quickened and convicted by the Spirit are anxious to be relieved by the great Physician. "The LORD kills, and makes alive; He brings down to the grave, and brings up. The LORD makes poor, and makes rich; He brings low, and lifts up" (1 Samuel 2:6, 7). It is in this way that God slays our self-righteousness, makes poor, and brings low—by making sin to be an intolerable burden and as bitter as wormwood to us. There can be no saving faith until the soul is filled with evangelical repentance, and repentance is a godly sorrow for sin, a holy detestation of sin, a sincere purpose to forsake it. The Gospel calls upon men to repent of their sins, forsake their idols, and mortify their lusts, and thus it is utterly impossible for the Gospel to be a message of glad tidings to those who are in love with sin and madly determined to perish rather than part with their idols.

Nor is this experience of sin's becoming bitter to us limited unto our first awakening —it continues, in varying degrees, to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. The Christian suffers under temptations, is pained by Satan's fiery assaults, and bleeds from the wounds inflicted by the evils he commits. It grieves him deeply that he makes such a wretched return unto God for His goodness, that he requites Christ so evilly for His dying love, that he responds so fitfully to the promptings of the Spirit. The wanderings of his mind when he desires to meditate upon the Word, the dullness of his heart when he seeks to pray, the worldly thoughts which invade his mind on the holy Sabbath, the coldness of his affections toward the Redeemer cause him to groan daily; all of which goes to evidence that sin has been made bitter to him. He no longer welcomes those intruding thoughts which take his mind off God: rather does he sorrow over them. But "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

Third, our salvation from the pleasure of sin may be recognized by the felt bondage which sin produces. As it is not until a Divine faith is planted in the heart that we become aware of our native and inveterate unbelief, so it is not until God saves us from the love of sin that we are conscious of the fetters it has placed around us. Then it is that we discover we are "without strength," unable to do anything pleasing to God, incapable of running the race set before us. A Divinely-drawn picture of the saved soul's felt bondage is to be found in Romans 7: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin" (vv. 18, 19, 22, 23). And what is the sequel? This, the agonizing cry "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." If that be the sincere lamentation of your heart, then God has saved you from the pleasure of sin.

Let it be pointed out, though, that salvation from the love of sin is felt and evidenced in varying degrees by different Christians, and at different periods in the life of the same Christian, according to the measure of grace which God bestows, and according as that grace is active and operative. Some seem to have a more intense hatred of sin in all its forms than do others, yet the principle of hating sin is found in all real Christians. Some Christians rarely, if ever commit any deliberate and premeditated sins: more often they are tripped up, suddenly tempted (to be angry or to tell a lie) and are overcome. But with others the case is quite otherwise: they—fearful to say—actually plan evil acts. If anyone indignantly denies that such a thing is possible in a saint, and insists that such a character is a stranger to saving grace, we would remind him of David: was not the murder of Uriah definitely planned?

2. Salvation from the Penalty of Sin

This follows upon our regeneration which is evidenced by evangelical repentance and sincere faith. Every soul that truly puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is then and there saved from the penalty—the guilt, the wages, the punishment—of sin. When the Apostles said to the penitent jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," they signified that all his sins would be remitted by God; just as when the Lord said to the poor woman, "your faith has saved you: go in peace" (Luke 7:50). He meant that all her sins were now forgiven her, for forgiveness has to do with the criminality and punishment of sin. To the same effect when we read, "by grace are you saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8), it is to be understood that the Lord has actually "delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

This aspect of our salvation is to be contemplated from two separate viewpoints: the Divine and the human. The Divine side of it is found in the Mediatorial office and work of Christ, who as the Sponsor and Surety of His people met the requirements of the Law on their behalf, working out for them a perfect righteousness and enduring

Himself the curse and condemnation which was due them, consummated at the Cross. It was there that He was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). It was there that He, judicially, "His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). It was there that He was "smitten of God and afflicted" while He was making atonement for the offenses of His people. Because Christ suffered in my place, I go free; because He died, I live; because He was forsaken of God, I am reconciled to Him. This is the great marvel of grace, which will evoke ceaseless praise from the redeemed throughout eternity!

The human side of our salvation from the penalty of sin respects our repentance and faith. Though these possess no merits whatever, and though they in no sense purchase our pardon, yet according to the order which God has appointed, they are (instrumentally) essential, for salvation does not become ours experimentally until they are exercised. Repentance is the hand releasing those filthy objects it had previously clung to so tenaciously —faith is extending an empty hand to God to receive the gift of His grace. Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin; faith is accepting God's pardon thereof. Repentance is a crying, "God be merciful to me the sinner." Faith is receiving the sinner's Savior. Repentance is a revulsion of the filth and pollution of sin. Faith is a seeking of cleansing therefrom. Repentance is the sinner covering his mouth and crying, "Unclean, unclean!" Faith is the leper coming to Christ and saying, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean."

So far from repentance and faith being meritorious graces, they are self-emptying ones. The one who truly repents takes his place as a lost sinner before God, confessing himself to be a guilty wretch deserving nothing but unsparing judgment at the hands of Divine justice. Faith looks away from corrupt and ruined self, and views the amazing provision which God has made for such a Hell-deserving creature. Faith lays hold of the Son of God's love, as a drowning man clutches at a passing oar. Faith surrenders to the Lordship of Christ and gladly owns His rights to reign over him. Faith rests upon the

promises of God, setting to its seal that He is true. The moment the soul surrenders itself to the Lordship of Christ and rests upon the merits and efficacy of His sacrifice, his sins are removed from God's sight "as far as the east is from the west": he is now eternally saved from the wrath to come.

We cannot do better here than quote those sublime lines of Augustus Toplady:

"From whence this fear and unbelief?
Have You, O Father, put to grief
Your spotless Son for me?
And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin
Which, Lord, was laid on Thee?"

If You have my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath Divine;
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

Complete atonement You have made,
And to the utmost farthing paid,
Whatever Your people owed;
How then can wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Your righteousness,
And sprinkled with Your blood?"

Turn, then, my soul, unto your rest,
The merits of your great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty:
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear your banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for Thee."

While deliverance from the love of sin has to do entirely with the experimental side of our salvation, remission of the penalty of sin concerns the legal aspect only, or in other words, the believer's justification. Justification is a forensic term and has to do with the law-courts, for it is the decision or verdict of the judge. Justification is the opposite of condemnation. Condemnation means that a man has been charged with a crime, his guilt is established, and accordingly the law pronounces upon him sentence of punishment. On the contrary, justification means that the accused is found to be guiltless, the Law has nothing against him, and therefore he is acquitted and exonerated, leaving the court without a stain upon his character. When we read in Scripture that believers are "justified from all things" (Acts 13:39), it signifies that their case has been tried in the high court of Heaven and that God, the Judge of all the earth, has acquitted them: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

But to be without condemnation is only the negative side: justification means to declare or pronounce righteous, up to the Law's requirements. Justification implies that the Law has been fulfilled, obeyed, magnified, for nothing short of this would meet the just demands of God. Hence, as His people, fallen in Adam, were unable to measure up to the Divine standard, God appointed that His own Son should become incarnate, be the Surety of His people, and answer the demands of the Law in their place. Here, then, is the sufficient answer which may be made to the two objections which unbelief is ready to raise: how can God acquit the guilty? how can He declare righteous one who is devoid of righteousness? Bring in the Lord Jesus and all difficulty disappears! The guilt of our sins was imputed or legally transferred to Him, so that He suffered the full penalty of what was due them; the merits of His obedience is imputed or legally transferred to us, so that we stand before God in all the acceptableness of our Sponsor: Romans 5:18, 19; 2 Corinthians 5:21, etc. Not only has the Law nothing against us, but we are entitled to its reward.

This is a present and protracted process, and is as yet incomplete. It is the most difficult part of our subject, and upon it the greatest confusion of thought prevails, especially among young Christians. Many there are who, having learned that the Lord Jesus is the Savior of sinners, have jumped to the erroneous conclusion that if they but exercise faith in Him, surrender to His Lordship, commit their souls into His keeping, He will remove their corrupt nature and destroy their evil propensities. But after they have really trusted in Him, they discover that evil is still present with them, that their hearts are still deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and that no matter how they strive to resist temptation, pray for overcoming grace and use the means of God's appointing, they seem to grow worse and worse instead of better, until they seriously doubt if they are saved at all. They are now being sanctified!

Even when a person has been regenerated and justified, the flesh or corrupt nature remains within him, and ceaselessly harasses him. Yet this ought not to perplex him. To the saints at Rome, Paul said, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (6:12), which would be entirely meaningless had sin been eradicated from them. Writing to the Corinthian saints he said, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). Obviously such an exhortation is needless if sin has been purged from our beings. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6)—what need have Christians for such a word as this—except pride still lurks and works within them? But all room for controversy on this point is excluded if we bow to that inspired declaration, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

The old carnal nature remains in the believer: he is still a sinner, though a saved one. What, then, is the young Christian to do? Is he powerless? Must he resort to stoicism, and make up his mind that there is nothing but a life of defeat before him? Certainly not! The first thing for him to do is to learn thoroughly the humiliating truth

that in himself he is "without strength." It was here that Israel failed: when Moses made known to them the Law, they boastfully declared, "all that the LORD has said we will do and be obedient" (Exodus 24:7). Ah! how little did they realize that "in the flesh there dwells no good thing." It was here, too, that Peter failed: he was self-confident and boasted that, "though all men be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You" (Matthew 26:33, 35)—how little he knew his own heart! This complacent spirit lurks within each of us. While we cherish the belief we can "do better next time," it is evident that we still have confidence in our own powers. Not until we heed the Savior's word, "without Me you can do nothing," do we take the first step toward victory. Only when we are weak (in ourselves) are we strong.

The believer still has the carnal nature within him, and he has no strength in himself to check its evil propensities, nor to overcome its sinful solicitations. But the believer in Christ also has another nature within him, which is received at the new birth: "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). The believer, then, has two natures within him: one which is sinful, the other spiritual. These two natures being totally different in character, are antagonistic to each other. To this antagonism, or conflict, the Apostle referred when he said, "The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (Galatians 5:17). Now which of these two natures is to regulate the believer's life? It is manifest that both cannot, for they are contrary to each other. It is equally evident that the stronger of the two will exert the more controlling power. It is also clear that in the young Christian the carnal nature is the stronger, because he was born with it, and hence it has many years head start over the spiritual nature—which he did not receive until he was born again. Further, it is unnecessary to argue at length that the only way by which we can strengthen and develop the new nature is by feeding it. In every realm, growth is dependent upon food, suitable food, daily food. The nourishment which God has provided for our spiritual nature is found in His own Word, for "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"

(Matthew 4:4). It is to this that Peter has reference when he says, "As newborn babes desire the sincere (pure) milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). In proportion as we feed upon the heavenly Manna, such will be our spiritual growth. Of course, there are other things beside food needful to growth: we must breathe, and live in a pure atmosphere. This, translated into spiritual terms, signifies prayer. It is when we approach the Throne of Grace and meet our Lord face to face that our spiritual lungs are filled with the oxygen of Heaven. Exercise is another essential to growth, and this finds its accomplishment in walking with the Lord. If, then, we heed these primary laws of spiritual health, the new nature will flourish.

But not only must the new nature be fed. It is equally necessary for our spiritual well-being that the old nature should be starved. This is what the Apostle had in mind when he said, "Make not provision for the flesh, unto the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). To starve the old nature, to make not provision for the flesh, means that we abstain from everything that would stimulate our carnality—that we avoid, as we would a plague all that is calculated to prove injurious to our spiritual welfare. Not only must we deny ourselves the "pleasures of sin," shun such things as the saloon, theater, dance, card table, etc., but we must separate ourselves from worldly companions, cease to read worldly literature, abstain from everything upon which we cannot ask God's blessing. Our affections are to be set upon things above, and not upon things on the earth (Colossians 3:2). Does this seem a high standard and sound impracticable? Holiness in all things is that at which we are to aim, and failure so to do explains the leanness of so many Christians. Let the young believer realize that whatever does not help his spiritual life hinders it.

Here then, in brief, is the answer to our question, What is the young Christian to do in order for deliverance from indwelling sin? It is true that we are still in this world, but we are not "of" it (John 17:14). It is true that we are forced to associate with godless people, but this is ordained of God in order that we may "let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which

is in Heaven" (Matthew 5:16). There is a wide difference between associating with sinners as we go about our daily tasks, and making them our intimate companions and friends. Only as we feed upon the Word can we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Only as we starve the old nature can we expect deliverance from its power and pollution. Then let us earnestly heed that exhortation, "put you off concerning the former conversation (behavior) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Salvation from the Power of Sin

We have dealt only with the human side of the problem as to how to obtain deliverance from the dominion of sin. Necessarily there is a Divine side, too. It is only by God's grace that we are enabled to use the means which He has provided for us, as it is only by the power of His Spirit who dwells within us that we can "lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). These two aspects (the Divine and human) are brought together in a number of Scriptures. We are bid to, "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," but the Apostle immediately added, "for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12, 13). Thus, we are to work out that which God has wrought within us—in other words, if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16). It has now been shown that salvation from the power of sin is a process which goes on throughout the believer's life. It is to this Solomon referred when he said, "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

As our salvation from the pleasure of sin is the consequence of our regeneration, and as salvation from the penalty of sin respects our justification, so salvation from the power of sin has to do with the

practical side of our sanctification. The word "sanctification" signifies "separation"—separation from sin. We need hardly say that the word "holiness" is strictly synonymous with "sanctification," being an alternative rendering of the same Greek word. As the practical side of sanctification has to do with our separation from sin, we are told, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). That practical sanctification or holiness is a process, a progressive experience, is clear from this: "Follow . . . holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). The fact that we are exhorted to "follow" holiness clearly intimates that we have not yet attained unto the Divine standard which God requires of us. This is further seen in the passage just quoted above: "perfecting holiness" or completing it.

We must now enter into a little fuller detail upon the Divine side of our salvation from the power of sin. When a sinner truly receives Christ as his Lord and Savior, God does not then and there take him to Heaven: on the contrary, he is likely to be left down here for many years and this world is a place of danger, for it lies in the Wicked one (1 John 5:19) and all pertaining to it is opposed to the Father (1 John 2:16). Therefore the believer needs daily salvation from this hostile system. Accordingly we read that Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father" (Galatians 1:4). Not only is the sinner not taken to Heaven when he first savingly believes, but, as we have seen, the evil nature is not taken out of him— nevertheless God does not leave him completely under its dominion, but graciously delivers him from its regal power. He uses a great variety of means in accomplishing this.

First, by granting us a clearer view of our inward depravity so that we are made to abhor ourselves. By nature we are thoroughly in love with ourselves, but as the Divine work of grace is carried forward in our souls we come to loathe ourselves; and that, my reader, is a very distressing experience—one which is conveniently shelved by most of

our modern preachers. The concept which many young Christians form from preachers is that the experience of a genuine believer is a smooth, peaceful, and joyous one; but he soon discovers that this is not verified in his personal experience, but rather is it completely false. And this staggers him—supposing the preacher to know more about such matters than himself, he is now filled with disturbing doubts about his very salvation, and the Devil promptly tells him he is only a hypocrite, and never was saved at all.

Only those who have actually passed through or are passing through this painful experience have any real conception thereof. There is as much difference between an actual acquaintance with it and the mere reading a description of the same, as there is between personally visiting a country and simply studying a map of it. But how are we to account for one who has been saved from the pleasure and penalty of sin, now being made increasingly conscious not only of its polluting presence but of its tyrannizing power? How can we explain the fact that the Christian now finds himself growing worse and worse, and the more closely he endeavors to walk with God, the more he finds the flesh bringing forth its horrible works in ways it had not done previously? The answer is because of increased light from God, by which he now discovers filth of which he was previously unaware: the sun shining into a neglected room does not create the dust and cobwebs, but simply reveals them.

Thus it is with the Christian. The more the light of the Spirit is turned upon him inwardly, the more he discovers the horrible plague of his heart (1 Kings 8:38), and the more he realizes what a wretched failure he is. The fact is, dear discouraged soul, that the more you are growing out of love with yourself, the more you are being saved from the power of sin. Wherein lies its fearful potency? Why, in its power to deceive us. It lies to us. It did so to Adam and Eve. It gives us false estimates of values so that we mistake the tinsel for real gold. To be saved from the power of sin is to have our eyes opened so that we see things in God's light—it is to know the truth about things all around us and the truth about ourselves. Satan has blinded the minds of

them that believe not, but the Holy Spirit has shined in our hearts, "unto the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

But further—sin not only deceives, it puffs up, causing its infatuated victims to think highly of themselves. As 1 Timothy 3:6 tells us, to be "lifted up with pride" is to "fall into the condemnation of the devil." Ah, it was insane egotism which caused Lucifer to say, "I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13, 14). Is there any wonder, then, that those in whom he works are filled with pride and complacency! Sin ever produces self-love and self-righteousness: the most abandoned of characters will tell you, "I know that I am weak, yet I have a good heart." But when God takes us in hand, it is the very opposite: the workings of the Spirit subdue our pride. How? By giving increasing discoveries of self and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, so that each one cries with Job, "Behold! I am vile" (40:4). Such an one is being saved from the power of sin—its power to deceive and to inflate.

Second, by sore chastenings. This is another means which God uses in delivering His people from sin's power. "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they truly for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure: but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:9, 10). Those chastenings assume varied forms: sometimes they are external, sometimes internal, but whatever be their nature they are painful to flesh and blood. Sometimes these Divine chastisements are of long duration, and then the soul is apt to ask, "why stand You afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1), for it seems as though God has deserted us. Earnest prayer is made for a mitigation of suffering but no relief is granted; grace is earnestly sought for, meekly bowing to the rod, but unbelief, impatience, rebellion seem to wax stronger and

stronger—and the soul is hard put to believe in God's love—but as Hebrews 12:11 tells us, "Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

This life is a schooling and chastenings are one of the chief methods God employs in the training of His children. Sometimes they are sent for the correcting of our faults, and therefore we must pray, "Cause me to understand wherein I have erred" (Job 6:24). Let us steadily bear in mind that it is the "rod" and not the sword which is smiting us, held in the hand of our loving Father and not the avenging Judge. Sometimes they are sent for the prevention of sin, as Paul was given a thorn in the flesh, "lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations" given him. Sometimes they are sent for our spiritual education, that by them we may be brought to a deeper experimental acquaintance with God: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:71). Sometimes they are sent for the testing and strengthening of our graces: "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope," (Romans 5:3, 4); "count it all joy when you fall into varied trials: knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience" (James 1:2, 3).

Chastening is God's sin-purging medicine, sent to wither our fleshly aspirations, to detach our hearts from carnal objects, to deliver us from our idols, to wean us more thoroughly from the world. God has bidden us, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . . come out from among them, and be you separate" (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17). We are slow to respond, and therefore does He take measures to drive us out. He has bidden us "love not the world," and if we disobey we must not be surprised if He causes some of our worldly friends to hate and persecute us. God has bidden us, "mortify you therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Colossians 3:5): if we refuse to comply with this unpleasant task, then we may expect God Himself to use the pruning knife upon us. God has

bidden us, "cease you from man" (Isaiah 2:22), and if we will trust our fellows, we are made to suffer for it.

"Despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him" (Hebrews 12:5). This is a beneficial warning. So far from despising it, we should be grateful for the same—that God cares so much and takes such trouble with us, and that His bitter medicine produces such healthful effects. "In their affliction they will seek Me early" (Hosea 5:15): while everything is running smoothly for us, we are apt to be self-sufficient; but when trouble comes, we promptly turn unto the Lord. Own, then, with the Psalmist, "In faithfulness You have afflicted me" (119:75). Not only do God's chastisements, when sanctified to us, subdue the workings of pride and wean us more from the world, but they make the Divine promises more precious to the heart—such an one as this takes on a new meaning: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you . . . when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned" (Isaiah 43:2). Moreover, they break down selfishness and make us more sympathetic to our fellow-sufferers: "Who comfort us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble" (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Third, by bitter disappointments. God has plainly warned us that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:11), and that by one who was permitted to gratify the physical senses as none other ever has been. Yet we do not take this warning to heart, for we do not really believe it. On the contrary, we persuade ourselves that satisfaction is to be found in things under the sun, that the creature can give contentment to our hearts. As well attempt to fill a circle with a square! The heart was made for God and He alone can meet its needs. But by nature we are idolaters, putting things in His place. Those things we invest with qualities they possess not, and sooner or later our delusions are rudely exposed to us, and we discover that the images in our minds are only dreams—that golden idol is but clay after all.

God may order His providences that our earthly nest is destroyed. The winds of adversity compel us to leave the downy bed of carnal ease and luxuriation. Grievous losses are experienced in some form or other. Trusted friends prove fickle and in the hour of need fail us. The family circle, which had so long sheltered us and where peace and happiness were found, is broken up by the grim hand of death. Health fails and weary nights are our portion. These trying experiences, these bitter disappointments, are another of the means which our gracious God employs to save us from the pleasure and pollution of sin. By them He discovers to us the vanity and vexation of the creature. By them He weans us more completely from the world. By them He teaches us that the objects in which we sought refreshment are but "broken cisterns," and this that we may turn to Christ and draw from Him who is the living water, the One who alone can supply true satisfaction of soul.

It is in this way we are experimentally taught to look off from the present to the future, for our rest is not here. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for?" (Romans 8:24). Let it be duly noted that this comes immediately after "we ourselves groan within ourselves." Thus to be "saved by hope" respects our present salvation from the power of sin. Complete salvation is now the Christian's only in title and expectation. It is not here said that we, "shall be saved by hope," but we are saved by hope—that hope which looks for the fulfilling of God's promises. Hope has to do with a future good, with something which as yet "is seen not": we "hope" not for something which is already enjoyed. Herein hope differs from faith. Faith, as it is an assent, is in the mind; but hope is seated in the affections, stirred by the desirability of the things promised. And, my reader, the bitter disappointments of life are nothing but a dark background

upon which hope may shine forth the more brightly. Christ does not immediately take to Heaven the one who puts his trust in Him. No, He keeps him here upon earth for a while to be exercised and tried. While he is awaiting his complete blessedness there is such a

difference between him and it and he encounters many difficulties and trials. Not having yet received his inheritance there is need and occasion of hope, for only by its exercise can things future be sought after. The stronger our hope, the more earnestly shall we be engaged in the pursuit of it. We have to be weaned from present things in order for the heart to be fixed upon a future good.

Fourth, by the gift of the Spirit and His operations within us. God's great gift of Christ for us is matched by the gift of the Spirit in us, for we owe as much to the One as we do to the Other. The new nature in the Christian is powerless apart from the Spirit's daily renewing. It is by His gracious operations that we have made known to us the nature and extent of sin, are made to strive against it, are brought to grieve over it. It is by the Spirit that faith, hope and prayer are kept alive within the soul. It is by the Spirit we are moved to use the means of grace which God has appointed for our spiritual preservation and growth. It is by the Spirit that sin is prevented from having complete power over us, for as the result of His indwelling us there is something else besides sin in the believer's heart and life, namely, the fruits of holiness and righteousness.

To sum up this aspect of our subject—salvation from the power of indwelling sin is not the taking of the evil nature out of the believer in this life, nor by effecting any improvement in it: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6), and it remains so, unchanged to the end. Nor is it by the Spirit so subduing indwelling sin that it is rendered less active, for the flesh not merely lusts, but "lusts (ceaselessly) against the spirit": it never sleeps, not even when our bodies do, as our dreams evidence. No, and in some form or other, the flesh is constantly producing its evil works. It may not be in external acts, seen by the eyes of our fellows, but certainly so internally, in things seen by God— such as covetousness, discontent, pride, unbelief, self-will, ill-will towards others, and a hundred other evils. No, none is saved from sinning in this life.

Present salvation from the power of sin consists in, first, delivering us from the love of it, which though begun at our regeneration is continued throughout our practical sanctification. Second, from its blinding delusiveness, so that it can no more deceive as once it did. Third, from our excusing it: "that which I do, I allow not" (Romans 7:15). This is one of the surest marks of regeneration. In the fullest sense of the word, the believer "allows" it not before he sins, for every real Christian, when in his right mind, desires to be wholly kept from sinning. He "allows" it not fully when doing it, for in the actual committing thereof there is an inward reserve—the new nature consents not. He "allows" it not afterwards, as Psalm 51 evidences so plainly of the case of David.

The force of this word "allow" in Romans 7:15 may be seen from "truly you bear witness that you allow the deeds of your fathers: for they killed them (the Prophets) and you build their sepulchers" (Luke 11:48). So far from those Jews being ashamed of their fathers and abhorring their wicked conduct, they erected a monument to their honor. Thus, to "allow" is the opposite of to be ashamed of and sorrow over: it is to condone and vindicate. Therefore, when it is said that the believer "allows not" the evil of which he is guilty, it means that he seeks not to justify himself or throw the blame on someone else, as both Adam and Eve did. That the Christian allows not sin is evident by his shame over it, his sorrow for it, his confession of it, his loathing himself because of it, his renewed resolution to forsake it.

Salvation from the Presence of Sin

We now turn to that aspect of our subject which has to do solely with the future. Sin is yet to be completely eradicated from the believer's being so that he shall appear before God without any spot or blemish. True, this is his legal status even now, yet it has not become so in his state or experience. As God views the believer in Christ, he appears before Him in all the excellency of his Sponsor; but as God views him as he yet is in himself (and that He does do so is proved by His chastenings), He beholds all the ruin which the Fall has wrought

in him. But this will not always be the case: no, blessed be His name, the Lord is reserving the best wine for the last. And even now we have tasted that He is gracious, but the fullness of His grace will only be entered into and enjoyed by us after this world is left behind.

Those Scriptures which present our salvation as a future prospect are all concerned with our final deliverance from the very presence of sin. To this Paul referred when he said, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11)—not our salvation from the pleasure, the penalty, or the power of sin, but from its very presence. "For our citizenship is in Heaven: from whence we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). Yes, it is the "Savior" we await, for it is at His return that the whole election of grace shall enter into their full salvation; as it is written, "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). In like manner, when another Apostle declares, "We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5), he had reference to this grand consummation of the believer's salvation, when we shall be forever rid of the very presence of sin.

Our salvation from the pleasure of sin is effected by Christ's taking up His abode in our hearts: "Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Our salvation from the penalty of sin was secured by Christ's sufferings on the Cross where He endured the punishment due our iniquities. Our salvation from the power of sin is obtained by the gracious operations of the Spirit which Christ sends to His people—therefore is He designated "the Spirit of Christ" (Romans 8:9 and cf. Galatians 4:6). Our salvation from the presence of sin will be accomplished at Christ's second advent: "for our citizenship is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:20, 21). And again we are told, "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we

shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). It is all of Christ from beginning to end.

Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God, reflecting the moral perfections of his Maker. But sin came in and he fell from his pristine glory, and by that Fall God's image in him was broken and His likeness marred. But in the redeemed that image is to be restored, yes, they are to be granted a far higher honor than what was bestowed upon the first Adam: they are to be made like the last Adam. It is written, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestine to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). This blessed purpose of God in our predestination will not be fully realized until the second coming of our Lord: then it will be that His people shall be completely emancipated from the thralldom and corruption of sin. Then shall Christ "present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). Salvation from the pleasure or love of sin takes place at our regeneration; salvation from the penalty or punishment of sin occurs at our justification; salvation from the power or dominion of sin is accomplished during our practical sanctification; salvation from the presence or indwelling of sin is consummated at our glorification: "Whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Romans 8:30). Not so much is revealed in Scripture on this fourth aspect of our subject, for God's Word was not given us to gratify curiosity. Yet sufficient light is made known to feed faith, strengthen hope, draw out love, and make us "run with patience the race that is set before us." In our present state we are incapable of forming any real conception of the bliss awaiting us: yet as Israel's spies brought back the bunch of "the grapes of Eschol" as a sample of the good things to be found in the land of Canaan, so the Christian is granted a foretaste and earnest of his inheritance on High.

"Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of

the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). It is to the image of a glorified Christ that we are predestined to be conformed. Behold Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, when a foreview of His glory was granted the favored disciples. Such is the dazzling splendor of His person that Saul of Tarsus was temporarily blinded by a glimpse of it, and the beloved John in the isle of Patmos "fell at His feet as dead" (Rev. 1:17), when he beheld Him. That which awaits us can best be estimated as it is contemplated in the light of God's wondrous love. The portion which Christ Himself has received is the expression of God's love for Him; and as the Savior has assured His people concerning His Father's love unto them, "and have loved them as You love Me" (John 17:23), and therefore, as He promised, "where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3).

But is not the believer forever done with sin at death? Yes, thank God, such is the case; yet that is not his glorification for his body goes to corruption, and that is the effect of sin. It is written of the believer's body, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). Nevertheless, at death itself the Christian's soul is entirely freed from the presence of sin. This is clear from, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). What is signified by "that they may rest from their labors?" Why, something more blessed than ceasing from earning their daily bread by the sweat of their brows, for that will be true of the unsaved also. Those who die in the Lord rest from their "labors" with sin: their painful conflicts with indwelling corruption, Satan, and the world. The fight which faith now wages is then ended and full relief from sin is theirs forever.

Summary

The fourfold salvation from sin of the Christian was strikingly typified in God's dealings with the Nation of Israel of old. First we

have a vivid portrayal of their deliverance from the pleasure or love of sin: "And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning" (Exodus 2:23, 24). What a contrast does that present from what we read of in the closing chapters of Genesis! There we hear the king of Egypt saying to Joseph, "The land of Egypt is before you: in the best of the land make your father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen" (47:6). Accordingly we are told, "And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew and multiplied exceedingly" (47:27). Now Egypt is the Old Testament symbol of the world, as a system opposed to God. And it was there, in the "best part" of it, the descendants of Abraham had settled. But the Lord had designs of mercy and something far better for them: yet before they could appreciate Canaan they had to be weaned from Egypt. Hence we find them in cruel bondage there, smarting under the lash of the taskmasters. In this way they were made to loathe Egypt and long for deliverance therefrom. The theme of Exodus is redemption: how striking, then, to see that God begins His work of redemption by making His people to groan and cry out under their bondage! The portion Christ bestows is not welcome until we are made sick of this world.

Second, in Exodus 12 we have a picture of God's people being delivered from the penalty of sin. On the Passover night the angel of death came and slew all the firstborn of the Egyptians. But why spare the firstborn of the Israelites? Not because they were guiltless before God, for all had sinned and come short of His glory. The Israelites, equally with the Egyptians, were guilty in His sight and deserving of unsparing judgment. It was at this very point that the grace of God came in and met their need. Another was slain in their place and died in their place. An innocent victim was killed and its blood shed, pointing to the coming of "the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." The head of each Israelite household sprinkled the lamb's blood on the lintel and posts of his door and hence the firstborn in it was spared from the avenging angel. God promised,

"when I see the blood I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). Thus Israel was saved from the penalty of sin by means of the lamb dying in their place.

Third, Israel's wilderness journey adumbrated the believer's salvation from the power of sin. Israel did not enter Canaan immediately upon their exodus from Egypt: they had to face the temptations and trials of the desert where they spent not less than forty years. But what a gracious and full provision did God make for His people! Manna was given them daily from heaven—a figure of that food which God's Word now supplies for our spiritual nourishment. Water was given from the smitten rock—emblematic of the Holy Spirit sent by the smitten Christ to dwell within us: John 7:38, 39. A cloud and a pillar of fire guided them by day and guarded them by night, reminding us of how God directs our steps and shields us from our foes. Best of all, Moses, their great leader, was with them, counseling, admonishing, and interceding for them—figure of the Captain of our salvation: "Lo I am with you always."

Fourth, the actual entrance of Israel into the promised land foreshadowed the believer's glorification, when he enters into the full enjoyment of that possession which Christ has purchased for him. The experiences Israel met with in Canaan have a double typical significance. From one viewpoint they presaged the conflict which faith encounters while the believer is left upon earth, for as the Hebrews had to overcome the original inhabitants of Canaan before they could enjoy their portion, so faith has to surmount many obstacles if it is to "possess its possessions." The land of milk and honey into which Israel entered after the bondage of Egypt and the hardships of the wilderness were left behind—were manifestly a figure of the Christian's portion in Heaven after he is forever done with sin in this world.

"You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). First save them from the pleasure or love of sin by bestowing a nature which hates it: this is the great miracle

of grace. Second, save them from the penalty or punishment of sin, by remitting all its guilt: this is the grand marvel of grace. Third save them from the power or dominion of sin, by the workings of His Spirit: this reveals the wondrous might of grace. Fourth, save them from the presence or indwelling of sin: this will demonstrate the glorious magnitude of grace. May it please the Lord to bless this elementary but most important study to many of His little ones, and make their "big" brothers and sisters smaller in their own esteem.

Heart Work

"Do you think you came into this world to spend your whole time and strength in your employments, your trades, your pleasures, unto the satisfaction of the will of the flesh and of the mind? Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, to talk unprofitably—it may be corruptly—in all sorts of unnecessary societies, but have not enough time to live unto God, in the very essentials of that life? Alas, you came into the world under this law: 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment' (Heb. 9:27), and the end (purpose) why your life is here granted unto you, is that you may be prepared for that judgment. If this be neglected, if the principal part of your time be not improved with respect unto this end, you will yet fall under the sentence of it unto eternity" (John Owen, 1670).

Multitudes seem to be running, but few "pressing toward the mark"; many talk about salvation, but few experience the joy of it. There is much of the form of godliness, but little of the power of it. O how rare it is to find any who know anything experimentally of the power which separates from the world, delivers from self, defends from Satan, makes sin to be hated, Christ to be loved, truth to be prized, and error and evil to be departed from. Where shall we find those who are denying self, taking up their cross daily, and following Christ in the path of obedience? Where are they who hail reproach,

welcome shame, and endure persecution? Where are they who are truly getting prayer answered daily, on whose behalf God is showing Himself strong? Something is radically wrong somewhere.

Yes, and as surely as the beating of the pulse is an index to the state of our most vital physical organ, so the lives of professing Christians make it unmistakably evident that their hearts are diseased! "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chron. 16:9). Ah, do not the opening words indicate that those with "perfect" hearts are few and far between, that they are hard to locate? Surely it does; and it has ever been the case. David cried, "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psalm 12:1). The Lord Jesus had to lament "I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing" (Isaiah 49:4). The Apostle Paul declared, "I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own interests, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:20, 21); "All those who are in Asia have turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15). And things are neither better nor worse today.

But, my reader, instead of talking about the "apostasy of Christendom," instead of being occupied with the empty profession all around us, what about our own hearts? Is your heart "perfect"? If so, even in these so-called "hard times" God is "showing Himself strong" in your behalf: that is, He is working miracles for you, and ministering to you in a way that He is not to the empty professors. But if God is not so doing, then your heart is not "perfect" toward Him, and it is high time for you to take stock and get down to serious soul business.

"Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). The pains which multitudes have taken in religion are but lost labor. Like the Pharisees of old, they have been tithing annice, and mint and cummin, but neglecting the weightier matters. Many have a zeal, but it is not according to knowledge; they are

active, but their energies are misdirected; they have wrought "many wonderful works," but they are rejected by God. Why? Because their employments are self-selected or man-appointed, while the one great task which God has assigned, is left unattended to. All outward actions are worthless, while our hearts be not right with God. He will not so much as hear our prayers while we regard iniquity in our hearts (Psalm 66:18)!

Let us, then, endeavor to further point out what is signified by this supremely important exhortation. To "keep" the heart signifies to have the conscience exercised about all things. In numbers of passages "heart" and "conscience" signify one and the same thing: see 1 Samuel 24:5, 2 Samuel 24:10, 1 John 3:21, etc. The Apostle Paul declared "herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16), and herein he sets before us an example which we need to emulate. After the most careful and diligent manner we must strive to keep the conscience free from all offense in the discharge of every duty which God requires, and in rendering to every man what is due him. Though this is never perfectly attained in this life, yet every regenerate soul has a real concern for such a state of conscience.

A "good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly" (Heb. 13:18) is worth far more than rubies. This is to be something more than an empty wish, which gets us nowhere. The Apostle said, "herein do I exercise myself" (Acts 24:16): it was a matter of deep concern to him, and one to which he assiduously applied himself. He labored hard in seeing to it that his conscience did not flatter, deceiving and misleading him. He was conscientious over both his outer and inner life, so that his conscience accused and condemned him not. He was more careful not to offend his conscience than he was not to displease his dearest friend. He made it his daily business to live by this rule, abstaining from many a thing which natural inclination drew him unto, and performing many a duty which the ease-loving flesh would shirk. He steadily maintained a care not to break the law of love toward either God or man. And, when conscious of failure, he

saw to it that by renewed acts of repentance and faith (in confession) each offense was removed from his conscience; instead of allowing guilt to accumulate thereon.

"Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). The "commandment" is the same as the "holy commandment" of 2 Peter 2:21, namely, the Gospel, as including the Moral Law, which enjoined perfect love both to God and to our neighbor. The "end" or design—that which is enjoined and whose accomplishment is prompted thereby—is love. But spiritual "love" can only proceed from "a pure heart," that is, one which has been renewed by grace, and thereby delivered from enmity against God (Romans 8:7) and hatred against man (Titus 3:3), and cleansed from the love and pollution of sin. Spiritual "love" can only proceed out of a "good conscience," that is, a conscience which has been made tender and active by grace, which has been purged by the blood of Christ, and which sedulously avoids all that defiles it and draws away from God; its possessor being influenced to act conscientiously in the whole of his conduct.

It is solemn to note that those who "put away" a good conscience soon make "shipwreck of the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19). To "keep" the heart means to "set the Lord always before" us (Psalm 16:8). Some may object that those words spoke, prophetically, of the Lord Jesus. True, but remember He has "left us an example that we should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). What, then, is it to "set the Lord always before" us? It means to remember that His eye is ever upon us, and that we act accordingly. It means to remember that we must yet render to Him a full account of our stewardship, and to let this fact constantly influence us. It means that we are to ever have His honor and glory in view, living not to please ourselves but acting according to His revealed will. It means that we should strive, especially, to have God before our souls whenever we engage in any religious exercises.

The Omniscient One will not be imposed upon by outward forms or empty words; those who worship Him "must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). "Seek My face," O to respond with David, "my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalm 27:8). "The well is seldom so full that water will at first pumping flow forth; neither is the heart commonly so spiritual—even after our best care in our worldly converse—as to pour itself into God's bosom freely, without something to raise and elevate it; yes, often the springs of grace lie so low, that pumping only will not fetch the heart up to a praying frame, but arguments must be poured into the soul before the affections rise" (W. Gurnall, 1660).

Does not this explain why, after saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name," that the Psalmist added "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (Psalm 103: 1, 2)! Ah, note well those words, dear reader: "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and not merely by the lips. David dreaded lest, while the outward was awake, his inner man should be asleep. Are you equally careful as to this? David labored so that no dullness and drowsiness should steal over his faculties. Therefore did he add, "and all that is within me, bless His holy name"—understanding, conscience, affections, and will. O that we may not be guilty of that awful sin about which Christ complained, "This people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15:8).

Again we would note the repetition in Psalm 103:2, "Bless the Lord, O my soul": how this shows us that we need to bestir ourselves repeatedly when about to approach the Majesty on High, seeking with all our might to throw off the spirit of sloth, formality and hypocrisy. Of old God's servants complained, "There is none who calls upon Your name, who stirs up himself to take hold of You" (Isaiah 64:7). Are we any better, my friends? Do we really bestir ourselves to "take hold" of God: we shall never be like Jacob—successful "wrestlers" with Him—until we do. There is little wonder that so few obtain answers to their petitions unto the Throne of

Grace: it is not simply prayer, but "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

Before seeking to approach the Most High we need to "prepare" our heart (Job 11:13), and beg God to "strengthen" it (Psalm 27:14), so that we may be enabled to draw near with befitting reverence and humility, so that we may trust in Him with all our hearts (Proverbs 3:5), love Him with all our hearts (Matt. 22:37), and praise Him with "the whole heart" (Psalm 9:1). O the frightful impiety which is now to be witnessed on almost every side, of heedlessly rushing into the holy presence of God (or rather, going through the form of so doing), and gabbling off the first things that come to mind. And all of us are more affected by this evil spirit than we imagine. We need to definitely seek grace and fight against so grievously insulting God. We need to fix our minds steadily on the august perfections of God, reminding ourselves of whom it is we are about to approach. We need to seek deliverance from that half-hearted, ill-conceived, careless and indifferent worship which is offered by so many. We need to ponder God's grace and goodness unto us, and lay hold of His encouraging promises, that our affections may be inflamed and our souls brought into that gracious temper which is suited unto Him to whom we owe our all.

But not only do we need to diligently watch our hearts when about to approach God in prayer or worship, but also when turning to His Holy Word. All ordinances, helps, and means of grace, are but empty shells, unless we meet with God in them; and for that, He must be sought: "You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). We are not at all likely to obtain any more soul profit from the reading of the Scriptures than we are from the perusal of men's writings, if we approach them in the same spirit we do human books. God's Word is addressed unto the conscience, and it is only as we strive to have our hearts suitably affected by what we read therein, that we may justly expect to be helped spiritually.

God has bidden us, "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not the law of your mother: Bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck" (Proverbs 6:20, 21). And again, "My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart" (Proverbs 7:1-3). This cannot be done by reading the Bible for a few minutes, and then an hour later forgetting what has been read. Shame on us that we should treat God's Word so lightly. No, we must "meditate therein day and night" (Psalm 1:2). Unless we do so, we shall never be able to say, "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11): nor shall we be able to say, "Blessed are you, O Lord: teach me Your statutes" (Psalm 119:12).

To "keep" the heart signifies attending diligently to its progress or decays in holiness. What health is to the body holiness is to the soul. "I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made diligent search" (Psalm 77:6): this is absolutely essential if a healthy spiritual life is to be maintained: a part of each day should be set aside for the study of the heart and cultivation of its faculties. The more this is done, the less difficulty shall we experience in knowing what to pray for! O shame on us that we are so diligent in thinking about and caring for our bodies, while the state of our souls is so rarely inquired after. Emulate the example of Hezekiah, who "humbled himself for the pride of his heart" (2 Chron. 32:26). Peter's heart was lifted up with self-confidence: his fall was preceded by "a haughty spirit" (Proverbs 16:18).

It is in the heart that all backsliding begins. Observe closely your affections and see whether God or the world is gaining ground in them. Watch whether you experience increasing profit and pleasure in reading God's Word, or whether you have to force yourself to it in order to discharge a duty. Observe the same thing in connection with prayer: whether you are finding increased or decreased liberty in

pouring out your heart to God; whether you are having more freedom in so doing, or whether it is becoming an irksome task.

Examine well your spiritual graces, and ascertain whether your faith be in lively exercise, feeding upon the precepts and promises of God; whether your hope is lively, anticipating the glorious future; whether your love be fervent or cold; whether patience, meekness, self-control be greater or less.

To "keep" the heart signifies to store it well with pure and holy things. As the most effective way of getting a child to willingly drop some dirty trifle is to offer it an apple or orange, so the best security for the soul against the allurements of Satan is to have it engaged with a lovelier and more satisfying object. A heart which is filled and engaged with good, is best protected against evil.

Note well the order in Philippians 4:6-8, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." The heart which casts all its care upon God is well guarded from anxiety by His peace; but a pure atmosphere must be breathed if the soul is to be kept healthy, and that is best promoted by thinking about wholesome, lovely, and praise-provoking things.

Commune frequently with Christ: dwell upon His loveliness, stay in the sunshine of His presence, refresh your soul with those gifts and graces He is ever ready to bestow, and you shall have in yourself "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

"Were our affections filled, taken up, and possessed with these things (the beauty of God and the glory of Christ), as it is our duty that they

should be, and as it is our happiness when they are—what access could sin—with its painted pleasures, with its sugared poisons, with its envenomed baits—have upon our souls? How we should loathe all its proposals, and say unto them, Get you hence as an abominable thing" (John Owen).

As well might a poor man expect to be rich in this world—without industry, or for a weak man to become strong and healthy—without food and exercise, as for a Christian to be rich in faith and strong in the Lord—without earnest endeavor and diligent effort. It is true that all our labors amount to nothing unless the Lord blesses them (Psalm 127:1), as it also is that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). Nevertheless, God places no premium upon sloth, and has promised that "the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Proverbs 13:4).

A farmer may be fully persuaded of his own helplessness to make his fields productive, he may realize that their fertility is dependent upon the sovereign will of God, and he may also be a firm believer in the efficacy of prayer; but unless he discharges his own duty, his barns will be empty. So it is spiritually. God has not called His people to be drones, nor to maintain an attitude of passiveness. No, He bids them work, toil, labor. The sad thing is that so many of them are engaged in the wrong task, or, at least, giving most of their attention to that which is incidental, and neglecting that which is essential and fundamental.

"Keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23). This is the great task which God has assigned unto each of His children. But O how sadly is the heart neglected! Of all their concerns and possessions, the least diligence is used by the vast majority of professing Christians in the keeping of their hearts. So long as they safeguard their other interests—their reputations, their bodies, their positions in the world—the heart may be left to take its own course.

As the heart in our physical body is the center and fountain of life, because from it blood circulates into every part, conveying with it either health or disease, so it is with us spiritually. If our heart be the residence of impiety, pride, avarice, malice, impure lusts—then the whole current of our lives will largely be tainted with these vices. If they are admitted there and prevail for a season, then our character and conduct will be proportionately affected. Therefore the citadel of the heart needs above all things to be well guarded, that it may not be seized by those numerous and watchful assailants which are ever attacking it. This spring needs to be well protected—that its waters be not poisoned.

The man is what his heart is. If this be dead to God, then nothing in him is alive. If this be right with God, all will be right. As the mainspring of a watch sets all its wheels and parts in motion, so as a man "thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). If the heart be right, the actions will be. As a man's heart is, such is his state now and will be hereafter: if it be regenerated and sanctified there will be a life of faith and holiness in this world, and everlasting life will be enjoyed in the world to come. Therefore "Rather look to the cleansing of your heart, than to the cleansing of your well; rather look to the feeding of your heart, than to the feeding of your flock; rather look to the defending of your heart, than to the defending of your house; rather look to the keeping of your heart, than to the keeping of your money" (Peter Moffett, 1570).

"Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). The "heart" is here put for our whole inner being, the "hidden man of the heart" (1 Peter 3:4). It is that which controls and gives character to all that we do. To "keep"—garrison or guard—the heart or soul is the great work which God has assigned us: the enablement is His, but the duty is ours. We are to keep the imagination from vanity, the understanding from error, the will from perverseness, the conscience clear of guilt, the affections from being inordinate and set on evil objects, the mind from being employed on

worthless or vile subjects; the whole from being possessed by Satan. This, this is the work to which God has called us.

Rightly did the Puritan John Flavel say, "The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition is the great business of a Christian's life."

Now to "keep" the heart right, implies that it has been set right. Thus it was at regeneration, when it was given a new spiritual bent. True conversion is the heart turning from Satan's control to God's control; from sin to holiness; from the world to Christ. To keep the heart right signifies the constant care and diligence of the Christian to preserve his soul in that holy frame to which grace has brought it.

"Hereupon do all events depend: the heart being kept, the whole course of our life here will be according to the mind of God, and the end of it will be the enjoyment of Him hereafter. This being neglected, life will be lost, both here as unto obedience, and hereafter as to glory" (John Owen in "Causes of Apostasy").

1. To "keep" the heart means striving to shut out from it, all that is opposed to God." "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). God is a jealous God and will brook no rival; He claims the throne of our hearts, and requires to be loved by us supremely. When, then, we perceive our affections being inordinately drawn out unto any earthly object, we are to fight against it, and "resist the Devil."

When Paul said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12), he signifies that he was keeping his heart diligently, that he was jealous lest things should gain that esteem and place in his soul which was due alone unto the Lord. A very small object placed immediately before the eye is sufficient to shut out the light of the sun, and trifling things taken up by the affections may soon sever communion with the Holy One.

Before regeneration our hearts were deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9): that was because the evil principle, the "flesh," had complete dominion over them. But inasmuch as "the flesh" remains in us after conversion, and is constantly striving for the mastery over "the spirit," the Christian needs to exercise a constant watchful jealousy over his heart, mindful of its readiness to be imposed upon, and its proneness unto a compliance with temptations. All the avenues to the heart need to be carefully guarded so that nothing hurtful enters therein, particularly against vain thoughts and imaginations, and especially in those seasons when they are most apt to gain an advantage. For if injurious thoughts are allowed to gain an inroad into the mind, if we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, then in vain shall we hope to be "spiritually minded" (Romans 8:6). All such thoughts are only making provision to fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Thus, for the Christian to "keep" his heart with all diligence, means for him to pay close attention to the direction in which his affections are moving, to discover whether the things of the world are gaining a firmer and fuller hold over him, or whether they are increasingly losing their charm for him. God has exhorted us, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2), and the heeding of this injunction calls for constant examination of the heart to discover whether or not it is becoming more and more dead unto this deceitful and perishing world, and whether heavenly things are those in which we find our chief and greatest delight. "Take heed to yourself, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart" (Deut. 4:9).

2. To "keep" the heart means striving to bring it into conformity with the Word. We are not to rest content until an actual image of its pure and holy teachings is stamped upon it. Alas, so many today are just playing with the solemn realities of God, allowing them to flit across their fancy, but never embracing and making them their own. Why is it, dear reader, that those solemn impressions you had when hearing

a searching sermon or reading a searching article, so quickly faded away? Why did those holy feelings and aspirations which were stirred within you, not last? Why have they borne no fruit? Was it not because you failed to see that your heart was duly affected by them? You failed to "hold fast" that which you had "received and heard" (Rev. 3:3), and in consequence, your heart became absorbed again in "the cares of this life" or "the deceitfulness of riches," and thus the Word was choked.

It is not enough to hear or read a powerful message from one of God's servants, and to be deeply interested and stirred by it. If there is no diligent effort on your part, then it will be said "your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away" (Hosea 6:4). What, then, is required? This, earnest and persevering prayer that God will fasten the message in your soul as "a nail in a sure place," so that the devil himself cannot catch it away.

What is required? This "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Things which are not duly pondered are soon forgotten: meditation stands to reading, as mastication does to eating. What is required? This, that you promptly put into practice what you have learned: walk according to the light God has given, or it will quickly be taken from you: Luke 8:18. Not only must the outward actions be regulated by the Word, but the heart must also be conformed thereto. It is not enough to abstain from murder, the causeless anger must be put away. It is not enough to abstain from the act of adultery, the inward lust must be mortified too (Matt. 5:28). God not only takes note of and keeps a record of all our external conduct, but He "weighs the spirits" (Proverbs 16:2). Everything is naked and open before Him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13).

Not only so, He requires us to scrutinize the springs from which our actions proceed, to examine our motives, to ponder the spirit in which we act. God requires truth—that is, sincerity (reality)—in "the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6). Therefore does He command us "Keep

your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

3. To "keep" the heart means to preserve it tender unto sin. The unregenerate man makes little or no distinction between sin and crime: so long as he keeps within the law of the land, and maintains a reputation for respectability among his fellows, he is, generally speaking, quite satisfied with himself. But it is far otherwise with one who has been born again: he has been awakened to the fact that he has to do with God, and must yet render a full account unto Him. He makes conscience of a hundred things which the unconverted never trouble themselves about. When the Holy Spirit first convicted him, he was made to feel that his whole life had been one of rebellion against God, of pleasing himself. The consciousness of this pierced him to the very quick: his inward anguish far exceeded any pains of body or sorrow occasioned by temporal losses. He saw himself to be a spiritual leper, and hated himself for it, and mourned bitterly before God. He cried, "Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:9, 10).

Now it is the duty of the Christian, and part of the task which God has set him, to see to it that this sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin be not lost. He is to labor daily that his heart be duly affected by the heinousness of self-will and self-love. He is to steadfastly resist every effort of Satan to pity himself, to think lightly of wrong doing, or to excuse himself in the same. He is to live in the constant realization that the eye of God is ever upon him, so that when tempted he will say with Joseph, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). He is to view sin in the light of the Cross, daily reminding himself that it was his iniquities which caused the Lord of Glory to be made a curse for him; employing the dying love of Christ as a motive why he must not allow himself in anything that is contrary to the holiness and obedience which the Savior asks from all His redeemed.

Ah, my Christian reader, it is no child's play to "keep the heart with all diligence." The easy-going religion of our day will never take its devotees (or rather, its victims!) to Heaven.

The question has been asked, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?" (Psalm 24:3), and plainly has the question been answered by God Himself: "He who has clean hands, and a pure heart" etc. (Psalm 24:4). Equally plain is the teaching of the New Testament, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). A "pure heart" is one that hates sin, which makes conscience of sin, which grieves over it, which strives against it. A "pure heart" is one that seeks to keep undefiled the temple of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling place of Christ (Eph. 3:17).

4. To "keep" the heart means to look diligently after its cleansing. Perhaps some of our readers often find themselves sorrowfully crying, "O the vileness of my heart!" Thank God, if He has discovered this to you; if such be so, and you really feel it, it is clear proof that He has made you to differ from the multitudes of blindly-indifferent professing Christians all around you. But, dear friend, there is no sufficient reason why your "heart" should continue to be vile. You might lament that your garden was overgrown with weeds and filled with rubbish; but need it remain so? We speak now not of your sinful nature, the incurable and unchangeable "flesh" which still indwells you; but of your heart, which God bids you "keep." You are responsible to purge your mind of vain imaginations, your soul of unlawful affections, your conscience of guilt.

But, alas, you say, "I have no control over such things: they come unbidden and I am powerless to prevent them." So the Devil would have you believe! Revert again to the analogy of your garden: do not the weeds spring up unbidden; do not the slugs and other pests seek to prey upon the plants? What, then? Do you merely bewail your helplessness? No, you resist them and take means to keep them under. Thieves enter houses uninvited, but whose fault is it if the doors and windows be left unlocked? O heed not the seductive

lullabies of Satan. God says, "purify your hearts, you double minded" (James 4:8); that is, one mind for Him, and another for self; one for holiness, and another for the pleasures of sin. But how am I to "purify" my heart? By vomiting up the foul things taken into it—guiltily owning them before God, repudiating them, turning from them with loathing; and it is written "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). By daily renewing our exercise of repentance, and such repentance as is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 7:11: "Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm." By the daily exercise of faith (Acts 15:9), appropriating afresh the cleansing blood of Christ, bathing every night in that "fountain" which has been opened "for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1). By treading the path of God's commandments: "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit" (1 Peter 1:22).

We close this first article by pointing out, what is obvious to every Christian reader, namely, that such a task calls for Divine aid. Help and grace need to be earnestly and definitely sought of the Holy Spirit each day. We should bow before God, and in all simplicity say, "Lord, You require me to keep my heart with all diligence, and I feel utterly incompetent for such a task: such a work lies altogether beyond my poor feeble powers; therefore, I humbly ask You in the name of Christ to graciously grant unto me supernatural strength to do as You have bidden me. Lord, work in me both to will and to do of Your good pleasure."

"Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). How prone we are to be occupied with that which is evanescent, rather than with the things which abide; how ready to gauge things by our senses, instead of by our rational powers. How easily we are deceived by that which is on the surface, forgetting that true beauty lies within. How slow we are to adopt God's way of estimating. Instead of being attracted by loveliness of

physical features, we should value moral qualities and spiritual graces. Instead of spending so much care, time, and money in the adorning of the body, we ought to devote our best attention unto the developing and directing of the faculties of our souls. Alas, the vast majority of our fellows live as though they had no souls, and the average professing Christian gives very little serious thought unto the same.

Yes, the Lord "looks on the heart": He sees its thoughts and intents, knows its desires and designs, beholds its motives and motions, and deals with us accordingly. The Lord discerns what qualities are in our hearts: what holiness and righteousness, what wisdom and prudence, what justice and integrity, what mercy and kindness. When such graces are lively and flourishing, then is fulfilled that verse "My beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" (Song 6:2). God esteems nothing so highly as holy faith, unfeigned love, and filial fear; in His sight a "meek and quiet spirit" is of "great price" (1 Peter 3:4). O to be careful in the cultivation of that which gives Him delight: then "keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23).

The sincerity of our profession largely depends upon the care and conscience we have in keeping our hearts. A very searching example of this is found in 2 Kings 10:31, "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart." Those words are the more solemn because of what is said of him in the previous verse: "And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because you have done well in executing that which is right in My eyes, and have done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, your children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." Jehu was partial in his reformation, which showed his heart was not right with God; he abhorred the worship of Baal which Ahab had fostered, but he tolerated the golden calves which Jeroboam had set up. He failed to put away all the evil.

Ah, my reader, true conversion is not only turning away from gross sin, it is the heart forsaking all sin. There must be no reserve, for God will not allow any idol, nor must we. Jehu went so far, but he stopped short of the vital point; he put away evil, but he did not do that which was good. He heeded not the law of the Lord to walk in it "with all his heart."

It is greatly to be feared that those who are heedless are graceless, for where the principle of holiness is planted in the heart, it makes its possessor circumspect and desirous of pleasing God in all things—not from servile fear, but from grateful love; not by constraint, but freely; not occasionally, but constantly.

"My son, give Me your heart" (Proverbs 23:26). "The heart is that which the great God requires, and calls for from every one of us; whatever we give, if we do not give Him our hearts, it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon Him; our thoughts must converse much with Him; and on Him, as our highest end, the intents of our hearts must be fastened. We must make it our own act and deed to devote ourselves to the Lord, and we must be free and cheerful in it. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; He will have all or none: 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.' To this call we must readily answer, My Father, take my heart, such as it is, and make it such as it should be; take possession of it, and set up Your throne in it" (Matthew Henry).

"Keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23). Guard it jealously as the dwelling place of Him to whom you have given it. Guard it with the utmost vigilance, for not only is there the enemy without seeking entrance, but there is a traitor within desirous of dominion. The Hebrew for "with all diligence" literally rendered is, "above all": above all the concerns of your outward life, for careful as we should be as to that, it is before the eyes of men, whereas the heart is the object of God's holy gaze. Then "keep" or preserve it more sedulously than your reputation, your body, your estate, your money. With all earnestness and prayer, labor that no evil desire

prevails or abides there, avoiding all that excites lust, feeds pride, or stirs up anger, crushing the first emotions of such evils as you would the brood of a scorpion.

Many people place great expectations in varied circumstances and conditions. One thinks he could serve God much better if he were more prospered temporally; another, if he passed through the refining effects of poverty and affliction. One thinks his spirituality would be promoted if he could be more retired and solitary; another, if only he could have more society and Christian fellowship. But, my reader, the only way to serve God better is to be content with the place in which He has put you, and therein get a better heart! We shall never enter into the advantages of any situation, nor overcome the disadvantages of any condition, until we fix and water the root of them in ourselves. It is out of the heart are the "issues of life," and not from our surroundings. "Make the tree good, and his fruit good" (Matt. 12:33): get the heart right, and you will soon be superior unto all "circumstances."

"But how can I get my heart right? Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" Answer, you are creating your own difficulty by confounding "heart" with "nature"; they are quite distinct. It is important to recognize this, for many are confused thereon. There has been such an undue emphasis upon the "two natures in the Christian," that often it has been lost sight of that the Christian is a person over and above his two natures. The Scriptures make the distinction clear enough. For example, God does not bid us keep our "nature," but He does our "heart." We do not believe with our "nature," but we do with our "hearts" (Romans 10:10)! God never tells us to "rend" our nature (Joel 2:13), "circumcise" our nature (Deut. 10:16), "purify" our nature (James 4:8), but He does our "hearts"! The "heart" is the very center of my responsibility, and to deny that I am to improve and keep it, is to repudiate human accountability. It is the Devil who seeks to persuade people that they are not responsible for the state of their hearts, and may no more

change them than they can the stars in their courses. And the "flesh" within finds such a lie very agreeable to its case.

But he who has been regenerated by the sovereign grace of God, cannot, with the Scriptures before him, give heed unto any such delusion. While he has to deplore how sadly neglected is the great task which God has set before him, while he has to bemoan his wretched failure in making his heart what it ought to be, nevertheless, he wants to do better; and after his duty has been pressed upon him—as it now has upon the readers of these articles—he will daily seek grace to better discharge his duty, and instead of being totally discouraged by the difficulty and greatness of the work required, he will cry the more fervently to the Holy Spirit for His enablement. The Christian who means business will labor to have a "willing" heart (Exo. 35:5)—which acts spontaneously and gladly, not of necessity. A "perfect" heart (1 Chron. 29:9)—sincere, genuine, upright. A "tender" heart (2 Chron. 34:27)—yielding and pliable, the opposite of hard and stubborn. A "broken" heart (Psalm 34:18)—sorrowing over all failure and sin. A "united" heart (Psalm 86:11)—all the affections centered on God. An "enlarged" heart (Psalm 119:32)—delighting in every part of Scripture, and loving all God's people. A "sound" heart (Proverbs 14:30)—right in doctrine and practice. A "merry" heart (Proverbs 15:15)—rejoicing in the Lord always. A "pure" heart (Matt. 5:8)—hating all evil. An "honest and good heart" (Luke 8:15)—free from deceit and hypocrisy, willing to be searched through and through by the Word. A "single" heart (Eph. 6:5)—desiring only God's glory. A "true" heart (Heb. 10:22)—genuine in all its dealings with God.

The duty of keeping the heart with the utmost diligence, is binding upon the Christian at all times: there is no period or condition of life in which he may be excused from this work. Nevertheless, there are distinctive seasons, critical hours, which call for more than a common vigilance over the heart, and it is a few of these which we would now contemplate, seeking help from above to point out some of the most effectual aids unto the right accomplishment of the task

God has assigned us. General principles are always needful and beneficial, yet details have to be furnished if we are to know how to apply them in particular circumstances. It is this lack of definiteness which constitutes one of the most glaring defects in so much modern ministry. Mere generalizations and platitudes are substituted for specific instructions, and God has good reason to complain today, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

1. In times of Prosperity. When providence smiles upon us and bestows temporal gifts with a lavish hand, then has the Christian urgent reason to keep his heart with all diligence, for that is the time we are apt to grow careless, proud, earthly. Therefore was Israel cautioned of old, "When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Deut. 6:10-12). But they heeded not that exhortation for "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked" (Deut. 32:14).

Many are the warnings furnished in Scripture. Of Uzziah it is recorded, "when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction" (2 Chron. 26:16). Of the king of Tyre God said, "your heart is lifted up because of your riches" (Ezek. 28:5). Of Israel we read, "They captured fortified cities and fertile land; they took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things, wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves and fruit trees in abundance. They ate to the full and were well-nourished; they reveled in your great goodness. But they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets, who had admonished them in order to turn them back to you; they committed awful blasphemies" (Neh. 9:25, 26). And again, "Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols" (Hosea 8:4); "according to the goodness of His land they have made goodly

images" (Hosea 10:1); "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me" (Hosea 13:6).

Sad indeed are the above passages, the more so because we have seen such a tragic repetition of them in our own days. O the earthly-mindedness which prevailed, the indulging of the flesh, the sinful extravagance, which were seen among professing Christians while "times were good!" How practical godliness waned, how the denying of self disappeared, how covetousness, pleasure and wantonness possessed the great majority of those calling themselves the people of God. Yet great as was their sin, far greater was that of most of the preachers, who instead of warning, admonishing, rebuking, and setting before their people an example of sobriety and thrift, criminally remained silent upon the crying sins of their hearers, and themselves encouraged the reckless spending of money and the indulgence of worldly lusts.

How, then, is the Christian to keep his heart from these things in times of prosperity?

First, by seriously pondering the dangerous and ensnaring temptations which attend a prosperous condition, for very, very few of those who live in the prosperity and pleasures of this world escape eternal perdition. "It is easier (said Christ) for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:24). O what multitudes have been carried to Hell in the cushioned chariots of earthly wealth and ease, while a comparative handful have been whipped to Heaven by the rod of affliction. Remember too that many of the Lord's own people have sadly deteriorated in seasons of worldly success. When Israel was in a low condition in the wilderness, then were they "holiness unto the Lord" (Jer. 2:3); but when they fed in the fat pastures of Canaan they said, "We are lords; we will come no more unto You" (Jer. 2:31).

Second, diligently seek grace to heed that word, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Psalm 62:10). Those riches may be given to try you; not only are they most uncertain things, often taking to themselves wings and flying swiftly away, but at best they cannot satisfy the soul, and only perish with the using. Remember that God values no man a jot more for these things: He esteems us by inward graces, and not outward possessions: "in every nation he who fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:35).

Third, urge upon your soul the consideration of that solemn Day of Reckoning, wherein, according to our receipt of mercies, so shall be our accountings of them: "For unto whoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48). Each of us must yet give an account of our stewardship: of every dollar we have spent, of every hour wasted, of every idle word uttered!

2. In times of Adversity. When providence frowns upon us, overturning our cherished plans, and blasting our outward comforts, then has the Christian urgent need to look to his heart, and keep it with all diligence from replying against God or fainting under His hand. Job was a mirror of patience, yet his heart was discomposed by trouble. Jonah was a man of God, yet he was peevish under trial. When the food supplies gave out in the wilderness, they who had been miraculously delivered from Egypt, and who sang Jehovah's praises so heartily at the Red Sea, murmured and rebelled. It takes much grace to keep the heart calm amid the storms of life, to keep the spirit sweet when there is much to embitter the flesh, and to say "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Yet this is a Christian duty! To help thereunto:

First, consider, fellow-Christian, that despite these cross providences, God is still faithfully carrying out the great design of electing love upon the souls of His people, and orders these very afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Nothing happens by chance, but all by Divine counsel (Eph. 1:11), and therefore it is that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those

who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). Ah, beloved, it will wonderfully calm your troubled bosom and sustain your fainting heart to rest upon that blessed fact. The poor worldling may say, "the bottom has dropped out of everything," but not so the saint, for the eternal God is his refuge, and underneath him are still the "everlasting arms." Then, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

The very afflictions which are so painful unto flesh and blood are designed for our spiritual blessing: God chastens for "our profit" (Heb. 12:10). It is ignorance or forgetfulness of God's loving designs which makes us so prone to chafe under His providential dealings. If faith were more in exercise we would "Count it all joy when you fall into divers trials" (James 1:2). Why so? Because we should discern those very trials were sent to wean our hearts from this empty world, to tear down pride and carnal security, to refine us. If, then, my Father has a design of love unto my soul, do I well to be angry with Him? If not now, later, you will see those bitter disappointments were blessings in disguise, and will exclaim "It is good for me that I have been afflicted!" (Psalm 119:71).

Second, it is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under affliction, to call to mind that our own Father has the ordering of them: not a creature can move either hand or tongue against us, but by His permission. Suppose the cup be a bitter one which He has given you to drink, still there is no poison in it. Has not God said, "I will do you no hurt" (Jer. 25:6)! If you are really one of His children you lie too near Him to injure you. Your highest good is ever before Him, and though He spares not the rod when we need it, yet it is love which wields it (Heb. 12:6).

Suppose a faithful and tender-hearted physician had studied well the case of a patient, and had prescribed the most excellent remedies to spare his life; would he not be grieved to hear him cry out "you have poisoned me," because it pains him in the operation? Quell then

those groundless and unreasonable suspicions of the designs of the Great Physician.

Third, though God has reserved unto Himself the right to afflict His people, yet He has pledged Himself not to take His loving-kindness from them: "If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; If they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail" (Psalm 89:30-33). Can I look that Scripture in the face with a murmuring or repining spirit? O naughty heart! do you well to be discontented when God has given you the whole tree, with all its clusters of comfort, because He allows the wind to blow down a few leaves!

Christians have both spiritual blessings and temporal mercies, the one abiding, the other movable: since God has eternally secured the former, never let your heart be troubled at the loss of the latter.

Fourth, may it not be that by these humbling providences God is now accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited for? If so, is it not foolish to be worried over the same? You have asked Him to refine your soul, to conform you more unto the image of Christ, to deliver you from the power of sin, to discover unto you the emptiness and insufficiency of the creature, to so mortify your worldly and fleshly lusts that you might find all your enjoyment and satisfaction in Christ. Then by these impoverishing strokes God is now fulfilling your desires. Would you be delivered from temptation? then He has hedged up your way with thorns. Would you see the vanity of the creature? He has now revealed it to your experience. Would you have your corruptions mortified? He has taken away the food and fuel that maintained them. As prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Would you have your heart rest in the bosom of God? He has pulled from under your head the soft pillow of 'creature delights' on which before you rested!

Finally, if like Rebekah of old, you still refuse to be comforted or quieted, then consider one thing more, which if it be seriously pondered will doubtless still your soul. Compare the condition you are now in, and with which you are so much dissatisfied, with that of the damned! Some of those you used to associate and make merry with are now wailing and gnashing their teeth under the scourge of Divine vengeance. They are roaring amid the unquenchable flames of Hell; and you deserve to be among them! O my friend, your present lot, no matter how unpleasant it be, cannot for a moment be compared with theirs. How gladly would they change places with you. Let the knowledge that your sins deserved eternal torment make you thank God heartily for a crust of bread and a cup of water.

3. In times of Public Danger. We do not wish to be an alarmist, or needlessly excite the fear of our readers, but judging from God's ways in the past, it would seem quite likely that social upheavals, and the menacing of property and life, are not far distant. We say this, not merely because of the discontent which is now seething within the lower and rougher elements, nor because that tens of thousands, feeling so severely the pinch of poverty, are being driven to the point of desperation, but because so very few professing Christians have yet humbled themselves beneath the mighty hand of God, and evidenced any godly sorrow for their past extravagances, or show any marked reformation in their lives today. One wonders how much distress and suffering it will take before the haughty are humbled, and before those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God will give Him the place which is His right in their hearts and lives.

There can be no social revolution, no setting at defiance of established law and order, while the restraining hand of God curbs the wilder passions of men. The Almighty has perfect control of all His creatures, and therefore His people are bidden to pray "for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:2)—such a petition would be useless were not the helm of all events held by the hand of the Lord. And it is for the sake of His own elect that God

prevents the reprobate from turning this world into bedlam and shambles. But if His own people have wandered so far from Him as not to have His ear, if they will not repent of and turn away from their wicked ways now that His chastening hand is lightly laid upon them, then He will most probably resort to far sterner measures, and force them to their knees.

He who reads with any degree of attention the history of Israel, especially that portion of it recorded in the book of Judges, will see that God had to employ drastic means to turn them from their idols. So too he who has any fair acquaintance with the history of the "Christian" nations of Europe during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, will discover there several solemn illustrations of the same principle. And it seems to the writer that something more than an industrial depression, something more than financial straitness and flu epidemics, will be required to bring to an end the present frightful desecration of the Holy Sabbath, the brazen immodesty which stalks through the land, the spirit of lawlessness which abounds on every side. God may soon unleash the hounds of anarchy! Suppose He does: that would be another critical hour wherein we would need to exercise special care over our hearts. "Hear for the time to come" (Isaiah 42:23)!

In times of danger and public distraction the stoutest souls are apt to be surprised by slavish fear. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, and on earth distress of nations, with perplexity, then the hearts of men fail them for fear, and the looking after those things which are coming on the earth (Luke 21:25, 26). But it should not be thus with the saints: they ought to be of a more raised spirit. Those who are walking with God, may say "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled" (Psalm 46:1-3). With David they will exclaim, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

How, then, may a Christian preserve his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great or threatening danger?

First, even then all creatures are in the directing hand of God, and can only move as He permits them. Let this truth be well settled by faith in the heart, and it will have a marvelous quieting effect upon it. A lion at large is a terrible creature to meet, but not so when he is in the keeper's hand. Dreadful indeed will it be if a time of Bolshevism should break loose in this land, but even so He who rules Heaven and earth shall say, "Thus far shall you come, and no further." Even then, my brother or sister, God would still be your Father, and much more tender toward you than you are unto yourself. Let me ask the most nervous woman whether there would not be a vast difference between a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and the same sword in the hand of a loving husband? As great a difference is there in looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them as in the hand of your God by an eye of faith.

Second, urge upon yourself the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let your soul stand in awe of the violation of them. The Son of God has charged you, "When you shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified" (Luke 21:9); then cry unto Him for supernatural grace to obey. "In nothing terrified by your adversaries" (Phil. 1:28). Three times over in Matthew 10:26-31 Christ commands us not to fear "men." Does the voice of a creature make you tremble, and shall not the voice of God. If you are of such a timorous spirit, how is it that you fear not to disobey the plain commands of Christ? Surely His word should have more power to calm you, than the voice of a poor worm of the earth to terrify. "I, even I, am He who comforts you: who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die?" (Isaiah 51:12).

Third, consult the many precious promises which are recorded for your support and comfort in all dangers: these are the refuges to which you may fly and be safe. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies. "You will not fear the terror of

night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling — even the Lord, who is my refuge— then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" (Psalm 91:5-11).

"But now, O Israel, the Lord who created you says: Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." (Isaiah 43:1-3).

Finally, make sure of the eternal interest of your soul in the hands of Jesus Christ: when that is done, then you may say, Now world do your worst. You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you know that it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. "And I say unto you My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4). If you are truly and Scripturally assured that your spirit will be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation the moment of its dismissal from the body, trouble not yourself about the instruments and means of its dismissal.

"O but a violent death is terrible to nature"! But what matter is it when your soul is in Heaven whether it be let out at your mouth or your throat? whether your familiar friends or barbarous enemies close your dead eyes? Your soul in Heaven shall not be conscious of how your body is abused on earth.

Fourth, in times of Zion's trouble it behooves public and tender hearts to be delivered from sinking into despondency and despair.

When we see the once fair gardens of the Church, with their hedges broken down, the boar running wild therein, the flowers replaced by weeds, it makes a godly soul cry, "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears" (Jer. 9:1). Yes, but remember, no trouble befalls Zion, but by the permission of Zion's God, and He permits nothing out of which He will not bring much good at last. Moreover, "there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest" (1 Cor. 11:19). Again, lay hold of and persistently plead before God His promise: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19). However low the Church may be plunged under the waters of adversity, it shall assuredly rise again.

Fifth, how may a Christian keep his heart from revengeful motives under the greatest injuries and abuses of men?

First, urge upon your soul the express commands of God: remember that this is forbidden fruit, no matter how pleasant to our vitiated appetites. 'Revenge is sweet,' says nature. 'The effects thereof shall be bitter,' says God. How plainly has God prohibited this flesh-pleasing sin: "Say not, I will do so to him as he has done to me: I will render to the man according to his work" (Proverbs 24:29); "Avenge not yourselves" (Romans 12:19). But that is not all: "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink" (Proverbs 25:21). One of the many proofs of the supernatural origin of the Scriptures is that they forbid revenge, which is so sweet to nature. Then awe your heart by the authority of God in those Scriptures.

Second, set before your soul the blessed and binding example of Christ: never did any suffer more and greater abuses from men than did the Savior, and never was any one so peaceful and forgiving: "When He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him who judges

righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). To be of a meek and gracious spirit is to be Christ-like.

Third, calm your heart by the realization that by revenge you do but satisfy a lust; but by forgiving you shall conquer a lust.

Again; consider more frequently how often you wrong God, and then you will not be so easily inflamed against those who wrong you. Do you still reply, But such insults and injustices are more than flesh and blood can stand? then earnestly seek supernatural grace.

Sixth, how may a Christian preserve his heart from utterly sinking in seasons of spiritual gloom and the hidings of God's face? Turn unto the cheering promises which God has left on record for His backslidden people: Jeremiah 3:22, Hosea 14:4, etc. No matter what your sin or trouble is, let it drive you to God, and not from Him: cry with David, "Pardon my iniquity; for it is great" (Psalm 25:11). But suppose I can obtain no access to God, no conscious help from His Spirit, and find no ray of hope for my poor heart? Then heed this word, "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50:10).

Seventh, how may the Christian, in a time of critical illness, get his heart loose from all earthly engagements and persuade it unto a willingness to die?

First, by reminding himself that death has lost its sting (1 Cor. 15:55) and cannot harm him.

Second, by considering what heavy burdens he will then be rid of. The soul pays a dear rent for the house it now lives in! But death frees the saint not only from all the troubles and trials of this life, not only from all the sufferings and pains of the body, but it delivers from all spiritual diseases—"he who is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:7). Justification destroys its damning power, sanctification its reigning power, but glorification its very being and

existence. At death the Christian is done forever with Satan and his temptations: then how heartily should he welcome it!

"God is not the author of confusion" (1 Cor 14:33); no, the Devil causes that, and he has succeeded in creating much in the thinking of many, by confounding the "heart" with the "nature." People say, "I was born with an evil heart, and I cannot help it." It would be more correct to say, "I was born with an evil nature, which I am responsible to subdue." The Christian needs to clearly recognize that in addition to his two "natures"—the flesh and the spirit—he has a heart which God requires him to "keep." We have already touched upon this point, but deem it advisable to add a further word thereon.

I cannot change or better my "nature," but I may and must my "heart." For example, "nature" is slothful and loves ease, but the Christian is to redeem the time and be zealous of good works. Nature hates the thought of death, but the Christian should bring his heart to desire to depart and be with Christ. The popular religion of the day is either a head or a hand one: that is to say, the laboring to acquire a larger and fuller intellectual grasp of the things of God, or a constant round of activities called "service for the Lord." But the heart is neglected! Thousands are reading, studying, taking "Bible-courses," but for all the spiritual benefits their souls derive, they might as well be engaged in breaking stones! Lest it be thought that such a stricture is too severe, we quote a sentence from a letter recently received from one who has completed no less than eight of these "Bible-study courses": "There was nothing in that 'hard work' which ever called for self-examination, which led me to really know God, and appropriate the Scriptures to my deep need." No, of course there was not: their compilers—like nearly all the speakers at the big "Bible conferences"—studiously avoid all that is unpalatable to the flesh, all that condemns the natural man, all that pierces and searches the conscience. O the tragedy of this "head Christianity"!

Equally pitiable is the hand religion of the day, when young "converts" are put to teaching a Sunday school class, urged to

"speak" in the open air, or take up "personal work." How many thousands of beardless youths and young girls are now engaged in what is called "winning souls for Christ," when their own souls are spiritually starved! They may "memorize" two or three verses of Scripture a day, but that does not mean their souls are being fed. How many are giving their evenings to helping in some "mission," who need to be spending time in "the secret place of the Most High"! And how many bewildered souls are using the major part of the Lord's day in rushing from one meeting to another, instead of seeking from God that which will fortify them against temptations of the week. O the tragedy of this "hand Christianity"!

How subtle the Devil is! Under the guise of promoting growth in "the knowledge of the Lord," he gets people to attend a ceaseless round of meetings, reading an almost endless number of religious periodicals and books, or under the pretense of "honoring the Lord" by all this so-called "service." He induces the one or the other—to neglect the great task which GOD has set before us: "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Ah, it is far easier to speak to others, than it is to constantly use and improve all holy means and duties to preserve the soul from sin, and maintain it in sweet and free communion with God. It is far easier to spend an hour reading a sensational article upon "the signs of the time," than it is to spend an hour in agonizing before God for purifying and rectifying grace!

This work of keeping the heart is of supreme importance. The total disregard of it means that we are mere formalists. "My son, give me your heart" (Proverbs 23:26): until that is done, God will accept nothing from us. The prayers and praises of our lips, the labor of our hands, yes, and a correct outward walk, are things of no value in His sight—while the heart be estranged from Him. As the inspired Apostle declared, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have

not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

If the heart be not right with God, we cannot worship Him, though we may go through the form of it. Watch diligently, then, your love for Him. God cannot be imposed upon, and he who takes no care to order his heart aright before Him is a hypocrite. "My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice" (Ezek. 33:31, 32). Here are a company of formal hypocrites, as is evident from the words "My people": like them, but not of them! And what constituted them impostors? Their outside was very fair—high professions, reverent postures, much seeming delight in the means of grace. Ah, but their hearts were not set on God, but were commanded by their lusts, and went after covetousness.

But lest a real Christian should infer from the above that he is a hypocrite too, because many times his heart wanders, and he finds—strive all he may—that he cannot keep his mind stayed upon God either when praying, reading His Word, or engaged in public worship: to him we answer, the objection carries its own refutation. You say, "strive all I may"; ah, if you have, then the blessing of the upright is yours, even though God sees well to exercise you over the affliction of a wandering mind. There remains still much in the understanding and affections to humble you, but if you are exercised over them, strive against them, and sorrow over your very imperfect success, then that is quite enough to clear you of the charge of reigning hypocrisy.

The keeping of the heart is supremely important because "out of it are the issues of life": it is the source and fountain of all vital actions

and operations. The heart is the warehouse, the hand and tongue but the shops; what is in these comes from thence—the heart contrives and the members execute. It is in the heart the principles of the spiritual life are formed: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil" (Luke 6:45). Then let us diligently see to it that the heart be well stored with pious instruction, seeking to increase in grateful love, reverential fear, hatred of sin, and benevolence in all its exercises, that from within these holy springs may flow and fructify our whole conduct and life.

This work of keeping the heart is the hardest of all. "To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit, will cost no great pains; but to set yourself before the Lord, and tie up your loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon Him: this will cost something! To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put your meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy; but to get your heart broken for sin while you are confessing it, be melted with free grace, while you are blessing God for it, be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God's infinite holiness, and to keep your heart in this frame, not only in, but after duty—will surely cost you some groans and travailing pain of soul. To repress the outward acts of sin, and compose the external acts of your life in a laudable and lovely manner, is no great matter— even carnal persons by the force of common principles can do this; but to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up an holy government over your thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is not easy" (John Flavel).

Ah, dear reader, it is far, far easier to speak in the open air than to uproot pride from your soul. It calls for much less toil to go out and distribute tracts, than it does to cast out of your mind unholy thoughts. One can speak to the unsaved much more readily than he can deny self, take up his cross daily, and follow Christ in the path of obedience. And one can teach a class in the Sunday school with far less trouble than he can teach himself how to strengthen his own

spiritual graces. To keep the heart with all diligence calls for frequent examination of its frames and dispositions, the observing of its attitude toward God, and the prevailing directions of its affections; and that is something which no empty professor can be brought to do! To give liberally to religious enterprises he may, but to give himself unto the searching, purifying, and keeping of his heart, he will not.

This work of keeping the heart is a constant one. "The keeping of the heart is such a work as is never done until life be done: this labor and our life end together. It is with a Christian in his business, as it is with seamen that have sprung a leak at sea; if they tug not constantly at the pump, the water increases upon them, and will quickly sink them. It is in vain for them to say the work is hard, and we are weary; there is no time or condition in the life of a Christian, which will allow an intermission of this work. It is in the keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in the keeping up of Moses' hands, while Israel and Amalek were fighting below (Exo. 17:12): no sooner do Moses' hands grow heavy and sink down, but Amalek prevails. You know it cost David and Peter many a sad day and night for intermitting the watch over their own hearts but a few minutes" (John Flavel).

As long as we are in this world we must exercise the greatest diligence in protecting the heart. A significant type for the need of this is found in Numbers 19: "This is the law, when a man dies in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which has no covering bound upon it, is unclean" (vv. 14, 15). How many of our readers have sufficient discernment to perceive the spiritual meaning of this? Ponder it a moment before you read further. The "tent" into which "death" has entered, is this world (Romans 5:12). The "vessel" is the human heart (Matt. 25:4; 2 Cor. 4:7). The vessel which has "no covering bound upon it" is an unkept heart, and this is defiled by the presence of death! It is a striking illustration of the world's corrupting influence entering as soon as the heart be unguarded. But

if the heart be "covered"—protected, vigilantly kept—then the world cannot harm it.

Having sought to show that the keeping of the heart is the great work assigned the Christian, in which the very soul and life of true religion consists, and without the performance of which all other duties are unacceptable to God, let us now point out some of the corollaries and consequences which necessarily follow from this fact:

1. The labors which many have taken in religion are lost. Many great services have been performed, many wonderful works wrought by men, which have been utterly rejected of God, and shall receive no recognition in the Day of rewards. Why? Because they took no pains to keep their hearts with God in those duties: this is the fatal rock upon which thousands of vain professors have wrecked to their eternal undoing—they were diligent about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have professors spent in hearing, reading, conferring and praying! and yet as to the supreme task God has assigned, did nothing. Tell me, you vain professor, when did you shed tears for the coldness, deadness, and worldliness of your heart; when did you spend five minutes in a serious effort to keep, purge, improve it? Do you think that such an easy religion can save you? If so, we must inverse the words of Christ and say, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads unto life, and many there be that go in thereat."

2. If the keeping of the heart be the great work of the Christian, then how few real Christians are there in the world! If everyone who has learned the dialect of Christianity and can talk like a Christian, if everyone who has natural gifts and abilities and who is helped by the common assisting presence of the Spirit to pray and teach like a Christian, if all who associate themselves with the people of God, contribute of their means to His cause, take delight in public ordinances, and pass as Christians, were real ones—then the number of the saints would be considerable. But alas, to what a little flock do

they shrink when measured by this rule: how few make conscience of keeping their hearts, watching their thoughts, judging their motives.

Ah, there is no human applause to induce men to engage in this difficult work, and were hypocrites to do so, they would quickly discover what they do not care to know. This heart-work is left in the hands of a few hidden ones. Reader, are you one of them?

3. Unless real Christians spend more time and pains about their hearts than they have done, they are never likely to grow in grace, be of much use to God, or be possessors of much comfort in this world. You say, "But my heart seems so listless and dead"—do you wonder at it, when you keep it not in daily communion with Him who is the Fountain of Life? If your body had received no more concern and attention than your soul, what state would it now be in? O my Brother, or Sister, has not your zeal run in the wrong channels? God may be enjoyed even in the midst of earthly employments: "Enoch walked with God and begat sons and daughters" (Gen. 5:22)—he did not retire into a monastery; nor is there any need for you to.

4. It is high time the Christian reader set to this heart-work in real earnest. Do not you have to lament, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept" (Song. 1:6)? Then away with fruitless controversies and idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with harsh censuring of others—turn upon yourself. You have been a stranger long enough to this work; you have trifled about the borders of religion too long: the world has deterred you from this vitally necessary work too long. Will you not now resolve to look better after your heart? Hasten you to your closet.

5. He who will keep his heart must take heed against plunging himself into a multiplicity of earthly business (either in his worldly calling or so-called religious "service") so that he is unable to make his spiritual and eternal interests his chief concern. You say, "But I must live," yes, and you must die! Put the claims of God and your

heart first, and He will not allow your body to starve! Then take heed lest you neglect your soul by gratifying the immoderate clamoring of the flesh. Christ rebuked Martha because she was troubled about "many things," and assured her that but one thing was "needful." O say with David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalm 27:4).

The heart of man is his worst part before it be regenerate, and his best part afterwards. The heart is the seat of principles and the source of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of the Christian ought to be, principally fixed upon it. The great difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God, and the great difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God. Herein lies the very pinch and stress of religion; here is that which makes the way to life a narrow way, and the gate of Heaven a straight one. To afford some direction and help in this great work, these articles have been prepared. We realize their many defects, yet trust that God will be pleased to use them. No other subject can begin to compare with it in practical importance. The general neglect of the heart is the root cause of the present sad state of Christendom: the remainder of this article might readily be devoted unto the verifying and amplifying of that statement; instead, we merely point out briefly one or two of the more prominent features.

Why is it that so many preachers have withheld from their congregations that which was, so obviously, most needed? Why have they "spoken smooth things" instead of wielding the sword of the Spirit? Because their own hearts were not right with God: His holy fear was not upon them. An "honest and good heart" (Luke 8:15) will cause a servant of Christ to preach what he sees to be the most essential and profitable truths of the Word, however displeasing they may be unto many of his people. He will faithfully rebuke, exhort, admonish, correct and instruct—whether his hearers like it or not. Why have so many church members departed from the faith and

given heed to seducing spirits? Why have multitudes been led away by the error of the wicked, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness? Why have so many others been attracted to companies of notional professors, which, despite their proud boasts of being the only people gathered together in the name of Christ, are, for the most part, people who have only an acquaintance with the letter of Scripture and are strangers to practical godliness?

Ah, the answer is not far to seek: it was because they had no heart acquaintance with the things of God. It is those who are sickly and diseased, who fall easy victims unto the quacks; so it is those whose hearts are never rooted and grounded in the Truth, which are tossed about with every wind of doctrine. The study and guarding of the heart is the best antidote against the infectious errors of the times. And this leads us to point out some of the advantages of keeping the heart.

1. The pondering and garrisoning of the heart, is a great help to the understanding in the deep things of God. An honest and experienced heart is a wonderful aid to a weak head. Such a heart will serve as a commentary upon a great portion of the Scriptures. When such a one reads the Psalms of David or the Epistles of Paul, he will find there many of his own difficulties stated and solved: he will find them speaking the language of his own heart—recounting his experiences, expressing his sorrows and joys. By a close and regular study of the heart he will be far better fitted to understand the things of God, than graceless teachers and inexperienced doctors—not only will they be clearer, but far sweeter unto him. A man may discourse orthodoxly and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, of the preciousness of Christ, and the sweetness of communion with God—who has never felt the impressions or efficacy of them upon his own spirit. But O how dull and dry will these notions be unto those who have experienced them!

Ah, my reader, experience is the great schoolmaster. Much in Job and Lamentations will seem dull and uninteresting until you have

had deeper exercises of soul. The 7th Chapter of Romans is not likely to appeal much unto you until you make more conscience of indwelling sin. Many of the later Psalms will appear too extravagant in their language until you enjoy closer and sweeter fellowship with God. But the more you endeavor to keep your heart, and bring it into subjection unto God, to keep from it the evil solicitations of Satan, the more suited to your own case will you find many chapters of the Bible. It is not simply that you have to be in the "right mood" to appreciate, but that you have to pass through certain exercises of heart before you can discover their appropriateness. Then it is that you will have "felt" and "tasted" for yourself the things of which the inspired writers treat. Then it is you will have the key which unlocks many a verse that is fast closed unto masters of Hebrew and Greek.

2. Care in keeping the heart, supplies one of the best evidences of sincerity. There is no external act which distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor; but before this trial no hypocrite can stand. It is true that when they think death to be very near, many will cry out of the wickedness and fear of their hearts, but that signifies nothing more than does the howling of an animal when it is in distress. But if you are tender of your conscience, watchful of your thoughts, and careful each day of the workings and frames of your heart, this strongly argues the sincerity of it; for what but a real hatred of sin, what but a sense of the Divine eye being upon you, could put any one upon these secret duties which lie out of the observation of all creatures? If, then, it be such a desirable thing to have a fair testimony of your integrity, and to know of a truth that you fear God, then study, watch, keep the heart.

The true comfort of our souls much depends upon this, for he who is negligent in the keeping of his heart, is generally a stranger to spiritual assurance and the sweet comforts flowing from it. God does not usually indulge lazy souls with inward peace, for He will not be the patron of carelessness. He has united together our diligence and comfort, and they are greatly mistaken who suppose that the beautiful child of assurance can be born without soul pangs.

Diligent self-examination is called for: first the looking into the Word, and then the looking into our hearts, to see how far they correspond. It is true the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian, but He cannot be discerned by His essence; it is His operations that manifest Him, and these are known by the graces He produces in the soul; and those can only be perceived by diligent search and honest scrutiny of the heart. It is in the heart the Spirit works.

3. Care in keeping the heart makes blessed and fruitful the means of grace and the discharge of our spiritual duties. O what precious communion we have with God when He is approached in a right frame of soul: then we may say with David, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet" (Psalm 104:34). But when the heart is indisposed, full of the things of this world, or weighted down by the cares of this life, then we miss the comfort and joy which should be ours. The sermons you hear and the articles you read (if by God's servants), will appear very different if you bring a prepared heart to them! If the heart be right you will not grow drowsy while hearing the reading of the riches of God's grace, the glories of Christ, the beauty of holiness, or the needs-be for a scripturally ordered walk. It was because the heart was neglected you got so little from attending to the means of grace!

The same holds good of prayer. O what a difference there is between a deeply exercised and spiritually burdened heart pouring out itself before God in fervent supplication, and the utterance of verbal petitions by rote! It is the difference between reality and formality. He who is diligent in heart-work and perceives the state of his own soul, is at no loss in knowing what to ask God for. So he who makes it a practice of walking with God, communing with God, meditating upon God—spontaneously worships Him in spirit and in truth; like David he will say, "My heart is stirred by a noble theme" (Psalm 45:1). The Hebrew there is very suggestive: literally, it is "my heart is boiling up a good matter"; it is a figurative expression, taken from a living spring, which is bubbling up fresh water. The formalist has to rack his mind, and as it were, laboriously pump up something to say unto God; but he who makes conscience of heart work finds his soul

like a bottle full of new wine—ready to burst, giving vent to sorrow or joy, as his case may be.

4. Diligence in keeping the heart will make the soul stable in the hour of temptation. The care or neglect of the conscience largely determines our attitude toward and response unto solicitations of evil. The careless heart falls an easy prey to Satan. His main attacks are made upon the heart, for if he gains that, he gains all, for it commands the whole man! Alas, how easy a conquest is an unguarded heart: it is no more difficult for the devil to capture it, than for a burglar to enter a house whose windows and doors are wide open. It is the watchful heart, which both discovers and suppresses the temptation before it comes in its full strength. It is much like a large stone rolling down a hill! it is easy to stop at first, but very difficult after it has gained full momentum. So, if we cherish the first vain imagination as it enters the mind, it will soon grow into a powerful lust which will be difficult to uproot. Acts are preceded by desires, and desires by thoughts. A sinful object first presents itself to the imagination, and unless that be nipped in the bud, the affections will be stirred and enlisted. If the heart does not repel the evil imagination, if instead it dwells on it, encourages it, feeds on it, then it will not be long before the consent of the will is obtained.

A very large and important part of heart work lies in observing its first motions, and checking sin there. The motions of sin are weakest at the first, and a little watchfulness and care then, prevents much trouble and mischief later. But if the first movings of sin in the imagination are not observed and resisted, then the careless heart is quickly brought under the full power of temptation, and Satan is victorious.

5. The diligent keeping of the heart is a great aid to the improving of our graces. Grace never thrives in a careless soul, for the roots and habits of grace are planted in the heart, and the deeper they are rooted there, the more thriving and flourishing grace is. In Ephesians 3:17 we read of being "rooted and grounded in love": love in the heart

is the spring of every gracious word of the mouth and of every holy act of the hand. But is not Christ the "root" of the Christian's graces? Yes, the originating root, but grace is the derivative root, planted and nourished by Him, and according as this thrives under Divine influences, so the fruits of grace are more healthy and vigorous. But in a heart which is not kept diligently, those fructifying influences are choked. Just as in an uncared-for garden, the weeds crowd out the flowers, so vain thoughts that are not disallowed and lusts which are not mortified, devour the strength of the heart. "My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you, when I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches" (Psalm 63:5, 6).

6. The diligent care of the heart makes Christian fellowship profitable and precious. Why is it that when Christians meet together, there are often sad jarrings and contentions? It is because of unmortified passions. Why is their conversation so frothy and worthless? It is because of the vanity and earthiness of their hearts. It is not difficult to discern by the actions and converse of Christians, what frames their spirits are under. Take one whose mind is truly stayed upon God, and how serious, heavenly, and edifying is his conversation: "The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just. The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip" (Psalm 37:30, 31)! If each of us was humbled every day before God under the evils of his own heart, we would be more pitiful and tender toward others: Galatians 6:1.

7. A heart well kept fits us for any condition God may cast us into, or any service He has to use us in. He who has learned to keep his heart lowly, is fit for prosperity; and he who knows how to apply Scripture promises and supports, is fit to pass through any adversity. So he who can deny the pride and selfishness of his heart is fit to be employed in any service for God. Such a man was Paul: he not only ministered to others, but looked well to his own vineyard: see 1 Corinthians 9:27. And what an eminent instrument he was for God; he knew how to abound and how to suffer loss. Let the people deify

him, it moved him not, except to indignation; let them stone him, he can bear it.

8. By keeping our hearts diligently we would the soonest remove the scandals and stumbling blocks out of the way of the world. O how the worthy name of our Lord is blasphemed because of the wicked conduct of many who bear His name. O what prejudice has been created against the Gospel by the inconsistent lives of those who preached it. But if we keep our hearts, we shall not add to the scandals caused by the ways of loose professors. No, those with whom we come into contact will see that we "have been with Jesus." When the majestic beams of holiness shine from a heavenly walk, the world will be awed and respect will again be commanded by the followers of the Lamb.

Though the keeping of the heart entails such hard labor, do not such blessed gains supply a sufficient incentive to engage diligently in the same? Look over the eight special benefits we have named, and weigh them in a just balance; they are not trivial things. Then guard well your heart, and watch closely its love for God. Jacob served seven years for Rebekah, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love that he had unto her. The labor of love is always delightful. If God has your heart, the feet will run swiftly in the way of His commandments; duty will be a delight. Then let us earnestly pray, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12)— as we "apply" our hands unto manual tasks.

Let me now close this article with a word or two of CONSOLATION to all serious Christians who have sought to faithfully and closely give themselves to this heart work, but who are groaning in secret over their apparent lack of success therein, and who are fearful that their experience falls short of a saving one.

First, this argues that your heart is honest and upright. If you are mourning over heart conditions and sins—that is something no

hypocrite does. Many a one is now in Hell who had a better heart than mine; many a one now in Heaven complained of as bad a heart as yours.

Second, God would never leave you under so many heart burdens and troubles if He intended not your benefit thereby. You say, Lord, why do I go mourning all the day having sorrow of heart? For long have I been exercised over its hardness, and not yet is it broken. Many years have I been struggling against vain thoughts, and still I am plagued by them. O when shall I get a better heart? O that God would thereby show you what your heart by nature is, and have you take notice of how much you are indebted to free grace! So too He would keep you humble, and not fall in love with yourself.

Third, God will shortly put a blessed end to these cares, watchings, and headaches. The time is coming when your heart shall be as you would have it, when you will be delivered from all fears and sorrows, and never again cry, "O my hard, vain, earthy, filthy heart." Then shall all darkness be purged from your understanding, all vanity from your affections, all guilt from your conscience, all perversity from your will. Then shall you be everlastingly, delightfully, ravishingly entertained and exercised upon the supreme goodness and infinite excellency of God. Soon that morning without clouds shall break, when all the shadows shall flee way; and then we "shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Hallelujah!

(For much in these articles, we are indebted to the works of the Puritan, John Flavel.)

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