

**The Holy Spirit Regenerating**

In our last article we pointed out that at regeneration the faculties of the soul are *spiritually enlivened*, grace putting into them a new ability so that they are capable of performing spiritual acts. At the new birth the Holy Spirit communicates principles of spiritual life, whereby the soul is qualified to act as a supernatural agent and produce supernatural works. The need-be for this should be evident: God and Christ, as they are revealed in the Gospel, are supernatural objects unto the natural faculties or powers of the soul, and there is no proportion between them—not only such a disproportion as the bat's eye hath unto the sun, but as a blind man's eye to the sun. Thus there is a greater necessity for the soul to be given new principles and abilities to act holy and spiritually than at the first creation to act naturally.

*Holiness in the heart* is the main and ultimate birth brought forth in regeneration, for to make us partakers of God's holiness is the sum and scope of His gracious purpose toward us, both of His election (Eph. 1:4), and of all His dealings afterward (Heb. 12:10), without which "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). Not that finite creatures can ever be partakers of the essential holiness that is in God, either by imputation, or much less by real transubstantiation. We can be no otherwise partakers of it than in the *image* thereof—"which after God (as pattern or prototype) is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24); "after the image of Him that created him" (Col. 3:10).

Regeneration is the first discovery and manifestation of election and redemption to the persons for whom they were intended: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man *appeared*" (Titus 3:4); and *how* and *when* did it appear? "According to His mercy He saved us, *by* the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (v. 5). "God's eternal love, like a mighty river, had from everlasting ran, as it were underground; and when Christ came, it took its course through His heart, hiddenly ran through it, He bearing when on the cross the names of them whom God had given Him; but was yet still hidden here as to us, and our knowledge of it. But the first breaking of it forth, and particular appearing of it in and to the persons, is when we are converted, and is as the first opening of a fountain" (T. Goodwin).

There is a great display of God's *power* apparent in our regeneration; yea, an "exceeding greatness" thereof, no less than that which raised up Christ from the dead (Eph. 1:19, 20). Because the work of regeneration is often repeated, and accomplished in an instant, as seen in the dying thief and Paul, and often accomplished (apparently) by a few words from one frail mortal falling on the ears of another, we are apt to lose sight of the omnipotent working of the Holy Spirit in the performing thereof. Indeed the Spirit so graciously hides the exceeding greatness of His power working in sinners' hearts, by using such sweet persuasive motives and gentle inducements—drawing with "the cords of a man" (Hosea 11:4)—that *His* might is inadequately recognized, owned, and adored by us.

The marvel of regeneration is the bringing of a soul out of spiritual death into spiritual life. It is a new creation, which is a bringing of something out of nothing. Moreover the new creation is a far greater wonder than is the old: in the first creation there was nothing to oppose, but in the new all the powers of sin and Satan are set against it. Regeneration is not like the changing of water into wine, but of contrary into contrary—of hearts of stone into flesh (Ezek. 36:26), of wolves into lambs (Isa. 11:6). This is greater than any miracle Christ showed, and therefore did He tell His Apostles that, under the

mighty enduement of the Holy Spirit, they should work “greater works” than He did (John 14:12).

Not only is there a wondrous exhibition of His power when the Spirit regenerates a soul, but there is also a blessed manifestation of His *love*. In the exercise of His gracious office towards God’s elect and in His work in them, the Holy Spirit proves to a demonstration that His love toward the heirs of glory is ineffable and incomprehensible. As the principle work of the Spirit consists in making our souls alive to God, in giving us to apprehend the transactions of the Father and the Son in the Everlasting Covenant, and in imparting to them spiritual principles whereby they are fitted to enjoy and commune with God, it is *internal*; hence it is that, His work being *within* us, we are more apt to overlook *Him*, and are prone to neglect the giving to Him the glory which is distinctly His due, and most sadly do we fail to praise and adore Him for His gracious work in us.

Thus it is with all believers: they find themselves more disposed to think on the love of Christ, or on the Father’s love in the gift of Him, than in exercising their minds spiritually in soul-inflaming and heart-warming meditations on the love and mercy of the Holy Spirit towards them, and His delight in them; though all that they really know and enjoy of the Father’s love by faith in the finished work of the Son, is entirely from the inward teaching and supernatural influences of the eternal Spirit. This is too plainly evident in our neglect to ascribe distinctive glory to Him as a Divine Person in the Godhead as God and Lord.

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him” (1 Thess. 5:9, 10): yet the Father’s appointment and the Son’s redemption, with all the unspeakable blessings thereof, remained for a season quite unknown to us. In their fallen, sinful, and guilty state, Christians lay “dead in trespasses and sins,” without hope. To bring them out of this state, and raise them from a death of sin into a life of righteousness, is the great and grand work reserved for the Holy Spirit, in order to display and make manifest thereby *His* love for them.

The Holy Spirit is fully acquainted with the present and everlasting virtue and efficacy of the Person and work of Immanuel, and what His heart was set upon when He made His soul an offering for sin, and how infinitely and eternally well-pleased was Jehovah the Father with it, who hath it in perpetual remembrance. The Father and the Son having committed the revelation and application of this great salvation unto the persons of all the elect *to the Holy Spirit*, He is pleased therefore, out of the riches of His own free and sovereign grace, to work in due season in all the heirs of glory. And as Christ died but once—His death being all-sufficient to answer every design to be effected by it—so the Holy Spirit *by one act* works effectually in the soul, producing a spiritual birth and changing the state of its partaker once for all, so that the regenerated are brought out of and delivered from the power of death and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Without this spiritual birth we cannot see spiritual objects and heavenly blessings in their true worth and excellency.

The effect of the new birth is that the man born again loves spiritual things *as spiritual* and values spiritual blessings on account of their being purely spiritual. The spring of life from Christ enters into him, and is the spring of all his spiritual life, the root of all his graces, the perpetual source of every Divine principle within him. So says Christ: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the wa-

ter that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). This regeneration introduces the elect into a capacity for the enjoyments which are peculiar to the spiritual world, and makes the one alteration in their state before God which lasts forever. *All* our meetness for the heavenly state is wrought at our regeneration (Col. 1:12, 13). Regeneration is one and the same in all saints. It admits of no increase or diminution. All grace and holiness are then imparted by the Spirit: His subsequent work is but to draw it forth into exercise and act.—A.W.P.

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## **The Epistle to the Hebrews**

### *76. The Faith of Israel: 11:30.*

In the preceding verse we had the faith of the believing remnant of Israel under the command and example of Moses; in our present text we have an exhibition and triumph of their faith under the leadership of Joshua. There we beheld what faith accomplished under their exodus from Egypt, here we see what it achieved upon their entering the promised land. As the yoke of bondage was by faith broken asunder, so by the same faith the people of God were to obtain possession of Canaan. Thereby we are taught that the true life of the saint is, from the beginning to end, one of faith. Without faith no progress can be made, no victories be obtained, no fruit be brought forth unto God's glory. It is solemn to note that an interval of forty years' duration comes in between Hebrews 11:29 and 30. Those years were occupied in the wilderness. They were a judgment from God because of unbelief (Heb. 3). Reader, how many years of your life record no actings of faith to the praise of Divine grace?

The remarkable incident referred to in our text is related at length in the 6th chapter of Joshua, which opens by telling us, "Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in" (v.1). Israel had reached the borders of Canaan. They had safely crossed the Jordan, but could not enter the land because of Jericho, which was a powerful fortress barring their ingress. This was one of the cities which had affrighted the spies, causing them to say, "The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven" (Deut. 1:28): to their eyes the cities appeared impregnable, and far too secure for them to take.

Jericho was a frontier town. It was the key-city at the entrance to Canaan. Its capture was absolutely necessary before any progress could be made by Israel in their conquering and occupying of their promised inheritance. Failure to capture it would not only discourage the children of Israel, but would greatly strengthen the morale of the Canaanites. It was the enemy's leading stronghold, which doubtless, they considered to be quite invulnerable. Yet it fell to a people who possessed no artillery, and without them fighting any battle. All they did, in response to Jehovah's orders, was to march by faith around the city once each day for six days, and then seven times on the seventh day, when they gave a great shout, and the walls fell down flat before them. Many important lessons are taught us therein, a few of which we will briefly mention, before dwelling at greater length upon the outstanding one.

First, God's ways are often entirely different from ours. Who ever heard of a powerful fortress being completely demolished in response to a company of people walking around it? Ah, God delights in staining the pride of man. The leader and lawgiver of Israel was preserved in an ark of bulrushes. The mighty giant of the Philistines was overcome by a sling and a stone. The prophet Elijah was sustained by a widow's handful of meal. The forerunner of Christ dwelt in a wilderness and fed upon locusts and wild honey. The Saviour Himself was born in a stable and laid in a manger. His selected ambassadors were, for the most part, unlettered fishermen. Striking illustrations are these of the sentence beginning this paragraph. The things which are highly esteemed among men are abomination in the sight of God. It is well for us to remember this.

Second, God is independent of all natural means and superior to all the "laws of nature." It is true that, as a general rule, God is pleased to bless the use of natural means, and that He frequently accomplishes His ends by the operations of those laws of nature

which He has set in motion; but it is a great mistake to imagine that He is tied down either by the one or the other. What natural “means” were employed in Israel’s crossing of the Jordan or their capturing of Jericho? What natural “means” were used in the preserving of Daniel in the lion’s den or Jonah in the whale’s belly? And what “laws of nature” were observed in connection with the birth of Isaac, the feeding of Elijah by the ravens, or the preserving whole the three Hebrews in Babylon’s fiery furnace? Yes, God *is* superior to all means and laws. It is well for us to remember this too.

Third, formidable difficulties and powerful oppositions are encountered in the Warfare of Faith. One will not follow the path of faith very far before he comes face to face with that which challenges all his courage and defies all his natural resources and powers. Jordan rivers and Jericho fortresses still exist. But though the one may be unfordable and the other appear impregnable, yet they are the veriest trifles to the Almighty. The dimensions which they assume unto our vision, is largely determined by the measure in which our hearts are engaged with the Omnipotent One. Those formidable difficulties and powerful obstacles are placed in our path *by God*, for the purpose of testing us, for the training of faith, as opportunities to trust in and glorify the Lord.

Fourth, Satan’s strongholds cannot stand before a people who are obedient to and who rely fully upon the living God. This fact is surely written in large letters across Joshua 6. The Canaanites were completely under the dominion of the Evil One, yet here we see one of their principal fortresses tumbling down like a frail booth when a powerful wind strikes it. To unbelief these cities might appear “walled up to heaven” and seem impregnable, but faith laughs at such things, knowing that God has only to breathe upon them and they will collapse at once. Thus it was in the early days of Christianity, when the imposing citadels of Paganism crumbled away before the faithful ministry of the Apostles. Thus it was at the time of the great Reformation in the sixteenth century, when the kingdom of the Papacy was shaken to its very foundations by the courageous preaching of Luther and his contemporaries. Thus it was, in many parts, some fifty years ago, when the high places of heathendom fell down before the onslaughts of the missionaries.

And why is it we are not witnessing the same Gospel triumphs in our generation? Why is it that Romanism has now regained so much of its lost ground, and is forging ahead in so many directions? Why is it that on the “foreign field” the forces of Satan are advancing instead of retreating? And why is it that in the so-called Christian lands a growing number of Jerichos defy the prayers and efforts of the saints? Is it because God’s arm is now waxed short? Perish the thought. Is it because the Scriptures are obsolete and unfitted to the needs of this twentieth century? Far, far from it. What, then, is the matter? This: *there is a grieved Spirit in our midst*, and in consequence *His power is withheld*. The Holy Spirit of God has been “quenched” (1 Thess. 5:19), and therefore the feverish and frenzied efforts of present-day Christendom avail not.

And *why* is the Spirit of God “grieved”? *What is it* that has “quenched” His power in our midst? This, we have departed from *God’s way*, we have ignored His orders, we have substituted human devices, we have put our confidence in carnal weapons. Instead of encompassing the walls of Jericho after the Divine order, we have resorted to worldly allurements, seeking to win over the Canaanites by fleshly attractions. My brethren, we cannot hope to have Israel’s victories until we emulate Israel’s example. We will never again witness a return to apostolic progress until we get back to apostolic methods. There can be no improvement until we truly recognize that it is “Not by might, nor by power,

but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). And the power of the Spirit will not be manifested in our midst until we once more enter the path of obedience, *doing God’s work in God’s prescribed way*, and confidently counting upon Him to honour and bless such efforts.

Fifth, but the outstanding lesson to be learned from this incident is that which is stated in our text, where the fall of Jericho is attributed to *the faith* of the believing Israelites. “Do we think enough of faith, chosen by Divine omnipotent love, to be its channel? God alone doeth great marvels, but it is through the faith of His saints. All the victories of Israel were wrought by faith. Divine power and grace redeemed them on that memorable night; but it was the faith of Moses which kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood. It was God who divided the Red Sea, but in answer to the silent prayer of faith which ascended from the heart of His servant. All miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels were wrought by faith. Jesus prayed to the Father, and then fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes. Jesus lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and then said ‘Ephphatha, Be thou loosed.’ Jesus by faith thanked God that He heard Him always, and then uttered His mighty ‘Lazarus, come forth.’

“And faith was wrought also in the recipient of Divine favour: ‘Thy faith hath healed thee’; ‘Be it unto thee as thou hast believed.’ Such were frequently Christ’s words. The people who perished in the wilderness entered not into God’s rest because of unbelief; and because of their unbelief, Jesus could not show many miracles in some places: ‘Believe only, and thou shalt see the glory of God.’

“Israel’s history is the history of God’s omnipotent saving grace and of man’s faith. From Heaven descends miracle; from earth ascends faith. From the election of Abraham to the birth of Moses, from the Passover and the Red Sea to the dividing of the river Jordan, all is miracle, and all has to go through the faith of some chosen saint. Israel is before Jericho, a walled and fenced city; it is not by power and might, but by faith, that they are to take it” (A. Saphir).

Let us consider the *various aspects of faith* which were manifested by the believing Israelites on this memorable occasion. 1. The *daring* of their faith. When Israel crossed the Jordan, they, as it were, burned all their bridges and boats behind them. They were cut off from flight; they had no houses to which they could retire, and no fortress to which they could retreat. They were now in the enemy’s territory, and victory or death were the only alternatives. To march peacefully and quietly around those walls of Jericho seemed a perilous undertaking: what was to hinder the Canaanites from shooting at or casting down rocks upon them? It was truly an adventure of faith, and it is venture-some faith which God delights to honour. Unbelief is hesitant and timorous, but bold faith is confident and courageous. O to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

There are three degrees of faith. There is a faith which *receives*, when as empty-handed beggars we come to Christ and accept Him as our Lord and Saviour: John 1:12. There is also a faith which *reckons*, which counts upon God to fulfill His promises and undertake for us: 2 Timothy 1:12. There is also a faith which *risks*, which dares something for the Lord. This aspect of faith was exemplified by Moses when he ventured to confront the king of Egypt and make known Jehovah’s demands. This daring of faith was manifested by David when he went forth to engage the mighty Goliath. We see it again in Elijah, when, single-handed, he encountered the host of Jezebel’s false prophets on Car-

mel. We see it again when Daniel dared to be cast into the lion's den rather than comply with the idolatrous edict of Babylon's king. We see it again and again in the journeys and ministry of the Apostle Paul, who flinched not before dangers of every imaginable order, that he might make known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

And in each of the instances mentioned above we behold in the sequel how God honoured those trusting and daring hearts. It is venturesome faith which He ever delights to reward. He Himself bids us come to the throne of grace with holy "boldness," that we may find grace to help in time of need. O how this rebukes *our* timidity and reserve. How few today are prepared to *risk anything* in the service of our Lord. How little of the courage and daring of our fathers is now in evidence. What a lot of trembling and fearful soldiers are found today in the army of Christ. O how urgent is the need for some Spirit-filled man of faith to go forth and cry in the language of Carey, "Ask great things of God; expect great things from God; *undertake great things for God.*" It is well to look before we leap, but many look so long that they never leap at all!

2. The *obedience* of their faith. This appears from a reading of Joshua 6:3, 4 and 6-8: all concerned carried out the Lord's instructions to the letter. To do nothing more than walk and walk and walk around the walls of Jericho must have appeared a childish and ridiculous thing; yet the believing remnant complied with the Lord's command. God promised to deliver Jericho into their hands: Joshua and his believing fellows rested on His word and carried out His orders. The Lord requires us to use whatever means He prescribes, no matter how unlikely and inadequate they may seem to us. It is true that Divine power overthrew Jericho's walls, yet it was also by faith's obedience they fell. God had made it known that the manifestation of His power should be via a particular way; it was inseparably connected with certain actions which were to be performed by His people.

How was Israel to capture that mighty fortress of the Canaanites? Consider their condition! For centuries they had been a nation of slaves. For the last forty years they had been weary wanderers in the wilderness. And now their great leader, Moses, was dead! They were without any military experience, devoid of artillery, and had no trained army. All true; but they were not left to themselves: the living God was for them; and so long as they responded to His revealed will, all went well with them. In like manner God has not left us to our own devisings, but has given us plain and full directions, and He requires us to do the work which He has appointed *us* in the way He has commanded. Implicit obedience to His orders is absolutely essential if we are to have *His* blessing.

Implicit obedience unto the known will of God marked all Israel's arrangements for the siege of Jericho. Minute instructions were given them for their strange campaign. They were to march in a certain order, each being required to take the place assigned him. They were to march at a specified hour, and encompass the city a given number of times. At the command of the Lord they were to be silent, and at the command of the Lord they were to shout. There was no room for human scheming, no place for carnal planning, no need for human reasoning as to what should be done. Everything was prescribed for them, and faith's obedience was all that was required from them. The orders which God gave to Joshua might have seemed unreasonable and absurd to his men, yet they *must* be faithfully executed if victory was to be theirs. And as it was then, so it is still. But O how slow we are to learn this lesson.

Reader, the commands and precepts of God *often* appear strange unto carnal wisdom. How absurd did God's orders appear to the great Naman, when he was bidden to bathe

his leprous body in the Jordan. How contrary to all human ideas was it for God to send the prophet Elijah to be fed for many months by a widow who had naught but a handful of meal and a little oil. How unreasonable it must have seemed to the twelve Apostles when Christ bade them tell the great multitude to sit down, and only five small loaves and two little fishes were in sight. And how unreasonable does it appear unto multitudes of professing Christians today when they are told to cast away all the worldly devices which have been brought into the “churches” and substitute fasting and prayer. How slow we are to recognize that it is the *obedience of faith* which God requires.

3. The *discipline* of their faith. “And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout” (Josh. 6:10). Their silence at the beginning was as necessary as their shouting at the finish. Why? These men were the immediate descendants of the greatest grumblers who ever lived. Their fathers complained and murmured until God swore in His wrath they should not enter into His rest.

How much mischief had been caused if every man had been left free to express *his* “opinion”! How many would have been ready to advise Joshua what method of strategy to employ. One would have reasoned that the only way to capture Jericho was by starving out its inhabitants through a protracted siege. Another would have suggested the use of ladders to scale its walls. Another would have advocated heavy battering-rams to force a way in. Another would have suggested tunneling under the walls. One and all would have ridiculed the plan which Joshua adopted. Ah, my readers, if the Jerichos which now confront the people of God are to be captured, then not only must the mouths of murmurers be stopped, but all leaning unto our own understanding must be abandoned.

O how often are the sinews of faith cut by the injudicious and unfriendly criticisms of those who pose as our Christian friends. How often is the man of God hindered by the Christ-dishonouring doubts and carnal suggestions of his fellows. A brother in the Lord, who had been without employment, recently wrote us that he had been rebuked for not making known his needs to his friends. Ah, let us not forget that the very first line which the Holy Spirit gives us in His picture of the “blessed” man is, that he “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly” (Psa. 1:1). How much mischief is wrought by people perpetually talking of the *difficulties* in the task confronting us. All real Christian work is beset with difficulties—Satan sees to that!

The soldiers of Christ must be trained: faith must be disciplined: each one in the ranks of the Lord’s hosts must learn there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:7). The children of Israel were not ordered to go forth in battle array and make any sally upon this garrison of the Canaanites. Instead, in solemn silence, in sacred procession, they were to encompass the city. This was a great trial of faith for such a procedure seemed very unlikely to accomplish the desired end. Not only so, but it would expose them to the contempt of their enemies, who must have sneered at their harmless procession. Yet this was the way which *God* had ordered: He loves to do great things by contemptible means, that the glory may be His.

4. The *patience* of their faith: “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, *after they were compassed about seven days*” (Heb. 11:30). They did not fall the first day that Israel marched around them, nor the second, nor the third. No, it was not until they had journeyed about them thirteen times, that the power of God was displayed. And why? To test

their patience, as well as their faith and obedience; to prove whether they really believed the Lord's promise or no, when He enjoined the use of such weak and unlikely means; and to give them a more distinct apprehension that the conquest of Canaan was the Lord's, and not theirs. When nothing happened the first twelve times Israel encompassed Jericho, it became the more evident that their enemies would not be overcome by the power of man, but by God.

Not only the mercy, but the *timing* of it, is in the hands of God, and therefore are we bidden, "Rest in the LORD, and *wait patiently for Him*" (Psa. 37:7). Alas, how sadly do we fail at this point. How easily we become discouraged if our Jericho does not fall the first or second time we encompass it: "the vision is yet for an appointed time . . . though it tarry, *wait for it*; because it will surely come" (Hab. 2:3). But O how impatient is the flesh. It was at this point that Abraham failed: when Sarah bare not the promised son, he determined to have one by Hagar. It was at this point Moses first failed—taking things into his own hands (Exo. 2:11, 12), instead of waiting God's time. "*Tarry ye* at Jerusalem" was the last word which the Redeemer gave unto the Apostles before He ascended.

"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). How much we need to take this word to heart: how often we have "fainted" when victory was almost in sight! Ah, we thought that the walls of our Jericho would never fall; but they *did*, at the appointed time. God is in no hurry, and it is required of us that "he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. 28:16). But we find it much harder to *wait* than we do to believe: that is, probably, the weakest spot in our armour, and the point at which we fail most frequently. Then let us be more definite and earnest in begging the Holy Spirit to work in us the spiritual grace of patience. Let us seek grace to lay hold of that word, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

5. The *anticipation* of their faith: "So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city" (Josh. 6:20). Our space is nearly exhausted, so we must condense. What we would now particularly observe is that the people shouted *before* the walls fell down—it was faith *expecting* the victory. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, *believe that ye receive* them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). It reminds us of the missionary Moffatt, who laboured for years among the Bechuanas and saw not a single seal to his ministry. Some of his far-distant friends in England wrote him saying they wished to make a present, and asked him to specify what it should be. He answered "a communion set." Months after, when it arrived, more than a dozen converted natives sat down with him to remember the Lord's death!

Now the whole of Joshua 6 has been recorded for our learning. "The walls of unbelief, superstition, and ungodliness, yield to no earthly armour and power. It is not by compulsion, nor by reasoning; it is not by weapons which this world supplies, that these walls can be destroyed. It is by the Word of God, and by the Word declared in faith. Ministers and people, they who blow the trumpet, and also the people who are with them, are to be united together in the power of God" (A. Saphir). Each of us is confronted with a Jericho: whether it be the preacher in the field of service where God calls him to labour, the Sunday-school teacher in the class before her, or the individual Christian who is seeking to overcome some habit or disposition. Remember Joshua and take courage! If there

be the daring, the discipline, the obedience, the patience, and the expectation of faith, the victory is sure in God's appointed time.

Once more we have been shown the wondrous power of real faith to bring to pass that which is beyond mere nature: compare Matthew 17:20, 1 John 5:4; persevering trust and obedience enabled Israel to accomplish what had otherwise been impossible. Again, we have seen that faith in God's promise of protection and the use of His appointed means, far surpasses all worldly methods of defense: compare 2 Chronicles 20:20. Contrariwise, we behold what a worthless thing it is to trust in outward and material things: the walls of Jericho were both strong and high, yet they afforded no security against God's power—"vain is the help of man." Though God required Israel to use the utmost of their courage, submission, and patience, yet He took it upon Himself to bless their efforts and effect the work of power. Barriers more difficult than the walls of Jericho stand between the Christian and holiness: how are they to be removed? By faith's obedience; *compare 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5.*—A.W.P.

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## The Life of David

### 28. *His Recovery of His Wives.*

“And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled” (1 Sam. 30:16, 17). We resume at the point where we left off in our last article. These verses form a solemn sequel to those previously pondered, and set before us the other side of the picture which was then considered.

The Amalekites, in all probability, knew that the Israelites and Philistines were engaged in fighting each other, a considerable distance away, and supposed that David and his men were assisting the king of Gath. Deeming themselves secure, they imprudently began to riot and make merry over the abundance of spoils they had captured, without so much as placing guards to give notice of an enemy’s approach. They lay not in any regular order, much less in any military formation, but were scattered in groups, here and there. Consequently, David and his little force came upon them quite unawares, and made a dreadful slaughter of them. How often when men say, “Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thess. 5:3).

Just as the sick and abandoned Egyptian who was befriended by David typified one of God’s elect being saved by Christ, so these flesh-indulging Amalekites portray careless sinners who will yet be destroyed by Him. Solemnly is this announced in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.” And again, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14, 15).

Yet, such unspeakably solemn warnings as those which God has given in His Word have no restraining effect upon the unconcerned and Satan-drugged world. The vast majority of our fellows live as though there were no eternity to come, no judgment-day when they must appear before God, give an account of the deeds they have done in the body, and be sentenced according to their works. They know full well how brief and uncertain this life is: at short intervals their companions are cut down by the hand of death, but no lasting serious impressions are made upon them. Instead, they continue in their pleasure-loving whirl, impervious to the Divine threats, deaf to the voice of conscience, disregarding any entreaties or admonitions which they may receive from Christian friends or the servants of God.

O how tragically true to the present-day life of the world is the frivolous scene presented to us in the verses we are now pondering. Those care-free Amalekites were “eating and drinking and dancing.” In their fancied security they were having what the young people of this degenerate age call “a good time.” There was an abundance of food to hand, why then should they deny those lusts of the flesh which war against the soul?

They had been successful in spoiling their neighbours, why then should they not “celebrate” and make merry? All were in high spirits, why then should they not fill the air with music and laughter? Yes, similar is the fatal reasoning of multitudes today. But mark well the fearful sequel: “And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day” (1 Sam 30:17). Alas, what was their carnal security worth!

David was just as truly a type of Christ in his slaying of the Amalekites as he was in befriending the poor Egyptian. Ah, dear reader, He who saves those who submit to Him as their Lord and trust in Him as their Redeemer, shall as surely judge and destroy them who despise and reject Him. He will yet say, “But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me” (Luke 19:27). How will it fare with *you* in that Day? The answer to this question will be determined by whether or not you have truly received Him as Prophet to instruct you, as Priest to atone for your sins, as King to regulate and reign over your heart and life. If you have not already done so, seek grace from above to throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him and surrender yourself wholly to Him.

“The young man of Egypt was with David when he came upon the Amalekites. He once belonged to their company and was one of them. Had he not been separated from them he would have surely shared their fate. If unconverted, you are of that world of sinners ‘whose judgment now for a long time lingereth not.’ Turn from it now ere the vengeance of God destroys you with it. God has borne with it long. The sins of Christendom reach up to Heaven, and cry for vengeance. Christ is your only refuge. Come to Him now, and, like Noah in the ark and Lot in the mountain, you will be safe from the sweeping storm. Like the young man of Egypt, you will be taken out of the world and away from this scene before the stroke descends. You will appear with Christ along with those ten thousand holy ones who accompany Him when He comes to earth to war and judge” (C. Knapp).

Let us now return to our narrative and seek its practical teaching for the Christian today. “And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah” (v. 16). How many miles it was that the befriended Egyptian led David and his men we do not know, but probably some considerable distance: that they were supernaturally strengthened for their strenuous exertions after their previous fatigue, we cannot doubt. Justly did God make use of this poor Egyptian, basely abandoned, as an instrument of death to the Amalekites.

“And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all” (vv. 17-19). Here is the blessed sequel to all that has occupied us in the preceding verses of this chapter. What a proof that David’s heart was now perfect toward the Lord, for most manifestly did He here show Himself strong on his behalf, by granting such signal success to his endeavours. Ah, when our sins are forsaken and forgiven, and we act by the Lord’s directions, we are very likely to recover what we lost by our previous folly.

“And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drave before those other

cattle, and said, This is David's spoil" (v. 20). The seeming ambiguity of this language is removed if we refer back to what is said in verse 16: the Amalekites had successfully raided other places before they fell upon Ziklag. The spoil they had captured was kept separate, and the cattle which they had taken in the territory of Philistia and Judah David claimed for his own portion: the noble use which he made of the same we shall see in a moment.

"And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them" (v. 21). The expression "whom they had *made* also to abide by the brook Besor" shows plainly that those fatigued men earnestly desired to follow David further, and had to be constrained not to do so. Typically, it tells us that all Christians are not equally strong in the Lord: compare 1 John 2:13. The Hebrew word for "saluted" signifies "he asked them of peace," which means he enquired how they did, being solicitous of their welfare. Though all Christians are not alike spiritually robust, all are equally dear unto Christ.

"Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart" (v. 22). In the most favoured company there will be found selfish men, who being ungrateful to God for His kindness and favours will desire to enrich and pamper themselves, leaving their fellows to starve, for all they care. Even amid David's band were certain sons of Belial, wicked men, of a covetous and grasping disposition. No doubt they were the ones who took the lead in suggesting that David be "stoned" (v. 6). Their real character was here made quite evident: in their evil suggestion we may see how the heart of David was tested.

"Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand" (v. 23). David's reply to the selfish suggestion of some of his grasping followers was meek, pious, and righteous, and it prevailed unto their silencing. Note how gently he replied even to the sons of Belial, addressing them as "my brethren"; but observe that he, at the same time, maintained his dignity as the general-in-chief, by directly denying their request. Yet it was not a mere arbitrary assertion of his authority: he followed his "Ye shall not do so" with powerful reasonings.

First, he reminded these selfish followers that the spoil which had been taken from the Amalekites was *not theirs* absolutely, but that "which the LORD has given us." Therein David inculcated an important principle which is to regulate us in the discharge of our Christian stewardship: freely we have received from God, and therefore freely we should give unto others. Miserliness in a child of God is a practical denial of how deeply he is indebted unto Divine grace. Second, he reminded them of how mercifully the Lord had "preserved" them when they attacked a people who greatly outnumbered them, and how He had also "delivered" the Amalekites into their hands. They must not ascribe the victory unto their own prowess, and therefore they could not claim the booty as wholly belonging unto themselves. It is not a time to give way to a spirit of greed when the Lord has particularly manifested His kindness to us.

Third, he pointed out that their evil suggestion most certainly would not commend

itself unto any wise, just, and right-thinking people: “For who will hearken unto you in this matter?” (v. 24). When the people of God are in the majority, they will vote down the propositions of the covetous: but when the unregenerate are allowed to outnumber them in their assemblies, woe unto them. Fourth, David reminded them that those who tarried at Besor did so out of no disloyalty or unwillingness: they had fought valiantly in the past, and now they had faithfully done their part in guarding the “stuff” or baggage, and so were entitled to a share of the spoils: “But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike” (v. 24).

The whole of the above illustrates the fact that when a backsliding believer has been restored to communion with God, he is now in a state of soul to enjoy his recovered possessions: they will no longer be a snare unto him. When God takes something from us to teach us a needed lesson, He can, after we have learned that lesson, restore it to us again. Often, though not always, He does so. Faith is now dominant again, and receives the recovered blessings from the hand of God. One who has been truly restored, like David, who knew what his own failure has been, will permit of no such selfishness as the sons of Belial advocate. Those who had stayed at home, as it were, should share in the victory. That was true *largeness of heart*, which ever marks one who has learned in God’s school.

But there are always some who would wish to stint those possessing less faith and energy, yet he who realizes something of his own deep indebtedness to Diving grace rejoices to give out to others what he has gained. When the Lord is pleased to open up some part of His precious Word unto one of His servants, he, with enlarged heart welcomes every opportunity to pass on the same to others. But how often there are those who seek to pour cold water on his zeal, urging that it is not “wise” or “timely,” yea, that such teaching my prove “dangerous.” While it is not fitting that we should take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs, on the other hand it is sinful to withhold any portion of the Bread of Life from hungry souls. If God has restored to us any portions of His truth, we owe it to the whole Household of Faith to impart it unto as many as will receive it.

“And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD” (v. 26). “David not only distributed of the spoil to all who had followed him in the wilderness, and shared his dangers there—he also remembered that there were some, who, though they had refused to quit their position in Israel, and had shrunk (as well they might) from the cave of Adullam, did nevertheless love and favour him. Yet though they had drawn back from following him, and had declined to partake of his cup of sorrow, David, in the hour of his triumph, refused not to them participation in his joy. Such is the liberality of a heart that has sought and found its portion in *grace*” (B.W. Newton).

Very blessed is what we find recorded in these closing verses of 1 Samuel 30. Those who view God as the Giver of their abundance will dispense of it with equity and liberality: they will seek to restrain injustice in others (v. 23), establish useful precedents (v. 25), and share with friends (vv. 26-31). The Amalekites had spoiled some of those parts of Judah mentioned in verses 26-31 (see vv. 14, 16), and therefore did David now send relief to those sufferers: it was the part of justice to restore what had been taken from them. Moreover, he had a grateful remembrance of those friends who secretly favoured him during the time of Saul’s persecution, and who had sheltered and relieved his men in the time of this distress (v.31). Instead of selfishly enriching himself, he generously befriended others, and gave them proof that the Lord was with him.

Fearfully divergent may be the effects produced on different persons who pass under the same trials and blessings. The “sons of Belial” companied with David during the night of his sorrow (as Judas did with Christ), and were also made the recipients of his mercies; yet they now evidenced a state of soul which marked them in God’s sight as “wicked men” (v. 22). What more abhorrent to God than that which would narrow the expansiveness of grace: what more hateful in His sight than a selfishness which sought to extract out of His free favours an excuse for enriching itself by despising others—cf. John 12:4-6. But how different with David: from the ruins of Ziklag he rose, step by step, to a higher faith: manifesting dependency upon God, seeking His guidance, obtaining energy to pursue the enemy, and exercising largeness of heart in sharing the spoils with all. Thereby did he furnish an eminent foreshadowing of Him who “took the prey from the mighty” (Isa. 49:24), “led captivity captive, and *gave gifts unto men*” (Eph. 4:8).—A.W.P.

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## Dispensationalism

### 8. *The Law of God (Concluded).*

All truth is catholic or universal. It embraces many elements and opens upon wide horizons, and therefore involves endless difficulties and apparent inconsistencies. But the mind of man seeks for unity, and tends prematurely to *force* unity in the sphere of his imperfect knowledge by securing one element of truth at the sacrifice of another. This is eminently the case with all rationalists: they are clear and logical, but at the expense of being superficial and half-orbed. Such is the case with heretics. The Greek word from which “heresy” is derived means an act of choice, and hence of diversion, a picking and choosing one part instead of comprehensively embracing the whole truth. The man who holds to the Law of God and repudiates Divine grace is a heretic. Equally so, the man who glories in the grace of God and throws overboard His Law is a heretic. Jude 4 speaks of “turning the *grace* of our God into lasciviousness.”

In his Estimate of Manton, J.C. Ryle wrote, “I admire the scriptural wisdom of a man who, in a day of hard-and-fast systems could *dare to be apparently inconsistent*, in order to ‘declare all the counsel of God.’ I firmly believe that this is the test of theology, which does good in the Church of Christ. The man who is not tied hand and foot by systems, and does not pretend to reconcile what our imperfect eyesight cannot reconcile in this dispensation, he is the man whom God will bless. Manton was such a man; and because he was such a man, I think his works, like the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’ deserve the attention of all true Christians.”

Alas, how few such men has Christendom been favoured with during the last century. For the most part certain favorite portions of Scripture have been seized, and every thing which appeared to conflict with them has been either ignored, explained away, or repudiated. Some aspects of the truth have been eagerly contended for by champions of the faith, but anything which appeared “inconsistent” therewith, has been studiously avoided or bitterly denounced. The great majority would not allow that there is a perfect agreement between the invincibility of God’s decrees and the freedom of human actions, insisting that if God has definitely predestinated a certain course of conduct, the individual is reduced to the level of a machine. Some believe in God’s sovereignty, and some in man’s responsibility; but few indeed *really* believe fully in both, and with rare exceptions, the more strongly the one is retained, the more loosely the other is held.

Few perceive there is a perfect consistency between justification by the righteousness and blood of Christ and the necessity of our obedience, if ever we are to reach Heaven; nor can they reconcile the efficacy of Divine grace with the indispensability of our performance of duty. There have been some good men who have honoured the Spirit in clearly teaching His effectual call, but those same men have denounced others who exhorted unsaved sinners to repent of their sins and believe in Christ. Certain men of God have rightly affirmed that Scripture assures the real saint of the absolute security of his salvation, but have denied that the solemn warnings and admonitions addressed to Christians in the New Testament also belong to them: they gloried in the immutability of God’s promises, but failed to see that the Christian is preserved from apostasy by his own use of appointed means.

Logic takes a certain premise and draws from it a rational and “consistent” conclusion. But faith appropriates a Divine statement and leaves God to draw His own conclusions, for faith knows that “logical conclusions” *often contradict the Scriptures*. For ex-

ample, logic says, "God is one, and *therefore* there cannot be three persons in the Godhead." Faith says, "God *is* one, yet Scripture affirms there are three Divine Persons, and [by God's grace] I believe it." Logic says, "Jesus Christ is man, and *therefore* He cannot be God." Faith says, "Christ *is* man, but Scripture also declares He is *God*, and [by God's grace] I believe it." It is really pitiful to see some men such slaves to "logical consistency" that they use one portion of Truth to overthrow another portion equally blessed. So it is deplorable to find so many ignoring or despising passage after passage of Holy Writ because they are unable to "harmonize" them with some favorite text. O for grace to receive *all* that God has given us in His Word.

The same spirit of partiality or lopsidedness explains why so many insist that law and grace are antagonistic principles. In his youth the writer was taught by men he looked up to, that law and grace could no more be united than oil and water: may the Lord forgive him for inserting this error in some of his earlier writings. How many are now being told by the "champions of orthodoxy" that law and grace are hostile to each other, and that where the one is in exercise the other must necessarily be inactive. But this is a serious mistake. How could the Law *of God* and the grace *of God* conflict? The one expresses Him as "light" (1 John 1:5), the other manifests Him as "love" (1 John 4:8); the one makes known His righteousness, the other reveals His mercy. The manifold wisdom of God has made known the perfect consistency between them. Instead of their being contradictory, they are complementary. Both shone forth in their full glory at the Cross; both are published in the true Gospel.

In all of God's works and ways we may discern a meeting together of *seemingly* conflicting elements. The centrifugal and centripetal forces which are ever at work in the material realm illustrate this principle. So it is in connection with Divine providence: there is a constant inter-penetration of the natural and supernatural. So it was in the giving of the Scriptures: they are the product both of God's and man's agency; they are a Divine revelation, yet couched in human language and given through human media: they are inerantly true, yet written by fallible men. They are inspired throughout, yet the superintending control of the Spirit over the writers did not exclude nor interfere with the natural exercise of their faculties. So it was with Christ. He was omniscient yet He marveled at unbelief. He was omnipotent, yet He hungered and slept. He was eternal, yet He died. He was man, yet He rose again from the dead by His own power.

In view of what has been pointed out in the preceding paragraph, to which many other examples might be added, why should so many stumble over the fact of Divine Law and Divine grace being exercised side by side, operating at the same season? Do law and grace present any greater contrast than the inexorable justice and abounding mercy of God, or between His fathomless love and everlasting wrath? No indeed, not so great. Grace must not be regarded as an attribute of God which eclipses all His other perfections. As Romans 5:21 so plainly tells us, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign *through righteousness*," and not at the expense of righteousness. Divine grace and Divine righteousness, Divine love and Divine holiness, are as *inseparable* as light and heat from the sun. In bestowing grace God never rescinds His claims upon us, but rather enables us to meet them. Was the prodigal son, after his penitent return and forgiveness, less obliged to conform to the laws of his father's house than before he left it? No indeed: but more so.

"The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from

mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went *a fiery law* for them. *Yea, he loved the people*" (Deut. 33:2, 3). What a strange collocation of terms must those words present unto many today! The very giving of the fiery law unto Israel was an effect an evidence of Jehovah's special *love* for them! His very grant unto them of what is now so bitterly hated, is here said to be a signal instance of God's benignity, being a distinguishing blessing which other nations were not favored with. So too, as good old Matthew Henry says, "The law of God written in the heart is a certain evidence of the love of God being shed abroad there."

Divine grace was exercised unto Israel throughout the entire Mosaic economy. It seems to be generally overlooked that full provision was made for forgiveness and restoration unto those who transgressed the Divine statutes. The ceremonial institutions, which afforded expiation and ablution, were wholly of *grace*. Amongst the "statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between Him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai" (Lev. 26:46), was this one, "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and that also they have walked contrary unto Me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham" (Lev. 26:40-42)! Note how this was reiterated in the time of Solomon: 1 Kings 8:37-40; 44-49! Thus, under the Old Testament dispensation there was *provision of pardon* for penitent sinners.

How deplorable, then, that one who exercised such a wide influence as the late J.N. Darby should say in volume 1 of his "Synopsis" (p. 126), "Had it been a human righteousness, it would have been by the law, which is the rule of that righteousness—a law given *to the Jews only*." And again, "It is certain we have not commandments like those of the old law—they would be quite contrary to the spirit of the Gospel of grace" (p. 218). Yet the Lord Jesus plainly enough declared, "If ye love Me, keep *My commandments*" (John 14:15). Equally baneful is this statement found in the introduction to "The Four Gospels" in the popular Scofield Bible, "The sermon on the mount is not grace . . . the *doctrines* of grace are to be sought in the epistles, not in the gospels." We are prepared to show that *every* doctrine of grace contained in the epistles is found clearly expressed in the four gospels; while the law is just as clearly enforced in the epistles.

That there is no conflict whatever between the Law and the Gospel is plain enough from Romans 3:31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we *establish* the law." Here the Apostle anticipates an objection which might be drawn from what he said in verses 26-30, namely, that justification is entirely by grace through faith. But so far from this annulling the law, it recognizes and enforces it. No greater respect could have been shown to the law than in determining to save some men from its curse, God sent His own co-equal Son to fulfill all its requirements. O marvel of marvels! the great Legislator humbled Himself to full obedience unto its precepts; the God who gave the law became incarnate and bled under its condemning sentence, rather than a tittle thereof fail. Magnified thus was the law indeed, and forever "made honourable."

God's method of salvation by grace has "established" the law in a threefold way. First, by Christ, the Surety of God's elect, being "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4), fulfilling its precepts (Matt. 5:17), and suffering its penalty in the stead of His people; and thus

He has “brought in everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9:24). Second, by the Holy Spirit, at regeneration, imparting a nature which delights in the law, which is what is meant by His writing the law in our *hearts* (Heb. 8:10). Third, by the Christian’s voluntary consent unto the law as his Rule of Life, so that he can say, “With the mind I myself *serve* the law of God” (Rom. 7:25). Thus is the law established both in the high court of Heaven and in the affections of the saint. Faith is not opposed to the doing of good works, in obedience to the Law of God, from right principles and with right ends; but to trusting in and depending upon them as the matter of justification before God.

The law is a mirror to believers in which, by the light of the Spirit, they behold the deformity of their souls by sin, and the imperfection of their obedience, whereby they grow out of love with themselves. In this view of things, David said, “I have seen an end of all perfection—Thy commandment is exceeding broad” (Psa. 119:96). So the Apostle Paul, comparing his heart and conduct with the Law of God, declared “We know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14). The law is also used by the Spirit to make the righteousness of Christ more precious to the Christian, for he sees how imperfect is his own righteousness and how far short of the demands of the law his obedience comes; and thus he desires to, “be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

There is therefore no feud whatever between the Law and the Gospel. They sweetly stand together in their proper place. In the Gospel we see the law fulfilled (by Christ) as a *covenant*, and established (in the hands of Christ) as a *rule* of obedience. The Gospel brings to light new motives and arguments to obedience, arguments drawn from the consideration of redeeming grace and love, which have a far greater constraining power than all the threats and cursings which the law denounces against those who do not continue in obedience thereto. Thus in the case of the Christian, the law remains, although the motives to obedience are changed: our obedience is spontaneous, our motive love. Should it be asked, What happens when the Christian deliberately breaks the law? The answer is given in Psalm 89:30-33, “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 lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail”—he comes under the rod of his heavenly Father’s displeasure, but the Spirit leads him to repentance and confession, and he is forgiven: Proverbs 28:13, 1 John 1:9.

Summing up now what has been before us in the four articles. 1. Adam was under the Law of God in a twofold way: His fear and love ruling his heart, there was wrought into the very constitution of his soul that which answered to all the requirements of his Maker; and further, he received from Him, objectively, a revelation of His will: Genesis 1:26, Romans 7:10. 2. The whole human race was, in Eden, placed under the law as a covenant of works, and fell under its penalty when their federal head broke it: Romans 5:18. 3. The law was known long before Sinai: Genesis 26:5. 4. All mankind are under the law, and will be judged by it: Romans 3:19. 5. Christ satisfied every demand of the law and His righteousness is imputed to His people: Romans 5:19, 2 Corinthians 5:21. 6. The Holy Spirit implants in the heart of the regenerate a love for the law: Romans 7:22. 7. The true Christian is under the law to Christ (1 Cor. 9:21), and gladly obeys it: Romans 7:25.—A.W.P.

*“It is time for Thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void Thy law”* (Psa. 119:126).

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## The Providence of God

*Carson on Esther*

That nothing more than civil honor was required for Haman by the king's command is clear from the ninth verse of the fifth chapter—"Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai." Here his offense was, that *he stood not up*, nor even *moved* himself to Haman. Can any sober mind interpret this of religious worship? Was there any idolatry in rising out of respect to the second man in the Persian empire? Whatever ceremonial might have been in approaching great men in that country, on this occasion there is no ceremonial, for there was no approach. The great man is passing, and Mordecai will not stand up, nor even move to notice him. Dr. Gill himself admits that this was civil respect; but then, Mordecai, it seems, refuses even this, least it should be interpreted as religious worship. Was ever greater violence used in special pleading? So then not even the smallest respect ought to be given to heathen rulers who claim Divine honors. But, this, it seems, was only part of his reason. Mordecai was influenced, he says, partly by knowing that Haman had planned the destruction of the Jews. And would this justify him in refusing to obey the king's commandment? Another thing that weighed with Mordecai, he alleges, was that he confided in Esther's influence to save the Jews, and therefore treated Haman with marked contempt. But may rulers be disobeyed when this can be done with impunity? Ought the man to be treated with contempt who is commanded by an absolute monarch to be honored above all his subjects? Is this the way in which Christians are to recommend the doctrine of Christ to the world?

But where is the necessity of arbitrarily supposing that this reverence must have had something idolatrous in it, when nothing but what is lawful is required in the words of the command? Was Mordecai perfect in knowledge, and infallible in conduct, that such a violent stretch must be made to justify him? It is argued by Mr. Scott that Mordecai was accepted of God in what he did, and therefore that his conduct must have been justifiable. But God's acknowledging him and interfering to deliver him, are *no* proof that *He approved* of this part of his conduct. If God would not deliver his people from the consequences of their ignorance, they would soon be destroyed. Is there any passage in this history which either by implication or expressly, commends Mordecai for not bowing to Haman? I admit that his motives may have been good. If he intended to honour God, his motives would be approved, though his conduct might be the effect of ignorance. We see from Romans 14 that God accepts His people even in their ignorance, when they are influenced by a regard to His authority. But this does not change error into truth, nor sin into duty. I think it is manifest that Mordecai acted on principle, for even when he saw the frightful consequences of his conduct, he persisted in it with the utmost steadiness. The text also seems to insinuate that he considered his being a Jew as a reason for refusing honour to Haman. But whether this had an eye to the nation or character of Haman, or in what way he supposed his being a Jew could justify his conduct, is not said, and cannot be known.

It has also been very properly replied that the homage required does not seem to differ from that paid to Joseph by his brethren and by the Egyptians, or from those forms of civil reverence which the greatest saints of whom the Old Testament give them account, observed without scruple before their superiors. Ezra and Nehemiah, and even Mordecai

himself, must have rendered the same homage to the king of Persia. It is answered that in these cases, with respect to the Persian monarch, the forms of approach may have been dispensed with, in the approach of the Jews. But this is gratuitous, and exceedingly unlikely. It is not in evidence and cannot be accepted as truth. But what will utterly destroy this forced supposition is that Esther, in her first approach to the king, must have complied with the ceremonial, and she could not have been excused by her nation, for it was not known that she was a Jewess. And in all this she followed the counsel of Mordecai. What is still more, even after the nation of Esther was known, she not only did without scruple what Mordecai refused to Haman, but she prostrated herself before the king: "And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews" (8:3). Here she submits to the humblest prostrations to the king. Mordecai refuses to stand up, or even to move, in honour of Haman; Esther prostrates herself at the feet of Ahasuerus. It is utterly vain by special pleading to hope to save Mordecai in this matter.

This point is of no great importance in itself, but the forced interpretations and violent suppositions that are used in order to justify Mordecai, is a specimen, in the disciples of Christ themselves, of the effects of human wisdom, to conform the Word of God to itself, *instead of implicitly bowing to its dictates*. Had the learned and good men who have recourse to this criticism, in order to justify a man of God, met with such an instance of outraging the inspired text, in the writings of the opposers of the doctrines of grace, they would have justly exclaimed with wonder, indignation, and horror. But they can consecrate the same licentious principle to make the text speak agreeably to their own wisdom. I have often observed, that in vindicating their own errors, the disciples of Christ avail themselves of the most licentious of the principles of criticism, which are the usual recourse of the wildest heretics. On the contrary, the man of God ought to accustom himself in all things to conform himself to the Word of God, to make his own wisdom bow to the Scriptures, and to *receive implicitly whatsoever they teach*.

Here then, we see that even the ignorance of God's people is employed to fulfill His purposes. Mordecai's ignorance was *sinful*; but had he been better instructed in his duty, he could not have been employed on this occasion. Many a piece of service God has, in every age, allotted to some of His people, for which they are fitted by their ignorance. That He should bestow gifts on His people, to enable them to fill the station allotted to them, is not a matter of surprise to any; but that the very ignorance of His people should fit them for certain situations for which He has designed them, could hardly be anticipated.

From this fact we may also perceive that our ignorance of duty may frequently bring danger and persecution upon ourselves and the whole body of Christians with which we are connected. Haman's resolution to destroy the whole Jewish nation was occasioned by Mordecai's refusal to honour him. It is true, indeed, commentators are willing to believe that Haman's including the whole Jewish nation with Mordecai was influenced by the conviction that they were all of the same sentiment on this subject. This, however, is not only not in evidence, but it is directly contrary to the reason assigned by the Holy Spirit in the narrative. "And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he *thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone*; for they had showed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the

Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai” (3:5-6).

Mordecai is then fully chargeable with all the natural effects of his ignorance, even though a merciful Providence prevented the execution of threatened vengeance. When an ill-informed Christian manifests a refractory, unsubmitting spirit towards his superiors, it brings odium and persecution on all connected with him. That God should give the government of the world to His enemies, and demand submission to the wicked, is not what the wisdom of this world could expect. If Christians will listen to the counsel of their own hearts, rather than to the dictates of the Divine Word, they will think it very unreasonable that the children of the great King, the heirs of God, should tamely yield to the evil men in power, and honour their persecutors. But such is the law of *that* kingdom which is not of *this* world. That spirit that refuses honour to worthless men in power is not the spirit of the Gospel. That proud and insolent piety that refuses the customary tokens of respect even to majesty was not practised by the patriarchs nor was it inculcated by the Apostles. If it finds shelter in the conduct of Mordecai, it ought to be known that it is sanctioned only by Mordecai’s sin.

The next providential circumstance we shall review is Esther’s concealing of her kindred. Had it been known to Haman that Esther was a Jewess, and the near kinswoman of Mordecai, he certainly would not have attempted any violent measures against either Mordecai or the Jews. Notwithstanding his mortification on account of the insult, he would have found it prudent to smother his resentment, or to gratify it in a more indirect way. He could not have expected to prevail, as long as Esther retained any share of the affections of the king. Mordecai’s intention in enjoining Esther to conceal her descent, was, no doubt, lest her being a captive Jewess might prevent her advancement to the situation of queen. The odium of her religion, as well as the captivity of her nation, would appear to him to stand in the way of her elevation. God’s intention by that concealment was to preclude a circumstance that would have prevented the danger of His people. He designed to bring them to the very brink of ruin, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance. It was ignorance and carnal policy in Mordecai; yet in another view, *it was ordained by God* for a wise purpose.

From this we may see that worldly policy in religion naturally leads to disappointment and trouble. When by their wisdom, Christians seek preferment, or endeavour to escape the cross, *by concealing any part of the truth*, they are generally preparing a scourge for their own back. Esther, by the advice of Mordecai, concealed her religion for the purpose of obtaining a situation that would enable her to protect the cause and people of God; but by that concealment the ruin of her whole nation would have been effected, had not a merciful God interposed to ward off the intended blow. Every means contrary to the Word of God promises affliction to the people of God. Believers who conceal the truth to obtain any worldly advantage may congratulate their policy when they succeed; but let them look about, for danger and sorrow are pursuing them. They have made a pit in which they will sink if a merciful God prevent not the natural tendency of their conduct. From the bold and independent spirit of Mordecai we may reasonably infer that his desire of the advancement of his kinswoman was more influenced by zeal for the good of his nation than by any views of private advancement. The advantage of her exaltation to the cause of the captive Jews would blind him to his sin. How often do Christians, reasoning on the same principle, overlook the Laws of God! Jesus Christ, by His Apostles,

separated His disciples from the world for observance of the ordinances of His kingdom; but human wisdom has violated this order, and sought protection and power to the cause of God, *through a marriage with the world*. In the writings of the Apostles we everywhere meet with the distinction between Christ's people, who are called "Christians," "believers," "saints"; and the rest of mankind, who are called "the world," those who are without, etc. But by the marriage of Esther with Ahasuerus, there is now no world; there are none without; for every man in Christendom either belongs to what is called the church, or may belong to it if he chooses. That this marriage has produced some good effects, I am not the person to deny. It may often have been *a shield* to the people of God. But with all the advantages that it has ever had, the bans are forbidden, for the marriage is contrary to the Word of God. None ought to have a place in the church of Christ but such as appear to be His disciples. When the Lord shall stand upon the wall that was made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in His hand, the high places of Israel shall be desolate and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste: Amos 7:7. *The greatest possible good to the cause of God cannot justify the smallest deviation from His commands. Let the ark of God itself fall, rather than attempt to uphold it with a human hand.*

Let us adore the mercy of our God, who steps forward in the time of our danger to rescue us from the consequences of our own policy. He might justly have given up Mordecai and Esther, to reap the reward of their sin. But as their conduct was the effect of ignorance [in contrast from presumptuous defiance—A.W.P.] He saves them from ruin, and promotes them to honour. Their devotedness to the cause of God is unquestionable. He forgets not the glory of His own name, and though His people are ignorant and sinful, He looks to the perfection of the righteousness of their Substitute, His own dearly beloved Son.

Not only was the great elevation of Haman providential; the commandment of the king for all to reverence him in a marked manner was also directed by the Divine counsel. The favour of the king would indeed naturally have procured respect for the object of it; but the royal command made the neglect a breach of the laws of the king; and exposed it to the notice of the other servants, who made it known to Haman. "Why transgresseth thou the king's commandment?" (3:3) is a question which shows that the offence was considered not a breach of courtesy merely, but the violation of the royal authority. Without this commandment, Mordecai might have escaped. That Haman was immediately informed of the people to whom Mordecai belonged was also providential, for he had not previously known this. Had not this been discovered, the body of the Jewish nation would have escaped the dangers to which Mordecai was exposed. But a wise Providence took care that this fact should not lie hid, that His name might be glorified in the salvation of His people, and in the destruction of their enemies. Why was Esther's descent unknown, though she was advanced to the consort to majesty, while Mordecai's was notified as soon as his offense? Yet the other servants themselves had not previously known this. It was on this very occasion that he himself discovered his kindred: "For he had told them that he was a Jew." Here we see that as the caution of Mordecai in advising Esther to conceal her nation was the means of bringing it into the utmost danger of total extinction, his voluntary discovery of his descent was now to have the same effect. The utmost exertions of human wisdom may often be employed to bring about what they are intended to prevent.

But what above all calls for our wonder is that a monarch, who ought to consider

himself the father of all his people, shall, for no purpose but the gratification of a wicked favourite, give up a whole nation to perdition. If no sentiments of duty or of pity had any weight with him, why did not his interest as a sovereign forbid his compliance with the cruel request? Yet, in defiance of every principle of humanity, justice and policy,—without even the pretense of any misconduct—he gave the lives of the whole Jewish nation, “both young and old, little children and women,” a present to his unprincipled favourite. The unsubstantial reasons alleged are not weighed but received implicitly, without examination. After all, there is nothing in the history to show that Ahasuerus was a cruel or tyrannical man. His conduct in this instance is an easy, unsuspecting compliance, in a matter that required the utmost deliberation and caution. Let us attend a moment to the argument employed by the crafty favourite to overreach his master and destroy the people of God. “And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws: therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries” (3:8, 9).

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## The Doctrine of Justification

### 2. Its Meaning.

Deliverance from the condemning sentence of the Divine Law is the fundamental blessing in Divine salvation: so long as we continue under the curse, we can neither be holy nor happy. But as to the precise nature of that deliverance, as to exactly what it consists of, as to the ground on which it is obtained, and as to the means whereby it is secured, much confusion now obtains. Most of the errors which have been prevalent on this subject arose from the lack of a clear view of the thing itself, and until we really understand what justification is, we are in no position to either affirm or deny anything concerning it. We therefore deem it requisite to devote a whole article unto a careful defining and explaining this word “justification,” endeavouring to show both what it signifies, and what it does not connote.

Between Protestants and Romanists there is a wide difference of opinion as to the meaning of the term “justify”: they affirming that to justify is to *make* inherently righteous and holy; we insisting that to justify signifies only to formally *pronounce* just or legally *declare* righteous. Popery includes under justification the renovation of man’s moral nature or deliverance from depravity, thereby confounding justification with regeneration and sanctification. On the other hand, all representative Protestants have shown that justification refers not to a change of moral character, but to a change of legal status; though allowing, yea, insisting, that a radical change of character invariably *accompanies* it. It is a legal change from a state of guilt and condemnation to a state of forgiveness and acceptance; and this change is owing solely to a gratuitous act of God, founded upon the righteousness of Christ (they having *none* of their own) being imputed to His people.

“We simply explain justification to be an acceptance by which God receives us into His favour and esteems us as righteous persons; and we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. . . . Justification, therefore, is no other than an acquittal from guilt of him who was accused, as though his innocence has been proved. Since God, therefore, justifies us through the mediation of Christ, He acquits us, not by an admission of our personal innocence, but by an imputation of righteousness; so that we, who are unrighteous in ourselves, are considered as righteous in Christ” (John Calvin, 1559).

“What is justification? Answer: Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which He pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in His sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone” (Westminster Catechism, 1643).

“We thus define the Gospel justification of a sinner: It is a judicial, but gracious act of God, whereby the elect and believing sinner is absolved from the guilt of his sins, and hath a right to eternal life adjudged to him, on account of the obedience of Christ, received by faith” (H. Witsius, 1693).

“A person is said to be justified when he is approved of God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment; and as having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles to the reward of life” (Jonathan Edwards, 1750).

Justification, then, 1. refers not to any subjective change wrought in a person’s disposition, but is solely an objective change in his standing in relation to the law. That to jus-

tify cannot possibly signify to *make* a person inherently righteous or good is most clearly to be seen from the usage of the term itself in Scripture. For example, in Proverbs 17:15 we read, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD": now obviously he who shall *make* a "wicked" person just is far from being an "abomination to the LORD," but he who knowingly pronounces a wicked person to be righteous is obnoxious to Him. Again; in Luke 7:29 we read, "And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God": how impossible it is to make the words "justified God" signify any moral transformation in His character; but understand those words to mean that they *declared* Him to be righteous, and all ambiguity is removed. Once more, in 1 Timothy 3:16 we are told that the incarnate Son was "justified in (or "by") the Spirit": that is to say, He was publicly vindicated at His resurrection, exonerated from the blasphemous charges which the Jews had laid against Him.

Justification has to do solely with the *legal* side of salvation. It is a judicial term, a word of the law courts. It is the sentence of a judge upon a person who has been brought before him for judgment. It is that gracious act of God as Judge, in the high court of Heaven, by which He pronounces an elect and believing sinner to be freed from the penalty of the law, and fully restored unto the Divine favour. It is the declaration of God that the party arraigned is fully conformed to the law; justice exonerates him because justice has been satisfied. Thus, justification is that change of status whereby one, who being guilty before God, and therefore under the condemning sentence of His Law, and deserving of nought but an eternal banishment from His presence, is received into His favour and given a right unto all the blessings which Christ has, by His perfect satisfaction, purchased for His people.

In substantiation of the above definition, the meaning of the term "justify" may be determined, first, *by its usage in Scripture*. "And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we *clear* (this Hebrew word "tsadaq" always signifies "justify") ourselves?" (Gen. 44:16). Here we have an affair which was entirely a *judicial* one. Judah and his brethren were arraigned before the governor of Egypt, and they were concerned as to how they might procure a *sentence in their favour*. "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked" (Deut. 25:1). Here again we see plainly that the term is a forensic one, used in connection with the proceedings of law-courts, implying a process of investigation and judgment. God here laid down a rule to govern the judges in Israel: they must not "justify" or pass a sentence in favour of the wicked: compare 1 Kings 8:31, 32.

"If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse" (Job 9:20): the first member of this sentence is explained in the second—"justify" there cannot signify to make holy, but to pronounce a sentence in my own favour. "Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu . . . against Job . . . because he justified himself rather than God" (Job 32:2), which obviously means, Because he vindicated himself rather than God. "That Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Psa. 51:4), which signifies that God, acting in His judicial office, might be pronounced righteous in passing sentence. "But Wisdom is justified of her children" (Matt. 11:19), which means that they who are truly regenerated by God have *accounted* the wisdom of God (which the scribes and Pharisees reckoned foolishness) to be, as it really is, consummate wisdom: they cleared it of the calumny of folly.

2. The precise force of the term “to justify” may be ascertained by noting that it is *the antithesis of “to condemn.”* Now to condemn is not a process by which a good man is made bad, but is *the sentence* of a judge upon one because he is a transgressor of the law. “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17:15 and cf. Deut. 25:1). “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. 12:37). “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth” (Rom. 8:33, 34). Now it is undeniable that “condemnation” is the passing of a sentence against a person by which the punishment prescribed by the law is awarded to him and ordered to be inflicted upon him; therefore justification is *the passing of a sentence* in favour of a person, by which the *reward* prescribed by the law is ordered to be given to him.

3. That justification is not an experimental change from sin to holiness, but a judicial change from guilt to no-condemnation may be evidenced by *the equivalent terms used for it.* For example, in Romans 4:6 we read, “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works”: so that legal “righteousness” is not a habit infused into the heart, but a gift transferred to our account. In Romans 5:9, 10 to be “justified by Christ’s blood” is the same as being “reconciled by His death,” and reconciliation is not a transformation of character, but the effecting of peace by the removal of all that causes offense.

4. From the fact that the judicial side of our salvation is propounded in Scripture under the figures of *a forensic trial and sentence.* “(1) A judgment is supposed in it, concerning which the Psalmist prays that it may not proceed on the terms of the law: Psalm 143:2. (2) The Judge is God Himself: Isaiah 50:7, 8. (3) The tribunal whereon God sits in judgment is the Throne of Grace: Hebrews 4:16. (4) A guilty person. This is the sinner, who is so guilty of sin as to be obnoxious to the judgment of God: Romans 3:19. (5) Accusers are ready to propose and promote the charge against the guilty person; these are the law (John 5:45), conscience (Rom. 2:15), and Satan: Zechariah 3:2, Revelation 12:10. (6) The charge is admitted and drawn up in a ‘handwriting’ in form of law, and is laid before the tribunal of the Judge, in bar to the deliverance of the offender: Colossians 2:14. (7) A plea is prepared in the Gospel for the guilty person: this is grace, through the blood of Christ, the ransom paid, the eternal righteousness brought in by the Surety of the covenant: Romans 3:23, 25, Daniel 9:24. (8) Hereunto alone the sinner betakes himself, renouncing all other apologies or defensatives whatever: Psalm 130:2, 3; Luke 18:13. (9) To make this plea effectual we have an Advocate with the Father, and He pleads His own propitiation for us: 1 John 2:1, 2. (10) The sentence hereon is absolution, on account of the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ; with acceptance into favour, as persons approved of God: Romans 8:33, 34; 2 Corinthians 5:21” (John Owen).

From what has been before us, we may perceive what justification *is not.* First, *it differs from regeneration.* “Whom He called, them He also justified” (Rom. 8:30). Though inseparably connected, effectual calling or the new birth and justification are quite distinct. The one is never apart from the other, yet they must not be confounded. In the order of nature regeneration precedes justification, though it is in no sense the cause or ground of it: none is justified till he believes, and none believe till quickened. Regeneration is the act of the Father (James 1:18), justification is the sentence of the Judge. The one gives me a place in God’s family, the other secures me a standing before His throne. The one is internal, being the impartation of Divine life to my soul: the other is external,

being the imputation of Christ's obedience to my account. By the one I am drawn to return in penitence to the Father's house, by the other I am given the "best robe" which fits me for His presence.

Second, *it differs from sanctification*. Sanctification is moral or experimental, justification is legal or judicial. Sanctification results from the operation of the Spirit *in* me, justification is based upon what Christ has done *for* me. The one is gradual and progressive, the other is instantaneous and immutable. The one admits of degrees, and is never perfect in this life; the other is complete and admits of no addition. The one concerns my *state*, the other has to do with my *standing* before God. Sanctification produces a moral transformation of *character*, justification is a change of legal *status*: it is a change from guilt and condemnation to forgiveness and acceptance, and this solely by a gratuitous act of God, founded upon the imputation of Christ's righteousness, through the instrument of faith alone. Though justification is quite separate from sanctification, yet sanctification ever *accompanies* it.

Third, *it differs from forgiveness*. In some things they agree. It is only God who can forgive sins (Mark 2:7) and He alone can justify (Rom. 3:30). His free grace is the sole moving cause in the one (Eph. 1:7) and of the other (Rom. 3:24). The blood of Christ is the procuring cause of each alike: Matthew 26:28, Romans 5:9. The objects are the same: the persons that are pardoned are justified, and the same that are justified are pardoned; to whom God imputes the righteousness of Christ for their justification to them He gives the remission of sins; and to whom He does not impute sin, but forgives it, to them He imputes righteousness without works: Romans 4:6-8. Both are received by faith: Acts 26:18, Romans 5:1. But though they agree in these things, in others they differ.

God is said to be "justified" (Rom. 3:4), but it would be blasphemy to speak of *Him* being "pardoned"—this at once shows the two things are diverse. A criminal may be pardoned, but only a righteous person can truly be justified. Forgiveness deals only with a man's acts, justification with the man himself. Forgiveness respects the claims of mercy, justification those of justice. Pardon only remits the curse due unto sin; in addition justification confers a title to Heaven. Justification applies to the believer with respect to the claims of the law, pardon with respect to the Author of the law. The law does not pardon, for it knows no relaxation; but God pardons the transgressions of the law in His people by providing a satisfaction to the law adequate to their transgressions. The blood of Christ was sufficient to procure pardon (Eph. 1:7), but His righteousness is needed for justification (Rom. 5:19). Pardon takes away the filthy garments, but justification provides a change of raiment (Zech. 3:4). Pardon frees from death (2 Sam. 12:13), but righteousness imputed is called "justification of life" (Rom. 5:18). The one views the believer as completely sinful, the other as completely righteous. Pardon is the remission of punishment, justification is the declaration that no ground for the infliction of punishment exists. Forgiveness may be repeated unto seventy times seven, justification is once for all.

From what has been said in the last paragraph we may see what a serious mistake it is to limit justification to the mere forgiveness of sins. Just as "condemnation" is not the execution of punishment, but rather the formal declaration that the accused is guilty and worthy of punishment; so "justification" is not merely the remission of punishment but the judicial announcement that punishment cannot be justly inflicted—the accused being fully conformed to all the positive requirements of the law in consequence of Christ's perfect obedience being legally reckoned to his account. The justification of a believer is

no other than his being admitted to participate in the reward merited by his Surety. Justification is nothing more or less than the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us: the negative blessing issuing therefrom is the remission of sins; the positive, a title to the heavenly inheritance.

Beautifully has it been pointed out that “We cannot separate from Immanuel His own essential excellency. We may see Him bruised and given like beaten incense to the fire, but was incense ever burned without fragrance, and only fragrance being the result? The name of Christ not only cancels sin, it supplies in the place of that which it has canceled, its own everlasting excellency. We cannot have its nullifying power only; the other is the sure concomitant. So was it with every typical sacrifice of the Law. It was stricken: but as being spotless it was burned on the altar for a sweet-smelling savor. The savor ascended as a memorial before God: it was accepted for, and its value was attributed or imputed to him who had brought the vicarious victim. If therefore, we reject the imputation of righteousness, we reject sacrifice as revealed in Scripture; for Scripture knows of no sacrifice whose efficacy is so exhausted in the removal of guilt as to leave nothing to be presented in acceptableness before God” (B.W. Newton).

“What is placing our righteousness in the obedience of Christ, but asserting that we are accounted righteous only because His obedience is accepted for us as if it were our own? Wherefore Ambrose appears to me to have very beautifully exemplified this righteousness in the benediction of Jacob: that as he, who had on his own account no claim to the privileges of primogeniture, being concealed in his brother’s habit, and invested with his garment, which diffused a most excellent odor, insinuated himself into the favour of his father, that he might receive the benediction to his own advantage, under the character of another; so we shelter ourselves under the precious purity of Christ” (John Calvin).—  
A.W.P.

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## Preaching the Law

(Completed)

2. Explain *the inexorable demands of the law*. It requires perfect, perpetual, personal obedience. It is given for the regulation of all the faculties and powers of the creature, and all their exercises and conduct, both internal and external, both of the thoughts and motions of the heart, and all their outward behaviour. It is the one unchanging rule of every moral agent, in all places and at all times, not leaving him at liberty to act without regard to the law in any one instance, so long as he exists. No allowance is made for the slightest infraction. The obedience which it requires is not a forced or feigned obedience, but must be a cordial and loving one.

3. Expound *its spirituality and extent*. The Law of God is a perfect rule, being neither too strict nor too lax. It requires not too much or too little in any instance, but points out and prescribes what is exactly right and fit in all cases. Hence every voluntary exercise of the creature is either in perfect conformity to it, and so is perfectly right, or so far as it is not so, is wrong and a violation of it. There is no medium between right and wrong, between virtue and sin. God requireth truth in the *inward parts* (Psa. 51:6), and every ungodly thought, imagination, or desire, is a violation of the law: Matthew 5:22-48.

4. Announce *its fearful curse*. There is a dreadful penalty annexed to God's Law, which consists in a threat to the disobedient: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal 3:10). This is peculiar to a law. Where a rule and directory of conduct is given, and where it is clothed with authority, it must be enforced by the authority of the legislator. A rule which carried in it no threat to the transgressor is clothed with no authority at all, has not the force of a law. The penalty (or evil threatened) by God's Law corresponds exactly to the authority of the Law-Giver and the just desert of the transgressor: it cannot be anything short of *eternal* punishment, *infinite* misery.

5. Insist that *every member of the human race is under* God's Law, and will yet be judged by it. Show that this *must* be so, for otherwise there would be no rule by which our actions could be squared, and the whole of our conduct would possess no moral quality. "Where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15); "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5:13); but God *does* "impute" sin to all men, therefore all men must be under His Law: were it otherwise, they would be irresponsible and sinless creatures. Romans 3:19 makes it plain that "all the world" is under the law and under its curse.

6. Point out that *Christ did not abolish the law*: He expressly announced "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). The very phrasing of this declaration shows that men *do* "think" He came here to abrogate God's Law; but their thoughts are utterly erroneous and highly insulting to the holy Son of God. Instead of abolishing the law, Christ constantly expounded and enforced it, and was Himself subject to the law, as a perfect example for us to follow. Nor has Christ delivered His people from the law as a rule of life: 1 Corinthians 9:21.

7. Show *what is that salvation* which Christ came to purchase for His people. First, the gift of His Spirit (Acts 2:33), to overcome their enmity against God's law (Rom. 8:7), and to work in them a love for it (Rom. 7:22). It is by *this* we may know whether we have been regenerated. Second, to bring us into a hearty and cordial consent to the law, so that

each true Christian can say “so then with the mind I myself *serve the law of God*” (Rom. 7:25). Third, to deliver from the curse by dying for our sins of disobedience against the law, Himself enduring its penalty in our stead: Galatians 3:13.

Only as the first five points above are faithfully preached is any real foundation laid for the Gospel message! Without that foundation the preacher is building a house which will not stand; yea, he is throwing dust in the eyes of the people, bolstering them up in a false hope. Until the Law is given its proper place in the pulpit, and is preached regularly, plainly, authoritatively, the tide of lawlessness which has swept over this favoured land (and throughout all the so-called “civilized nations”), will continue rising higher and higher. Well may we pray, “It is time for Thee, LORD, to work: *for they have made void Thy law*” (Psa. 119:126).—A.W.P.

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### Submission to Our Sovereign

“Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Psa. 115:3). Being God, He consults no one; yet being omniscient and infinitely holy, He does only that which is good and right. But we are finite creatures; yea, fallen creatures, and sin has darkened our understanding. Therefore *we* are quite incompetent to gauge or grasp *God’s* ways; and to criticize or murmur against them is the height of impiety and wickedness: “Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?” (Rom. 9:20). True spirituality and practical godliness consist in *yielding ourselves* to the sovereign and perfect will of God, bowing submissively unto whatever He lays upon us, seeking grace to do whatever He commands us.

Much that God does is displeasing to the flesh, and sin within rises up and rebels. This is the very nature of sin: to oppose God, to be dissatisfied with His appointments. Daily does the Christian need to ask God to lay His cooling and quietening hand upon him. Daily does he need to beg Him to increase his faith, so that his *confidence in Him* may be so entire that he will not call into question any of His dealings with him; but rather will say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (v. 15). *That* is the great secret of real and lasting peace of heart. But *that* is something to which all the unregenerate are total strangers, though they will not acknowledge it, and try hard to conceal it. A heart which is truly at rest is one that realizes that *God* (and not the Devil) is on the throne of the universe, directing all things by His unerring wisdom and making *all* things “work together for good” unto His own people.

It is true that even to the Christian many of God’s ways are profoundly mysterious: if they were not, there would be no room for the exercise of *faith*. If the writer or the reader were on the throne and had *all* power at his disposal, he would order things in this world very different from what they now are. Yes, and that would only manifest what a *fool* he is. How so? Because Perfect Wisdom *is* now directing all the concerns of every life and all the affairs of this world as a whole, and therefore the very desire to alter what is, only exhibits our folly. *Faith* knows that unerring wisdom is regulating all things; that One too wise to err holds the helm in His hand, and that He “doeth all things well.” Though to sight and sense things *seem* to be all out of order, though human reason is quite unable to perceive the perfection of God’s governmental ways and providential dealings, *faith* knows that “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things” (Rom 11:36).

God could put an end to all sin in the world right now did He so please. So to He could save every sinner on earth this moment did He so choose. As to *why* He does not do so, we cannot tell; nor is it any of *our* business! Our business is not to mount the bench and pass judgment on the ways and dealings of the Most High: that is what the Devil once sought to do, and it resulted in his eternal undoing. Our business is to be clay in the hands of the Potter; to uncomplainingly submit to His holy and sovereign pleasure, to lie passive, and be molded by Him. Our business is to take our place in the dust before the Almighty, and say, Lord, in Thy mercy subdue my rebellious will, quieten my restless soul, purify my unbelieving heart. Our business is to delight ourselves in *the Lord* (Psa. 37:4), and to *give thanks* “always for *all* things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20).

We live in the midst of a rebellious generation who are ever murmuring and complaining at God’s appointments: grumbling at *His* weather, chaffing at His restrictions, belching forth their discontent every time He crosses *their* wills. Verily, “the poison of

asps is under their lips” (Rom. 3:13). And my reader, unless we are constantly on our guard, we shall be corrupted by them, learn their evil ways, and acquire their wicked speech. Our safeguard is to have as little to do with them as possible, and to cultivate more and more communion with Him who never murmured, but always delighted in the Father’s will—A.W.P.

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### Righteousness

“For the kingdom of God (or our service to Christ) is not (consists not in) meat and drink; but *righteousness*, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men” (Rom. 14: 17, 18). By which word “*righteousness*” he meaneth, as James doth, the royal law, the perfect law, which is the moral precept evangelized or delivered to us by the hand of Christ (James 2:8, 9). The law was given *twice* at Sinai; the last time it was given with a proclamation of grace and mercy of God, and of the pardon of sins going before: Exodus 19 and 34:1-10. The *second* giving is here intended: for so it cometh after faith, which first receiveth the proclamation of forgiveness. Hence we are said to do this “righteousness” in the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit. Now he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men. For who is he that can justly find fault with him that fulfilleth the royal law from a principle of faith and love? “If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scriptures,—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself—ye do well”; ye are approved of men. Again, he that hath loveth another, hath fulfilled the law, for love is the fulfilling of the law. He then that serveth Christ according to the royal law, from faith and love going before, he is a fit person for church communion. God accepteth him, men approve him. Now, that the royal law is *the moral precept* read James 2:8-12. It is also called the “law of liberty” because the bondage is taken away by forgiveness going before; and this it is by which we are judged.—John Bunyan, 1660.

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