

THE PATMOS SERIES

by Benjamin W. Newton

Newton's prophetic exposition interpreting key passages of Romans and Revelation, including the olive tree and its branches from Romans 11, warning that Christendom faces judgment if it does not continue in God's goodness.

13 Chapters

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03 - Wilderness Wanderings and Heavenly Guidance

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 3 Wilderness Wanderings And Heavenly Guidance "There are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."—Proverbs 19:21

Few things are more painful to observe than the tendency to declension among those whom God hath blessed. In reading the history of the "family of faith," we find from time to time God was pleased to call out some by His grace into a separate place of blessing. For a little while that place was steadily maintained, but then it waned, till the light of the day of their blessing seemed to set in darkness. So we have to remember this tendency to fall back into something that darkens the brightness of testimony.

What different exhibitions of faith we find in Abraham and in those who came after Abraham was distinctly separated, not only morally. That Enoch was, and Abel, and Noah. They remained in the midst of their country and associations and households; and that moral separation by reason of the Truth of God which was in them, of course continued in Abraham but then there was something more. He was called to leave his country and his father's house; and to move in a distinct sphere, in which there was to be a complete contrast between all the arrangements of his ways and of those whom he had left. This was manifested still more, when Israel was called out from Egypt, to be a peculiar and separated people to God to have laws, principles, and everything, distinct from all else in the earth.

Well, Abraham maintained this place of separateness; and during the whole of his course, with the exception of one or two spots that seemed for a moment to dim the brightness of his history, we find a steady adhesion to God; and it was marked by this, that he not only remembered the great end God had set before him, but day by day he was able to depend on God for the means by which that final end was to be realized. He did desire God to be the Director and Appointer of his ways. He sought not to control things for himself. He left the appointment of things to God, and said "the steps which He has appointed toward the final end of glory He has also provided for me."

Now you know, this is not easy: nothing is found by the "family of faith" so difficult as this. In Isaac it declined: in Jacob still more, for Jacob's history is a remarkable example of one who had great faith in God touching the end—we never find him wavering as to the end of blessing to be attained, neither do we find him doubting that all blessing must come from God—but, when it came to the management of his ways to secure that end, there was an energy which led him to try and control things for himself which he might have left to God. We see this in the history of Rebekah; and her child probably inherited it. She regarded the birthright, and knew it had been distinctly promised to Jacob. Ought there then to have been any doubt or question in her soul as to whether Jacob would indeed have that place? Was it not something that might well be left in the hands of God? Was it for her to burden herself with the care of how it might be attained, and to devise plans by which it might be secured? Did God tell her to do that? Had He told her, it would have been right to do it; but, whenever practical steps are necessary to be taken by the Lord's people for the final

end, He gives unmistakable signs; they will not be left in doubt what steps they ought to take, if those steps are necessary to the final end. God will take care to make that plain enough to their consciences and hearts, so they need not be anxious about them. Their place is only to move as He leads. No doubt Rebekah had some thought about this, therefore she waited many a long year; she did not immediately come to the crafty device she afterwards planned to secure that which God had promised. She left it many a long year; anxious no doubt about it; troubling herself often; but still she did not act till her patience was at last worn out, and would not endure any longer. She saw no advance. On the contrary, she saw all her husband's affections going towards Esau, not Jacob; and Isaac himself drawing very near the end of his days all seemed to indicate that the promise of God was rendered uncertain. Did not God intend this? Did not He intend that circumstances should seem to make it appear that the promise was not to be fulfilled? It is the way of God to discipline; to try the faith of His people and especially where there is any forwardness or self-confidence; or a disposition to make plans and schemes for oneself. Therefore, when everything seemed to threaten contrary to her desires, she at last distinctly determined that she would control circumstances, and not allow things to go on as they seemed to be going on. She put in her hand to subtlety and deceit, and planned that which was really a lie, undirected by God; involving her son, whom she so dearly loved, in that same falsehood and deceit! Here you see is an instance of the way in which nature acts but she could have had no right apprehension of the true nature of the blessing. She felt it would bring to her peace and blessing—things that nature would appreciate—but had she only connected it with God and His holiness, would she have dared to practice the deceit which she did? So this is what the human heart can do—even when it does not altogether depart from God—where nature is predominant.

Well, the deceit was practiced, the desired end attained, and by her own means! The blessing was given to Jacob, and then came the sorrow. Do you suppose that this could be unnoticed by God; that He could allow this to be done, without giving a clear intimation of what His judgment respecting it was? There was nothing on earth dearer to Rebekah than Jacob, yet she was never to see him anymore; and she well deserved that sorrow.

Instantly there was to be strife, bitter strife in her household; almost the feeling of Cain against Abel again. Esau was so furious as to be ready to imbrue his hands in his brother's blood, and she it was who had stirred up this feeling in Esau! If God had in His own way conducted it, no doubt He would have found means as He afterwards did, to calm the fury of Esau; but here it rose up in its terribleness, and then of course she had to plan again what could be done. She arranged for herself again, and the only way was, that Jacob should go away—back to the very place from which Abraham had been called, and of which he had said, "Beware that thou bring not my son thither again! "God had called him to Canaan, and was his son to go back to the place of his natural birth that would be seeking to undo the arrangements of God! But this was planned for Jacob, an arrangement that the heart of Rebekah had made, not God. God was the ultimate controller of it, and He intended ultimately to bend all these circumstances: but what a different relation of God that is! Yet how often believers are satisfied with this; viz., that God will finally cause all things to "work together for good," and in some way bend all circumstances so that they shall come to the right point at last. How different is this—first making things crooked, and then asking God to make them straight—from first asking God that He would be pleased to guide our ways Himself. How many sorrows that would avoid!

Well Jacob went on his solitary way into the wilderness—a blessed place indeed, when “faith” distinctly called into it, but it was not so here; it was self-sought—his own plans had brought him there. So you see, there may be circumstances of trial which we distinctly earn for ourselves, or it may be, we are brought into them distinctly by God. Now, would not that make a marked difference in our estimate of these circumstances? Not that we are to forget that God is a God of “grace” in either case; yet, we ought to ask if we find ourselves in such circumstances, “Are they self-earned, or, are we brought into them by faith? “Not infrequently has there been unholy haste as to this, and the Lord has been spoken of as if He were the Person Who had brought into such circumstances, when evidently it was not the Lord at all, but the mistakes and frowardness of the person himself.

It is a hallowed word “The Lord hath done so and so;” or “The Lord hath led me to this or that.” Indeed I seldom like to hear that from a person’s lips, because comparatively it is not often the case. It may be, but it is the exception now; because at the present time there is too great deficiency in faith and ability to wait on God for the means, for us assuredly to say “The Lord hath led to this or that.” Though I would not desire to take that word from anyone’s lips when it is fitting, yet there should be holy caution in using it, lest we put that holy Name to something which, after all, is proved to be a way of our own devising. So then, Jacob was in a wilderness, and so far apparently, in a right place; for the wilderness is a place of blessing when the Lord leads into it. But when he entered it, what thought was prominent in his mind?

How he should get through those trying circumstances to the point which he and Rebekah had set before him—that point of sorrow as he afterwards found it to be—for Laban’s house was very like to him. How bitterly he felt the bondage of it, he was able afterwards to tell (Genesis 31:6, Genesis 31:40). Jacob stood in that wilderness in nature’s strength. He intended to go through it in nature’s strength; he intended to act as he afterwards did act in Laban’s house. So this was no light prospect for him, and would have been sorrowful indeed but for the faithfulness of God; He did not forsake Jacob. Jacob was the heir of promise. God had said over the head of Abram, “Blessed, yea and thou shalt be blessed:” and God put that blessing on the head of Jacob for His own Name’s sake, and was carrying on His own purposes of “grace” through this unworthy instrument, who was beginning to prove, what was afterwards most distinctly proved, that he was the “worm Jacob.” Therefore, the moment he entered the wilderness, lest by any means God, and his promise and grace should be forgotten, and the darkness and sorrow that were going to roll over Jacob’s course should seem to dim the brightness of the promise, God took care to show that He did not forget His faithfulness. Consequently, though he was not apparently thinking of these things of God, and even the birth-right seemed a distant thing, and he, occupied no doubt with his present sorrows, for he lay down to sleep and placed a stone for his pillow—a blessed place externally if only Jacob’s soul had been in harmony with his position, but that harmony was wanting—nevertheless, God was pleased as soon as he fell asleep, to show him that heavenly vision, which will remain God’s great pledge to all the family of faith till the hour of glory comes. So that we have to go back to this vision and to learn in it part of our own blessing: for Heaven was opened, and a connection was formed between Heaven and earth! God formed the connection. God created the ladder. God caused the angels to ascend and descend. He formed the link between Heaven and earth, and He stood at the top of that ladder as indicating, that He would at last give these blessings to this dark earth. So that this vision stood in contrast, not only to the

sorrows of the wilderness and everything that man was on earth, but even in contrast with the practical moral condition of Jacob himself!

There was no bright prospect anywhere. As to the earth, it was groaning with corruption. As to men, they were strangers to God; and as to the person to whom the promise was made, he was lying down in the wilderness, having taken a wrong step, and going on to reap the consequences of that wrong step! But before all the results of this were worked out, God was pleased to give this bright vision of glory and peace. And when the hour comes for this vision to be fulfilled, then, where will all those stand who have been of faith during this dark season? Shall they not be in association with Him Who was at the top of the ladder—the heavenly One—and will not even angels be subject to them? Is not that the destined place of glory even of you, and is not the hour drawing nigh? Was not one step long ago taken, when Heaven was opened over the head of Jesus in this earth, and has it ever since been closed? No: never from that hour to the present! It is not manifestly open as it will be; but, as there are those in the earth loved with the same love as God loved the Son; as Heaven was opened over His head, so is it over theirs also! This is the place in which the family of faith still are, even as the Lord Jesus said (John 1:51), “From this time forth” (for that is the word He uses), “Ye shall see heaven opened.” That was the moment when this blessed period began, which, as to its manifestation, its development, we yet wait for. But that hour is drawing nigh now. It will not be long before all that that vision indicates shall absolutely and fully be revealed. We are coming near to the time when Christ will take His place on the Throne, and establish the glory of His kingdom in the earth.

Well; God enlarged the blessed promise that He had before made to Abraham (v. 13-15). Do you ever read a fuller development of the ways of faithful “grace” than is contained in these words to Jacob? And this remains as part of their inheritance, to all the children of faith! We may read them as applying to ourselves. The whole family of Israel come under these words “All things are yours.” So it is the pledge of constant preservation, guidance, and full blessing at the last. Yet, full of blessing as the words were, how did they affect the soul of Jacob? What would you have expected when he awoke from his vision? Fullness of thanksgiving, would you not? But was it so? No! he felt surprised and even terrified at this presence of God; yet there was not one terrifying word in it; they were all words of consolation and peace and mercy: yet, so little had he been walking with God, so little had God been the practical companion of his ways of late, (how could he have been in those paths of Jacob’s own devising) that when God did meet him, he was terrified, and said “How dreadful is this place!” Was that language ever used by Abraham? No, because Abraham was practically walking with God, which Jacob was not: therefore, the sense of the distance of his feeling from God was far more prominent in his soul, than the blessings God had spoken to him of.

It is one of the most remarkable evidences that Scripture anywhere furnishes, of the degree in which, by self-induced darkness, the light of the precious blessings of God may fail in penetrating the heart. So completely of the earth had his practical ways and thoughts been, that he dreaded to find himself at the gate of Heaven, even though he met there nothing but words of blessing! May we take warning by this, lest we say “our blessing is inalienable, therefore all is well.” No doubt these blessings are inalienable to all the family of faith, and so far all is well: but should we wish to be brought into the condition of heart under any circumstances that Jacob here manifested? Could we expect anything but sorrow? Bitter was the sorrow that marked the course of Jacob and his household, till it ended in Egypt, and then there was a gracious interference on the part of God on

their behalf; and though there were bright spots in their history, yet as a whole we must say it was a dark picture till Moses was called. As a whole, we must say it was a downward path, else, how would the family of faith have got into Egypt—that place so distinctly marked as opposed to everything that is of Canaan and of God—how could they have found themselves involved in the circumstances in which they finally groaned in Egypt? God indeed not failing them, but allowing them to go this downward path, and then, when they had made this crooked bend in their history, interfering for them in grace, and, without one intervention of human planning or human thought, delivering them from the house of bondage!

Then again observe, how even one of the chiefest blessings—the chief blessing of all—was unnoticed by Jacob. Did he speak at all of the heavenly glory and presence of God, as if that had been his blessing? No: there was no thought at all except of being brought back again in peace to his own land. That was his prevailing thought. “Give me that,” said he, “and I shall be satisfied!” God did do that for him, but, how many sorrows he had after! So you see, his heart did not estimate the very things that God proposed to him to encourage and cheer his faith. And then, would you not have supposed that the manner in which the Lord had so distinctly said “I will be with thee; I will guide thee,” etc., would have rested on his mind? yet, so far from recognizing this, he actually uses a word that God had not used! His very first word was “if”—“If the Lord will do this”—the very thing the Lord had said He would do! Instead of giving the prominence to God’s “I will do,” he made himself the prominent one, and says “If the Lord will do so and so, I will do so and so to Him! I will surely give the tenth to Him”; really as though it were a favor to God to take Jehovah to be his God!

Yet do we never feel like this, as though there were something to be proud of in rendering up our petty little services to the Lord? Do we apprehend those words “When ye have done all that is commanded you, say ‘we are unprofitable servants, we have done merely that which it was our duty to do.’” I fear we seldom estimate the fullness of truth that is in these words, but we have to guard against this unholy bargaining as it were. Of course it was right to ask (vv. 20, 21), but to put it in this way under any circumstances would be wrong, especially when the Lord had just said “I will be this to thee.” Let there not be this kind of stipulation, but a remembrance of what God has promised. Would you desire to choose your own ways? Has that ever ended in anything but sorrow? God may turn round those paths; still, you will know a deal of sorrow while those paths are being turned. So I trust we may have wisdom, seeing that the more our hand is still, the better, except indeed there be a command given by God to put it forth; and when there is, let it be put forth steadily and with vigor; otherwise let our hand be still, and let the Lord work; for He is able to accomplish His own purposes, and does not need our help. And then, if there should be a wilderness, it will be a wilderness entered with different feelings to those with which Jacob entered it. Many of David’s most blessed Psalms were sung in a wilderness—a wilderness which he did not choose for himself, but which was forced on him by faithfulness to God—and he went into it with words of faith and joy in his lips, and was able there to sing thankfully to God.

How different to Jacob! Jacob was not able to return thanksgiving when God invited to it. David, with no outward circumstances to cheer him, was yet able to rejoice, to praise, too glory in God. No angels were seen around his path: no vision was given to him: no such words were spoken to him; yet his heart was full of thanksgiving and praise, while the heart of Jacob, unmoved by the vision of glory, only felt dread and uncertainty as to the future; and the only words he uttered were

a kind of stipulation with God!

Both were children of faith. Both were blessed. Both will stand in final glory, complete in the perfectness of Christ: yet, how contrasted their practical ways! May we observe this contrast, and may God give us grace to choose the better path.

07 - The "Olive Tree" and Its Branches

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 7 The "Olive Tree" and its Branches The Doom of Israel and Christendom "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees."—Luke 3:9 "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee."—Romans 11:21

One great proof that God has not "cast away" His ancient people Israel is that had He done so it would have been the frustration of all that had been predicted respecting the blessing that is to be diffused over the nations through them. The Psalms, the Prophets, and even the books of Moses are full of joyful testimony to the blessing that will overspread the earth in the "latter day," when "Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit." It is the great expectation that has been proposed by God from the beginning—to make Israel the instrument in effecting His purposes. So, what can persons see respecting Truth, if they are blind to these things if they are ignorant of the calling of Israel as a nation to this place of blessing? If minds are blinded to this, they are blinded to all that God has written respecting the future blessing of the earth and that involves blindness to other things that are future.

Two proofs are given that God has not "cast away" His Israel. The apostle had spoken of the calling out of the Gentiles—the grace of the Gospel being directed towards them—and Israel being left in darkness. It was remarkably so, when the light of the grace of the gospel began to cease to shine on Israel corporately. In the beginning of the Acts, Light shone brightly, and, for a time continued, but it was gradually withdrawn and at last was almost confined to the Gentiles—the outcast Gentiles! So it might seem as though God had utterly forsaken Israel, and many a Gentile heart was ready to say so; to rejoice in having received blessing itself, and then secretly to rejoice in the thought that it had been taken from Israel! Strange that there should be a disposition in any heart to find joy in the restriction of blessing to themselves! Yet, if we watch the heart, we shall find, a tendency to rejoice in any restriction which seems to exalt or give greater privileges to ourselves. That is the reason. Not so much dislike that others should have the blessing, as the thought that, if they had it, we ourselves should lose a certain pre-eminence and distinction. So self is at the root of this feeling. And now it has developed so much among Gentile believers, that they have lost all thought of the future blessing of Israel; they have applied to themselves promises that belong to Israel's future, and, as a consequence, have settled down in worldliness in the earth; have sought "to reign as kings before the time;" and have, applied to themselves passages, which belong not to the period when Truth is rejected, but to the period when Truth has supremacy in the earth! Instead of waiting, and saying "The time for the supremacy of Truth will come, and it will be the time of our exaltation too," they have forestalled that hour, and have wished to "reign;" while Truth, to which the allegiance of their souls is due, is yet suffering and outcast in the Earth!

Therefore, the Apostle gives two proofs that Israel was not forsaken. First, that even at that present hour—as indeed there ever had been—a little remnant was year after year gathered from among them; in other words, not a year rolls over our heads, in which there is not one or other in the house of Israel found, who has received the Spirit of Christ and is a true believer in Him. So

that is one thing to which the faithfulness of God is pledged, that there shall always be a “remnant”—even though it may be a small one—a seeing remnant in Israel, so that the darkness is never total. And the second proof is, that a time is coming when “all Israel,” i.e. Israel as a whole, “shall be saved,” (Romans 11:26). The words “all Israel” are contrasted with the previous clause, where it is said “blindness in part is happened to Israel;” the contrast being between a part of Israel and all Israel. “Blindness in part” you must remember, does not mean partial blindness, in the sense in which we say “a person can see a little.” It is not with respect to the blindness itself being not full blindness, for those who were blinded were totally blinded, they saw not at all; no darkness could be more complete. “They groped at noonday as in the night;” so, those on whom this blindness falls are thoroughly blind. But these words mean that all are not blinded: there have always been some “seeing ones” among them—a remnant—yet the time is coming when, the Apostle says “all Israel shall see”! The contrast is, between the period when there is only a seeing remnant, and, when blindness is taken from all; which will be the convincing proof that God has not “cast away” His people. But to return. How important it is to remember that, from the beginning of Israel’s history; at the present moment; and yet more, in the history of those who have succeeded Israel as God’s present witness in the earth (i.e. those who now profess the Name of Jesus), have only been a little remnant in every age, in the midst of the corruption abounding around them; that faithful Christianity has always had this place hitherto, of being only a “little remnant.” Was it not so when Moses himself, in the early part of Israel’s history, took the Tabernacle and placed it “without the camp,” and bade all that were “on the Lord’s side” to go “without the camp” of Israel? So there was a separation from Israel itself. Israel had been separated from Egypt, but then there was need of a second separation, even from Israel!

Remember, that has been so in every age since. In the Christian dispensation as well as the Jewish, that has been the method of the dealing of God. There has always been necessity for this double separation; a separation not only from those who did not own the Name of Christ at all, who made no confession of Him; but a necessity of separation from those who, being professedly His witnesses, as circumcised or baptized, have gone astray and wandered from Truth.

Now trace this for a moment through Israel’s history. Think of Joshua, Caleb, and a few others when all Israel turned back to die in the wilderness; was it not “a little remnant”? Think, when they came into the Land at the time of the Judges, when evil abounded. How few were the remnant gathered to act on principles of faith!

Again, in the days of Samuel when Saul sat on the throne and seemed to be honored as the Lord’s Anointed; yet, how needful for those who were truly of faith, to go to the cave of Adullam, either actually or in heart only, as Jonathan. They were a “little remnant” in the midst of professing Israel, yet God’s true blessing lay with them.

Then think of the time when all true ministry of Truth was confined to the Prophets; when Kings and priests failed, and the time of the ministration of Truth was with the Prophets alone! Think of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, etc.; were they not almost all solitary witnesses even from the time of Elijah? Elijah thought he alone was left; but there were others; for God always has a larger remnant than even His people are disposed to think. We do not always see them. They are not always marked. If there were more energy of faith, no doubt they would be more marked. Few, who lived when Jesus was upon Earth, would have thought of numbering Nicodemus amongst

those who belonged to Him, for he seemed ashamed of Him. Yet he did belong to Jesus, and no doubt there were many others like Him, who, for various reasons, did not follow as they might have followed their Lord, openly, honestly, steadfastly; but who yet were bound to Him in faith. And now that this, which we call the Christian dispensation, has commenced, only carry your thoughts throughout it; and has it not been from the time when the Apostle died, a “little remnant” struggling in the midst of abounding corruption; God, from time to time raising up individuals; granting a little light; and then, floods of error closing around and often overwhelming that light? It has been a perpetual interference of the hand of God to keep Truth alive, but only with a little remnant; so, how must those, who deny that Christianity has that character—who say it is intended to increase and prosper in this dispensation—how must they be deceived! The deception is this, that they mistake the spread of that which is called Christianity—“Christianity,” which like Saul, has the energy of nature in it, but not of real sanctifying Truth—they mistake that for real and true Christianity; which is the same mistake as, if we had lived in the days of Saul, and had said “the blessing of God is with Saul’s house,” and had never cared to seek after David. But what was the end of Saul? Think how he turned to the power of Satan, and—then his punishment came! So it is a solemn question, whether our souls have at all discerned that position of Truth as connected with the “little flock,” and have contrasted that place with the history of the great outward body which only professes His Name. Few have done this, and that is the reason why so few are able to read aright “the signs of the times.” The Apostle speaks of the reason why this blindness had fallen on the greater part of Israel—on almost all of them—viz., because God had blinded them. The blindness is judicial; and have they not well deserved it? Only read Psalms 69:1-36 from which the Apostle quotes, and see the description which the Lord Jesus Himself gives—for He is the Speaker—of what the relation of Israel to Himself was. How they “hated” Him; “talked to the grief of Him whom God had wounded”! How, when they saw His sorrows, though their consciences discerned His holiness, and recognized that He was the Blessed of the Lord, yet they rejoiced in His affliction; added all the bitterness to His cup they could, and desired to tread Him down to the dust!

Now, it was this rejection of light, when it came not only in the way of Truth but of Grace, that sealed their blindness to Israel. They rejected the testimony of Grace three times! The Prophets spoke of blessing to come through the extension of God’s grace. They refused it! The Lord Jesus brought to them amore distinct testimony still. Again they refused it! The Apostles spoke of grace preached to them through His Blood—that, though they had slain Him, yet God was willing to receive them, and to impute to them the preciousness of the Blood which their wicked hands had shed—but they gnashed their teeth more sternly even, than when they rejected Jesus before! So then intensity of blindness was allowed to settle on them, and there they are to the present hour; “grace” working among them, to preserve a remnant. And when this was the case with Israel; when this blindness had been sealed on them, then, almost all—not quite all, but almost all—were “broken out” of their olive-tree!

You may take as the figure, an olive-tree with a branch on one side—the great leading branch—thoroughly broken out, so that one side of the tree is regarded as entirely bare. But, at the moment one side is thus stripped of its branches, on the other side stands a branch, which, at the moment when the other was “broken off” was “grafted in.” There is the calling of the gentiles, and Paul was the instrument of this. So that virtually, the Jewish branch was “broken off” when Paul

began to constitute the separate Gentile churches in the earth; when he was sent forth into the wide Gentile world to gather Gentile believers together in their various cities. Then the second branch was “grafted in,” the former having been “broken off,” (Acts 13:46).

Well, so far, it is a picture of blessing to Gentiles. But then comes another question, Does this Gentile olive-branch prosper; does it retain its fruitfulness and continue in God’s goodness? If it does, well; but if not, shall it escape the judgment that fell on Israel? If there be the same unrighteousness, the same rejection of Truth, shall this Gentile branch escape the judgment of God? Shall it be inflicted on the natural branch—His own people—and shall He not inflict a similar judgment on this Gentile olive-branch, if it become cankered and corrupt?

God cannot act on two principles; so this chapter tells us that, if it continue not in God’s goodness the Gentile olive-branch shall be “cut off”! Now, do you think it has continued in God’s goodness; in other words, is Christendom at this moment—all those who are baptized in the Name of Jesus—are they indeed servants of Christ in His Truth ? If they are, then the Gentile olive-branch has continued in God’s goodness: but if not; if we cannot assert that of Christendom, then, what remains for it, but to be broken off by judgments, more terrible far than those which fell on that other olive-branch, when it was “broken off”?

Therefore, if this be so, what are we as believers in Jesus? We belong in one sense to this cankered and corrupt olive-branch, for we are part of Christendom; we cannot separate ourselves in that sense from Christendom, any more than Jeremiah could separate himself from Israel his people. Was not Jeremiah an Israelite? Did he not stand in the midst of Israel as a witness? Did he not drink of the cup of suffering that Israel drank of? Was he not associated with its outward sorrows? So in that sense he did belong to that Jewish olive-branch. But in another sense was he not really distinct as the servant of God, and recognized as so by God? Because he formed part of that outward system, did God confound him with the evil of that system? Did not God value Jeremiah the more, because he was not connected with the evil of it, but walked with Him when all the rest departed? So with ourselves, we cannot say we are not part of Christendom, for we are; but if Truth separate us; if it guide us; if we are indeed servants of Truth, there is a sense in which we stand distinct in God’s sight, having a separate calling in the midst of it, and may be represented by little twigs or little berries on that cankered branch. Have you never seen that in nature; a branch cankered and about to fall, yet here and there a little twig in which sap is? That is the figure: the branch as a whole cankered, but here and there a twig with life in it on which berries are growing, it may be but two or three. That is not a figure that gratifies Gentile pride; but it is the picture which the hand of God here draws.

But, “has Israel stumbled that they should fall” (i.e. irrevocably)? God forbid (Romans 11:11)! There is a time when, as a nation, they will be brought back to God in blessing; but more than that, “by means of their fall, salvation comes to Gentiles,” i.e. the time of their fall became the occasion for God to manifest His grace towards the Gentiles! How remarkable is this statement of the Apostle, that even the fall of Israel should be used thus! God has been pleased, you see, to appoint that blessing should so much revolve around that people Israel, that He even makes their very fall an occasion of blessing to others! Think of that statement. It most marvelously shows how God has connected blessing with Israel.

Well, by means of their fall—as an occasion—salvation is come to Gentiles: but observe, not to all Gentiles. Unless you note the manner in which the Apostle writes, you might say that the verse means salvation comes to every Gentile in the world—that all are absolutely saved! He does not mean that. He means that salvation began to be preached to the Gentiles, and that salvation came to all Gentiles who believed. So you see, spiritual understanding is intended to be used in reading the Scriptures, and no one is supposed to be so foolish as to say that Salvation comes to all, whether they believe or not. I dwell on this, because in many parts of Scripture it is of deep importance to remember the manner in which it is written; e.g. “The reconciling of the world.” It has been a favorite doctrine to say from this, that all are absolutely saved: but the same principle applies there. It means that until then, Gentiles were regarded as outcast.” Mercy was not sent to them at all; but now it is sent; and if that be not rejected, it brings to a state of reconciliation. The two expressions “reconciling of the world” and “salvation of the Gentiles” are identical expressions. It came then on the Gentiles, and one reason was, that God had thoughts of mercy toward Israel still; viz. “to provoke them to jealousy,” (Romans 11:11). He wished to bring other means to bear on their obdurate hearts; to try whether, when they saw the power of God by His Spirit going away from them, and producing effects in the Gentiles which they could not but observe, whether that would not produce an effect on their hearts to provoke them to jealousy. No doubt it did on some souls; but for the most part, Israel rejected that too; and now alas! Israel has not that test, but the reverse; for have you not heard Israel speak of the iniquity seen among professing Christians; using that as an argument why Christianity cannot be from God?

But, see Romans 11:12, that if God availed Himself as it were, of the occasion when Israel was “diminished;” when blessing was drained away from them judicially; when they were deprived of it; if He made that an occasion of bringing “riches” to us Gentiles who believe, what will God do when the tide of blessing shall flow back to Israel in all fulness; when they shall be, not emptied of blessing, but filled with blessing? What will be the character of that hour to the world? It will begin the period of the world’s complete blessing, when there shall be universality of peace and truth; when outwardly and inwardly alike, the whole earth shall be “filled with fruit!” That will be the result.

But, be very careful to guard against this false inference, that therefore the period of Israel’s blessing will not be a period of judgment to” Christendom.” “Christendom” as Christendom will have no part in that blessing; on the contrary, it will be a time when that which we call Christendom will be destroyed; will cease to be! What will God do? He will send forth His angels; He will take to Himself everyone who has truly believed in Jesus; and what will become of the rest of Christendom? They are the “tares;” the “bad fish” in the net; the “foolish virgins;” the “goats in the flock.” They will be destroyed with everlasting destruction from the “presence of the Lord”! So Christendom, you see, will cease to be! That is the “breaking off” of the Gentile olive-branch, because it has not continued in God’s goodness. How needful that we should be most careful of the inferences we draw from Scripture! I believe that this verse, respecting the blessing to come on the world when Israel is restored, has been the means of blinding millions to the doom of Christendom.

You may perhaps ask, “who will be saved in that day?” Christendom you know, is but a small part of the world. The heathen nations are far more numerous; they “who have not heard His Name, neither seen His glory;” whose hearts have never received any intelligible acquaintance with the Gospel. The greater part of them will be spared; and in Christendom, those of tender age who

have never had the Gospel presented to them will, no doubt, be spared in that day. So it is those who have had the Gospel presented to them; who have had the opportunity of hearing it and yet have not learnt it, who will be the "tares," etc., in that day!

Yet, though there is thus a solemn thought connected with it, it is not to take our minds away from the thought of blessing that is to come on Israel, for, as a nation they will be converted; and blessing, through them, will come to all the nations of the earth! (Psalms 67:1-2, Psalms 67:7).

Romans 11:15 is a remarkable expression, and is to be taken as extensively as it can. Some have confined it to that which is no doubt, one of its greatest accomplishments; viz., the absolute revival to life of all those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. That is to take place in that hour. It is the hour of "the first resurrection," when Jesus will descend in glory; but that descent in glory will be the means of the removal of blindness from the "remnant of Israel" that is to be spared; just as His voice from glory was the means of causing Saul to confess His Name. So will it be with Israel in that Day. "They will look on Him whom they have pierced" and it will be His manifestation in the brightness of glory that will at length break down their unbelief. They deserve it not; but "grace" has said a "remnant" shall be spared.

But, that same "coming of the Lord," what will it be to all who have believed on Him, whether they have fallen into the grave or are alive on the earth? In either case, "mortality will be swallowed up of life!" The moment they glimpse the Lord in His glory, they are changed into His likeness! The moment the trumpet sounds, the dead hear His voice and rise incorruptible; and the living are changed. All Scripture testifies to this fact, that the hour when Israel will be converted and the Lord will appear in His glory, will be the hour of quickening those that are in the grave, and changing those that are alive at His coming. This is the emphatic tense in which it will be "life from the dead." But there are also other ways in which this is to be fulfilled; for do we not read of the vision of "dry bones," (Ezekiel 37:1-28)? The prophets saw them all come together; all clothed with flesh till they became living. And what does that apply to? To the national revival of Israel. The prophet himself explains the vision, and applies it to the time, when Israel; quickened in soul and nationally renovated, shall be brought back instinct with spiritual life, to be no more a nation "cut off," but, having all circumstances of blessing around them will be a living witness to God in the midst of the nations. So it is the political and social renovation of "Israel as a whole." There also, will be "life from the dead." And again; When is the desert to blossom as the rose? Is not death, as it were, in the desert? When the earth stood in its Paradisiacal beauty, was there barrenness; a wilderness; a land of drought? That was not the character of the earth in its beauty. Was it then the character of created life in this earth as seen in animals preying cruelly on each other, so that death is marked upon the way they pursue one another to death? Was Death marked on Creation in Paradise? No. Sin caused that: and the judgment which God pronounced on the earth and all in it was because of Adam's sin. So that is to be removed, and we shall see "the desert blossom as the rose"! Do you know any parts of the earth more desert than the northern parts of Arabia, through which Israel passed? Well, they are to be included in Emmanuel's land—the joy of the whole earth—one of the great manifestations in the earth of what blessing, when it descends on the earth in the worthiness of Emmanuel, will effect. What a change will this be! How will the land of Death be turned into Life! That is another intelligible sense in which it will be "life from the dead."

And, when we remember that it will be the hour when “tears will be wiped away;” when death will be repressed—though there will be the consciousness of life working against death—is not that another ground of saying “life from the dead”?

So, to put it in one simple expression “Hitherto we have had proofs of the application of the power of Death to things around, because of what Adam did: on the other hand, we shall recognize the application of the power of Life to things around because of the worthiness of the second Adam.” Do we not see the power of Death acting in everything here? God has intended to mark everything with Death, in order that the contrast might be felt and known, when even creation here beneath shall bear traces of Life according to the worthiness of the Lord from Heaven, working on all below, till at last, Death shall be abolished and everything made new, and it will be nothing but “Life.” Thus, what is done the moment Israel is restored is intended to be the pledge on God’s part of what He will finally do, when all corruption will be abolished, and when everything in the new earth will be instinct with Life. There will be no repression of corruption then, because everything will be in the fulness of Life. These thoughts, then, are connected with the expression “Life from the dead.” This is put before us as a blessed object of hope, to be chastened, however, by the thought that there is a “breaking off” of the branch to which we outwardly belong; but it is not a depressing thought, when we remember the honor that is granted to these who, in a day of abounding evil, yet walk in the truth of their God.

09 - Reflections for the Season

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 9 Reflections for the Season Some Lessons from Exodus 32:1-35 to Exodus 33:1-11

We can hardly fail to remember this passage on such occasions as these—days which are supposed to be days of holy thanksgiving before the Lord; ostensibly hallowed by the Name of Christ and speaking of joy in connection with His redemption and visitation to this earth—yet when we examine the character of the joy which prevails throughout Christendom—the professed people of the Lord—we shall not find it a more true joy than that of Israel here.

They were gathered around the calf, saying "It is a feast to Jehovah;" but really hawing down to the work of their own hands It is said "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play;" and we have the solemn command of the Apostle to remember these things, for they are "our ensamples, on whom the ends of the ages are come;" so that when we hear the sounds of revelry, we may remember it is the revelry of the world and not of God.

It is most emphatically true now, that because of disobedience, the great multitude professedly separated to God and Christ will fall in the wilderness and will never enter into the rest. Consequently we should be deceiving ourselves if we did not consider the character of an hour like this.

It was when Moses was absent from the people that this sin was committed (Exodus 32:1). Moses represents that gracious power of God which leads His people forward from day to day from Egypt, through the wilderness, to their rest. Moses was the Captain of the Lord's people to lead them; telling them there would be enemies to conflict with and a daily onward course in their appointed journey to pursue. Everything that would stimulate the people of God, everything "King-like" was thus connected with Moses. Well, he was for a season absent and the people were left to wait for him; not to forget him. Yet, they forgot Moses and all that was connected with his character and his special relation to them! But they found Aaron. Aaron was the person appointed whilst they were going forward and finding trials and failures etc., to bring mercy and reconciliation from God to them. God had not left them unprovided with mercy. He had given them one who could have compassion on the ignorant and who could make intercession for them. All grace and mercy were spread over the relation of the priest. All kindness and grace connected with the thought of Christ in Redemption were connected with the character of Aaron; and when this thought is combined with the thought of onward progress and holy energy which would not use grace for its own purposes of evil, saying "God is merciful, therefore I may use grace carelessly;" but rather, "God is merciful, therefore let me cleave to Him," then it gives strength to the soul. But, when Aaron is as it were separated from Moses; when the "grace" of the Gospel is separated from what God teaches as to the "holiness" of Him Who is leading us; when the "mercy" of God is looked to singly and separately, then, it is a perversion of His mercy. Here, the result was that Aaron was the framer of the golden calf (Exodus 32:4)! It was perverted mercy (Exodus 32:2-3). The earrings were the "spoil" of the Egyptians; things which had a natural excellence and value in

them; and when we have grace to use such things for God—to keep them in their right place as memorials of His goodness—then, it is well. But it requires special grace to do so. Nothing requires so much grace as to use natural things for God. When Moses was “guiding” the people of God we do not find they were ensnared by these things of Egypt; but, when God’s “mercy” (in Aaron) was the only thought, they took these things which were Egyptian in character, and used them apart from the onward strength and energy represented by Moses. Then they sinned; the calf was framed; and Aaron was the framer of it!

It was deliberately formed. It did not merely “come out” of the fire as Aaron afterwards said to excuse himself, (Exodus 32:24). This was not true. He deliberately formed it with his own graving tool, (Exodus 32:4)! So, when the heart chooses to consider the mercy and the peace and the grace of God only, and soaks to connect that mercy with natural things, saying “God is merciful, now let me enjoy natural things; let me grave them according to my own thoughts of God’s mercy,” what will be the result? Altogether a false image of God! When the soul meditates in this way; viz., how it shall use natural things for its own purposes and natural joy, it has then a certain image of the character of God before it. It makes for itself an ideal image of God, and attributes to Him certain characteristics which really He has not; so that God is not seen as really revealed in His Word. The soul assigns to Him a fictitious character, supposing Him to sanctify things which He has not sanctified; to show mercy to things to which He will not show mercy; and the soul very soon becomes as distant from the true character of God as Israel were distant from the real glory of God when they bowed before the calf. And is it not so now? What is the estimate of the character of God formed by the world around? Are they not saying that God delights in things which He abhors? Do they not speak of all the unsanctified and unregenerate energy of nature as if He delighted in it? Wars, bloodshed, wicked luxury are seen, very contrary to Jesus of Nazareth, and which found no place around Him when He was laid as a Babe in the manger and angels said “Peace on earth, the peace of ‘well pleasedness’ among men.” Goodness was expressed, but what were the circumstances? Were the greatness and the glory of the world there? Was anything illustrious there? No; He came “separate” from all that was great whether in Egypt or Jerusalem; in the world or in the Church; secular greatness or ecclesiastical greatness; not one thing the world would admire was there but, the Babe in a Manger! And why? Because the whole condition of human things was “out of course;” all contrary to God!

Suppose we thought that that “grace” connected with Him as the Babe were intended to sanctify natural things; to make Egypt no Egypt; and Jerusalem no wicked Jerusalem; but that God delighted in all as it then was, and spoke “peace to the earth” in its then natural condition! Would that be true?

How did Jesus walk through the world? He was “separate” up to the moment when He died on Calvary. And is He now less “separate” in Heaven? No; and there is a secret power drawing individuals out of the corruption around to know Him; and nothing can touch their blessing. All radiance of glory and excellency and joy surely belongs to them. No words are too high to describe it; but it is in contrast with everything in the world around with all its excellency and strength. That which now pretends to rejoice in the name of Christ is all in contrast with the real ground of joy which is hidden in heaven where Christ is. This was the early apostasy of Israel. They connected with that against which God was, His own Name (Exodus 32:5)! They pretended they were holding a “feast to Jehovah” at the moment they were canonizing the work of their own hands! But God

saw and understood this. His wrath was against it; and the intense expression of His anger we must not lessen.

Consider the feeling which is at present in the heart of God against all that is professedly in the wilderness for His sake, yet, which has “sat down to eat and to drink,” (1 Corinthians 10:7). Do not forget what the relation of the Name of God is to all that which attempts to misrepresent the character of His “holiness.” Nothing is more fearful than this. Was the molten calf really like Jehovah and His glory? Yet man’s thought of God now is really distant from what God and Christ really are! But the voice of “intercession” was heard in Moses. When the evil was deepest and the wrath of God according to “holiness” was pouring on it, at that moment we find an intimation of that which is the only reason why mercy and grace can continue towards such a world as this. There is a voice of “intercession;” found typically in Moses then, but in Jesus now; and thus a light is thrown on the intensity of the darkness because of Christ.

God says, (Exodus 32:7) “Thy people have corrupted themselves;” but when Moses speaks, he says “Thy people,” (Exodus 32:11). There is the apprehension of “faith;” that there was in this people a relation to God.

God not infrequently by His words tries the faith of His servants, to see if they have wisdom enough to apprehend what His real relations of blessing are, (Matthew 15:24). If Moses had not had sufficient faith for this; if he had said “They are my people,” do you suppose he would then have felt any encouragement to intercede? Would not the words of intercession have died upon his lips? But he was not accustomed to think of Israel as connected with himself, but with the living God, and there was his comfort; and on that ground he made “intercession.”

Moses reminds God of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (Exodus 32:13). In that covenant of promise was certainty. It was not dependent on condition. God said “I will bless thee;” and Sinai itself could not abrogate that covenant.

. . . Moses interceded not in vain; and since then how many have been God’s mercies to Israel! Instructions have been given from which we ourselves are profiting. If God had not continued to work among them, where would our blessing be? If Jesus had not come, if the Apostles had not taught, how should we have been brought in? But, God went on in a work of mercy towards His people for which we shall thank Him for ever.

Exodus 32:17-18. Nothing is more blessed than when the people of God can say “they are overcoming their foes.” And are there no occasions when they can say that; when they have conquered themselves or something that should be conquered for the Lord’s sake; when they have fought the good fight and the voice of triumph resounds? This is joy to the ear of the Lord. Or, if they “cry” because of being overcome. If Moses had heard the cry of distress to the Lord because their enemies were pressing hard on them, even that would have been a joy and pleasure to his ear. Moses heard neither of these, but, the voice of singing. He heard the sound of evil revelry in the wilderness, in the camp of those who were separated from Egypt that they might not have Egyptian revelry, but might stand as those who were advancing from Egypt to their rest! And when Moses saw this idolatry—the moment his eye was fixed upon it—he dropped the tables, (Exodus 32:19)!

Whilst he was above—thinking of God—he was able to intercede; but, when he saw the real circumstances below, his self-possession failed. This teaches us where, on such occasions, to look for strength. When we look at the circumstances alone, they are so depressing that they must upset us, and we shall not retain the calmness of soul which is necessary if we seek to act for God. To look at the power of God which is above circumstances is the only thing to give calmness. The falling of the Tables was no doubt a significant type. What would the Tables of the Law do, if they were made the means of bringing into blessing? Could we stand on the ground of fulfilling that Covenant entirely? Well indeed that the Tables should be shattered to atoms, for they are not our “hope.” Our “Hope” is in One Who was able to bear the “curse” of those broken Tables. Sin broke them, and the “curse” must be borne. Christ bore it and, in the title of Him as having borne it, we can say “rest is secured to us apart from our obedience to those Tables which our sin shattered.” When we realize this Truth we can look calmly and though we see that most holy thing shattered by our sin, we can give God thanks. When this is humbly done, not in proud carelessness of spirit, then the soul is in the true atmosphere of blessing. When Moses came into the camp we find thoughts of holiness applied to all that was there. The Levites were commanded to slay, (Exodus 32:26-27), and destruction and bloodshed were seen in the camp! At the present moment God is not exercising these judgments; they are reserved; and we look to the future hour when, the true Moses—the Lord Jesus Christ—will return for the application of those principles of judgment to everything which stands in a position to meet the stroke! This will be the first thing done. Destructive judgment will be exercised against all that is professedly of Christ, but which is found in this position of revelry! And is not the whole of Christendom slumbering on, so that similar judgment must meet the whole of this camp? And then it will be final, forever! The separated Tabernacle will be placed “without the camp;” and all who believe in Jesus will meet Him in the air. Then will be seen the true separation which belongs to the real people of God.

Why is this told us before? That it may warn us; that it may teach us what our place is to be. It is not outward indeed; but, is our separation to be less than that separation which will be manifested when we join the Lord in the air? That is the measure of our separation now. All who are “on the Lord’s side” answer to the tribe of Levi; and what is the character of their separation? They belong to Christ risen. They are not really of, though in the Apostate camp. Are those who believe in Jesus of this revelry and this idolatrous spirit which pervade Christendom from end to end? God forbid! Then, to what do they belong? To Him Who was once in the manger, but is now in His own glory! God is pleased to give them union with Him to call them with a glory which is of God; and therefore, when they meet Him changed and glorified, it will be only the manifestation of that blessing which God has already given, (1 John 3:2). He was able to take Paul into the third heaven, though his heart was proud and he needed a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Yet, “grace” had given him union with Christ! Thus, though we see it not with the outward eye, the Tabernacle is pitched “without the camp;” and that is the place where the people of God know and meet with Him. Does God dwell in the midst of the corruption around there to teach His people? In the reveling throng will you find these truths and comforts of God? No! You must quit their revelry: and, in proportion as you retire you will find the place where God dwells; where He instructs, comforts, teaches His people.

Moses went into the camp to “gather out” of the camp to a place of separation (Exodus 33:7). And is it not so now? Is no message of mercy to be given? There is the blessedness of judgment not

being exercised immediately. If it were, no one could be saved: but, seeing it is postponed, there as opportunity for the exercise of mercy and of reconciliation. The character of Levi is here marked, for with Levi is always connected the character of "service." The Levites were concerned with the sanctuary of God. They it was who carried the vessels, curtains, and boards of the Tabernacle and, where is happiness in such an hour as this, but to say whilst revelry is around, "I will seek to serve God; and, though feebly indeed, to commend certain principles to others; certain habits of thought opposed to those around." Any heart that feels the doctrines of Christ to be precious; the vessels of the sanctuary to be precious and seeks to preserve them—to draw the contrast between the mercy of God as seen in the mercy seat with the Altar before it, and, bowing down before an image—such a heart would be like the Levites.

There are two classes in Christendom. Some who really draw nigh to the Mercy Seat; who stand at the Altar; who think of Christ and acceptance in Him; who worship God through Him: and, that other class—the reveling throng—who bow down to the idol! Where the former character of thought is seen, there God's blessing truly rests; and when the Lord returns, everyone, who according to the truths of Redemption has sought to adhere to Him, will be gathered to Him, while all around in the earth will be the subjects of His destroying wrath.

Exodus 33:11. "Joshua departed not out of the Tabernacle." A type of Christ as "leading into" the inheritance. Everything connected with Christ as now risen and entered into the heavenly inheritance for us; everything connected with Him as really and truly placing us there is connected with Joshua; and, in proportion as we see the corruption that prevails and retire from it, we shall find our hearts instructed in those truths connected with Christ as the true Joshua.

He rose, not for Himself but for His people. He is raised high above all principalities and powers but this place He has taken as the Head of His people. Though He was pleased to humble Himself for us to the manger and even to the Cross, yet He is also exalted for us, to take us into a glory which "eye bath not seen." "Our life is hid with Christ in God," and He will put forth His exceeding power to take us into His heavenly mansions. Earth and Heaven are the inheritance of His people for "he that overcometh shall inherit all things."

But, where were those truths connected with Joshua found? "Without the camp;" and those who wished to learn them must go "without the camp" to find God's own presence and glory; those things which were to make Israel glad (Exodus 33:9-10).

We find it in measure now. There are two things. First: that they all left Egypt. All were separated by the cloud and by the sea. Yet even they, thus separated, so went astray that a second separation was needed. So now: those professedly sanctified in God's Name are different from the dark Pagan world. It is needful not only to separate from the darkness of entire ignorance of God, but also from that which, having had guidance from God has misused it and gone astray; "astray" till Christ comes! Then there will no longer be these sorrowful words. God will set His people in a place where they will not fail. "Thy people shall all be righteous, the branch of My planting."

Israel in the past dispensation have failed: the professing people of God in this dispensation have failed: both have gathered round a false estimate of the character of God—have cast the character of God in their own mould and graven it according to their own devices—and that they worship! And this will not be interfered with till Christ comes like Moses from the Mount!

Three things we have to watch. First; that our thoughts of what the Apostasy of Christendom is should not fail. Secondly; that we should seek to be in a separate place, especially as to the estimates and judgments of our souls individually before God; and more and more as to the position we assume. Thirdly; that we should not assume a pitiless position: but remember, that we are to be "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." He will not break the "bruised reed" i.e., wherever Christ sees anything broken and bruised; not having the stubbornness of the "oak of Bashan" He will not break it; "nor quench the smoking flax." His heart yearns over it and cherishes it!

Connect the stern apprehensions of God's holiness with this present ministration of the lowly, humble grace of the Lord Jesus; not to neutralize one by the other, but to combine them. This will enable us to act for God; not as casting a veil over evil, but as remembering "the Blood of the Lamb." Thus, we wait for the coming hour when all sorrow will end; and, connected with that Tabernacle will be only thoughts of thanksgiving and praise.

14 - Salvation: What the Instrumentality? What the Link?

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 14 Salvation: What the Instrumentality?

What the Link? 1 Corinthians 1:17-21 The special subject of this passage is "the instrumental means" by which persons who believe are brought into connection with all the blessing that is in Christ. It may seem a simple question to those who have believed; to those who understand what the Gospel is; yet there is scarcely an hour in the Church's history, when one of the great efforts of Satan has not been in some way to obscure the special link by which the soul becomes connected with the salvation that is in Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:17, will of itself suggest one of the great condemning sins of Christendom, for it has, as it were, reversed these Words! It has virtually said that Christ has sent His ministers to baptize, not to preach the Gospel! What question can there be of deeper moment than whether, in sending persons as St. Paul was sent, to turn men from darkness to light, the instrumentality that God appointed to be used were the simple announcement of the Gospel, or, something else?

Now, Christendom has said it was something else; viz., ritual ordinances; and those ordinances wrongly applied, and often by unconverted hands! And if the heart be free from that error, is it ready to break every link that binds to it? Only think of the results of that error! How many are caused to believe that they are connected with Christ according to God's appointment when they are not at all; and they live imagining they are Christians and they die imagining they are Christians, when really they have no connection with His salvation and have never been viewed by God in Christ, but seen in separation from Him! When we meditate on the enormity of this sin, and the consequences of placing ritual ordinances where God has placed the simple testimony of His Word, we see the artfulness of this present hour, and how easily persons may connect themselves with this sin and its consequences.

Few texts are more important than 1 Corinthians 1:17. Of course, St. Paul did baptize. He did not mean to depreciate the importance of baptism in the proper place; but, as one sent on the mission to save others' souls, he was "not sent to baptize but to preach the gospel."

Now, though there may be many who are delivered entirely from this error, yet not infrequently, many who do understand that there is no salvation except through faith in Christ have a very dim apprehension of what preaching the Gospel is. Perhaps you have known Christians who speak much of Christ being the alone salvation; of the uselessness of anything but faith in Him; and yet you find them doubtful and hesitating as to their own state and why? Because they have questioned as to their title to look to Christ: they have said "Am I one of the privileged elect number who have a title to say they have an interest in this salvation?" and then, in order to decide that, they have looked in themselves to find there certain evidences of their own election and if so, they have grounded a title to look to Christ upon them! That is the state of many hearts that clearly see salvation to be only in Christ! But suppose the evidences in their heart become dim: suppose circumstances obscure them, and they are not able to find there sufficient evidence to satisfy their

own conscience, what then? They think they have no title to look to Christ; they think Christ is not intended for them and they begin to despair; and not a few have gone on despairing even to the day of their death! Now what is the error in their case? They do not understand what the message of the Gospel is! They understand that salvation is "in Christ"; they know that salvation is reached only through "faith in Christ," but they do not see another thing, viz., that God comes forth bearing and sending a message to them! It is the relation of God in the ministry of reconciliation that they do not apprehend. They do not see that God is employed in sending a message about Christ, not to the elect as elect, but to sinners as sinners! It is that particular aspect of God that their souls do not apprehend.

Suppose, e.g., the Brazen Serpent had been set in the midst of Israel but that Moses had not been sent to bid Israel because they were bitten to look unto it: suppose there had been no such ministration and Moses had not addressed each individually, would they not all have died? And suppose they had looked for evidence of healing first, to see if they had a title to look at the Brazen Serpent, they would never have looked at all! They found their "title" in the message that was sent to them; a message sent to them, not as healed persons, but as bitten persons, because of the fact of the poison being in their veins.

Now, is not that the ground on which a lost child of Adam receives a message from God bidding him look to Christ; authorizing him to look; commanding him to look; you may use what words you please; but it is a command sent from God, not to fallen angels, but to the lost children of Adam. As such, to look to this salvation that God has been pleased to set in Christ. Therefore, we have to seek in ourselves a proof of being that, (and I suppose we shall not have to seek long); then we are the persons bidden to look. Now, unless the soul sees this, it will never have before it the full ground of assurance and hope, and there will be great opportunity for Satan to harass the soul; to take it away from the simplicity of its confidence in Christ.

And, again, there are many who restrict all the disposition of God's heart to seeking and saving only "the elect." Now, this is most untrue, and I consider it a very sad and fearful condition of heart: and though I would not deny that a person who feels so may, through God's mercy, be numbered among the saved; yet there is great lack of apprehension of the love and grace of God, and sometimes causes agony on the deathbed. So there is nothing I should more shrink from than this denial of the Gospel being preached to sinners as such. And if it be not baptism by which the soul is brought to God and by which it is regenerated, what is it? Some, who have taught that it is baptism, object to what they call the evangelical ministry of those who, they say, "speak and preach, and write as if there were no 'means' which the Church of God would employ so as to effect the regeneration of souls." Those who bring this charge say, "we have an instrumentality that we can use towards souls, viz., 'baptism'; but you have no instrumentality at all! You go forth into the world and tell persons they must be regenerate, but you do not help them to it; you do not tell them of the means by which that change can be effected, so that, when you speak of regeneration and the necessity of it, it is like mocking them. You tell them there is a gulf to be passed, but you do not help them over it!"

Now I fear, in many respects, that is a just charge against evangelical Christians. They have not been careful to consider that God has placed in their hands a certain instrumentality by which regeneration is to be affected; which the Holy Ghost does use, so as by means of it to effect

regeneration. Now what is that instrumentality that He has placed in the hands of the Church, in the hands, too, of every individual Christian— what is it? Christ As The Brazen Serpent! It is by presenting that through our words to the soul, that we put before it the instrument of regeneration. It is by means of that, that regeneration is effected for when the soul through the Spirit is opened to look at the object thus presented—and our lips ought to be the means of presenting it—it is instantly regenerate; as it looks; the moment it looks; and by means of its looking! God does not act by His Spirit apart from any object, but there is a “means,” and that “means” is “Christ as the Brazen Serpent,” Not Baptism. So, in reply to that charge, I say “Yea, we have an instrument; not Baptism indeed, but ‘the Word which we preach.’” God has put that Word on our lips, and that Word directs to Jesus on the cross: we speak of Him in death to sinners, and present Him as the Object of faith; and when the soul looks in feeble faith it is “quickened.”

It is of great importance to remember this, and not say in dealing with souls, that we have to wait God’s time. We are not to “wait,” but to present the Brazen Serpent, and then leave the result to God. Of course it may be rejected; it may be spurned; it may be turned from; we know that will happen but we know that when anyone does look, then new life is received. The power of the spirit of God uses this testimony, which testimony directs the heart to an external object—for Faith is always objective; it looks away to something external to itself—and when that is effected, then the quickening power of the Spirit of God has brought that soul to Christ and into all the blessed endowment of the riches of Christ: brought it into it the moment it believes, and through the Word of the Gospel. So what a mercy is this “foolishness of preaching!” It may seem simple, yet it is often forgotten by believers; but, I say “what a mercy is this foolishness of preaching!” God operates by it. God gathers His people through it. Silently, day by day. He causes some souls to look to Christ. It may be feebly, but the moment they “look” He puts on them all the perfectness of Christ! That is the “link.” Persons often see the perfectness of Christ and their own sinfulness, but do not see clearly what the “link” is that connects them with it all; and if so their comfort must be marred. I may be in a tempest-tossed bark, and conscious that the anchor is firm; but if I mistrust the links of the chain that connect me with it, all my knowledge of the security of the anchor would not give me confidence. How important, therefore, that our souls should see now it is that God brings us into connection with Christ; viz., that God proposes Him and the soul casts itself upon Him. That is “faith” and that “faith” connects with Christ. That is the “link” and that “link” holds for ever.

Now, the Apostle says, “The preaching of Christ crucified is unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” Two classes; Jews and Greeks.

“Greek” as I have often said, is the great denominative name of Gentilism—embodying all the wickedness of Gentilism:—but, at the same time embodying everything that is intellectual and otherwise great in Gentilism—the “Greek” always standing at the head of the class of Gentilism. So it was in past days; so it will be in the hour when Antichrist arises; therefore, always remember a certain fearfulness is connected with the name of “Greek.” The Greeks, the Apostle says, “seek after wisdom.” They are not satisfied with anything but what is according to the wisdom of this world: and with that in preaching, we have nothing to do. The Jews on the other hand, are not content except with some great outward sign; therefore, they will welcome Antichrist when he brings that great one of “fire out of heaven!” (Revelation 13:13).

Now, says the Apostle, "We seek in our ministry to meet neither of these conditions of heart. If persons seek that which is intellectually great and which satisfies their desires after wisdom, they will not find it in the ministration of the Cross: and, on the other hand, if they are seeking great and marvelous effects in outward signs and wonders, "they will not see that either!" A person comes into a room; hears the Gospel spoken; believes; and goes out translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son—made glorious and excellent and perfect in God's sight—all the inheritance of glory being given to him! But all this is unseen: it is a hidden thing, as the lamp in the pitcher of Gideon. It lay hidden till, at the midnight hour the earthen pitcher was broken, and then it was seen; but, as far as outward appearance went, it was nothing more than an earthen vessel!

So, when a person believes there is no outward sign. Angels see it; the eye of faith is able to recognize the change; but I am speaking of that which is addressed to the outward eye—that which men recognize—and they see nothing but a person burdened with sin and most unworthy; worthy of being despised: and though the moral symptoms are changed, men do not care for that; as far as the outward appearance goes he remains as before, and they say, "It is a strange thing you ask me to believe that that person is changed; translated into the Kingdom of God's Son;" and they look for a sign. But, says the Apostle, God will not depart from the nature of His instrumentality to please either the Jew or the Greek; it must be, as it is called here, "the foolishness of God;" meaning really the "foolish thing of God" speaking of the instrumentality used, (1 Corinthians 1:21). In human estimate it is a most weak and foolish instrument: it has all the characteristics of weakness in it; for it is simply a "message," and the more simply a message be delivered the better.

If you were sent by a Sovereign to catty a message someone, you would wish to convey it in as simple and intelligible a form as you could, and not wrap it up in words lest you should obscure it. Your effort would be to simplify it as much as possible, so that it might come as a "message." It is nothing to be reasoned about; all that is requisite to know is, whether this message is really from the person from whom it purports to come; and the moment that is certified, it has only to be delivered as simply as you can. Here then is no opportunity for "wisdom of words." It has simply the form of a message. You cannot suppose that Moses' began to "reason" when he told Israel to look at the Brazen Serpent. There could be nothing more simple than the message he had to bear, and he took care to bear it simply. It is a great thing to remember this. We do "speak wisdom," says the Apostle, "among them that are perfect," i.e., matured in faith: and then, not the wisdom of words, but certain things that do deserve to be deemed "wisdom" among them. But here it is the simple testimony to what the great Sacrifice is to all those who believe, and this testimony conveyed by feeble lips; so that to those who hear, it seems only "words." Faith sees indeed in those words the "arm of the Lord," because when those words are used and the soul believes in Jesus, they are "the power of God unto salvation;" but still they are only words—a feeble instrumentality. . . .and therefore called the "foolishness of preaching" or "the weak thing of God!" These three expressions are used to it. "The weak thing of God;" "the foolish thing of God;" "the foolishness of preaching." That is the place which the Gospel is to occupy to the end.

Now the Apostle says it is not generally received; and by very few among the great and noble, (1 Corinthians 1:26-27), for God has been pleased to "choose the foolish things of the world." So that where worldly wisdom is, there so far, is a great barrier! It may be broken down, but still it is a barrier, a hindrance.

Again, what name is given to those who are brought to receive this message? “The called.” That is a thought to which the soul reverts after it has believed; and it is a word only to be meditated on by those who have believed. But surely, when any heart is able to say it has believed, it is no immaterial thing to consider whether it has believed in virtue of a special calling of God, or whether by the exercise of anything that attaches to itself. Few believers I suppose wish to reverse those words that the Lord Jesus spoke over the head of Peter. “Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” It is the act of the Father to reveal this salvation which is in Christ as the Brazen Serpent: for simple as it is, yet that “foolishness of preaching” is sure to be rejected unless God by a special act of grace open the heart. That person then is effectually “called,” and to such only is “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

God has placed in Christ all power to bring believers not only from their sins but into Glory. Is not power needed for that? Well, all that power is put in Christ, to work on and on till it brings believers into Glory! And is there no need of “wisdom” on the part of God to accomplish His purposes for those who are brought to Christ? It is said, (1 Corinthians 1:30-31) Christ is made to us “wisdom from God:” that is the right translation. It is not “Christ is made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:” but the statement is this that “Christ is made to us wisdom from God,” i.e., in contrast to what the Greeks were boasting in. The Apostle says we do not wish to be without wisdom; wisdom is needful; but we boast not in any wisdom that springs from men or from the world or from ourselves in any way. What we look to is, “wisdom from God” acting on our behalf. We wish the wisdom to be in Him and from Him, and to be applied on our behalf in and through Christ. “He is made unto us wisdom from God. And then he defines what this is: viz., “both righteousness and sanctification as well as redemption;” as much as to say, that if we were looking from above with all the intelligence of God on our condition as sinners, we should say “wisdom teaches us that we need these things. We need righteousness, sanctification and redemption and unless wisdom is put forth by someone in order to provide us with these, we are without blessing for ever.”

Now, the Apostle says, “God has made Christ to be these to us!” First, “righteousness.” If ever we are to enter into God’s presence for blessing He could not receive us except as righteous. Suppose He were simply to say, “I will forgive you; I will not take vengeance on your iniquities.” Suppose He had said to Adam, “I will not indeed follow thee with My wrath, but still, I cannot consider thee as righteous and cannot receive thee into My presence as righteous;” how then would any believer rejoice? He might be thankful that he would not be consumed with wrath, but he would feel far distant from the blessing that he has now received through Christ: for God not only forgives their corruption through Christ; not only looks on believers as forgiven ones, but as persons whom He esteems and regards as righteous! That is a very different thought, and consequently there is no aspect in which the Sacrifice of Christ can be placed, in which this thought of “imputation” or “reckoning of righteousness” is not involved. For, while one part of the sacrificial ceremony was, that the blow should be received which caused death—the stroke of vengeance was always connected with the sacrifice—yet, the other part was, that the sacrifice ascended as a “sweet smelling savor;” that “sweet smelling savor” being attributed to the person who came under the sacrifice; and these two thoughts could not be separated from the great Sacrifice that has been offered. Could John and Peter and Mary standing around the Cross help

seeing these two things? First, the Holy One smitten. That they saw most distinctly: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" when "it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him." They saw He was smitten, but could they for a moment divest their minds of the apprehension of Who the smitten Person was? Had they not always known Him as the Son of the Father, as well as His excellency in the Father's sight even though He was smitten?" So not only was the Sin-bearer seen on the Cross, but the Righteous One also, Whose excellency was offered to God; consequently, if the value of the Cross is attributed to believers, both these things come concurrently. They are inseparable, because the "Righteous One" and the "sinner's Substitute" are the same Person! An attack has been made in latter days on the doctrine of "imputed righteousness"—I see it increasing all around—but you cannot teach the right doctrine of the Cross without it, and therefore, I regard it as a subtle means of undermining the testimony to the Cross of Christ! I need not refer to more direct statements of Scripture, than e.g., the distinctive words which Israel when converted will use, "The Lord our righteousness:" and again "As by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be constituted righteous." These are statements as plain as words can make them: and the connection is so necessary, that when the Apostle quotes from Psalms 32:1-11, where David describes the blessedness of the man who believes; saying "Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom God imputeth not iniquity," he simply speaks of the non-imputation of sin; but how does The Apostle quote those words? He says in Romans 4:6, that they prove the imputation of righteousness, because that is involved. Seeing that God only forgives sins in and through Christ, it is impossible but that the non-imputation of sin should involve the imputation of righteousness. That is the reason the Apostle quotes it. In human arrangements these things might be severed; in Divine arrangements it is impossible, because they both come only through Christ. And then he adds "Sanctification;" which here is to be taken in its full final sense, as it will be estimated in Heaven when the saints are perfected in glory! What will they esteem to be their "sanctification" then? Their being separated not only from everything which they know as transgression and taint and defilement outwardly, but being separated also from their tainted natures; from themselves; from their own flesh; from everything that they are as the fallen children of Adam! That is the "sanctification" here mentioned. It involves indeed cleansing from sin; it involves all the blessedness of that truth mentioned in Hebrews 10:10, "sanctification through His blood:" but it includes something more; for "sanctification" in Heaven, I repeat, involves separation from our sinful selves; all that is connected with our nature; with us as "flesh and blood" which "cannot enter the Kingdom of God." So we are to be separated from all that is of self, and to be presented in the full likeness of the glory of Christ! That is the final sense of "sanctification." And then it is added "Redemption." Redemption means buying back from death; buying back from the dungeon of destruction. And the redeeming price that buys back is not merely a price paid as a ransom might be paid, but paid also as an atoning price, something that is compensatory to the outraged holiness of God; which maketh "appeasement" to justly awakened wrath.

Thus, while God says, "I am able to forgive thee," He is able to say "My justice is satisfied because of the redeeming price." He is able to say, "I receive you as righteous because of what Christ is! That being imputed to you, I am able to receive you and to cause you to be as those who are sanctified and separated from everything that is of the fallen nature, because I have given you union with Christ in glory!"

Now, these three things constitute the wise arrangement of God respecting His people. The moment our eyes are open to see what true wisdom would direct to as that which we need, these things are found in Christ, so that “he that glorieth may glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). We are not forbidden to glory; to boast ourselves. They are strong words—boasting, joy, exultation—we are not forbidden to have these things, but only let them be “in the Lord.” Nothing of nature can glory in His presence; but— “Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.”

16 - Salvation: What the Instrumentality? What the Link?

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 16 Salvation: What the Instrumentality?

What the Link? The special subject of this passage is "the instrumental means" by which persons who believe are brought into connection with all the blessing that is in Christ. It may seem a simple question to those who have believed; to those who understand what the Gospel is; yet there is scarcely an hour in the Church's history, when one of the great efforts of Satan has not been in some way to obscure the special link by which the soul becomes connected with the salvation that is in Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:17, will of itself suggest one of the great condemning sins of Christendom, for it has, as it were, reversed these Words! It has virtually said that Christ has sent His ministers to baptize, not to preach the Gospel! What question can there be of deeper moment than whether, in sending persons as St. Paul was sent, to turn men from darkness to light, the instrumentality that God appointed to be used were the simple announcement of the Gospel, or, something else?

Now, Christendom has said it was something else; viz., ritual ordinances; and those ordinances wrongly applied, and often by unconverted hands! And if the heart be free from that error, is it ready to break every link that binds to it? Only think of the results of that error! How many are caused to believe that they are connected with Christ according to God's appointment when they are not at all; and they live imagining they are Christians and they die imagining they are Christians, when really they have no connection with His salvation and have never been viewed by God in Christ, but seen in separation from Him! When we meditate on the enormity of this sin, and the consequences of placing ritual ordinances where God has placed the simple testimony of His Word, we see the artfulness of this present hour, and how easily persons may connect themselves with this sin and its consequences

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own conscience, what then? They think they have no title to look to Christ; they think Christ is not intended for them and they begin to despair; and not a few have gone on despairing even to the day of their death! Now what is the error in their case? They do not understand what the message of the Gospel is! They understand that salvation is "in Christ"; they know that salvation is reached only through "faith in Christ," but they do not see another thing, viz., that God comes forth bearing and sending a message to them! It is the relation of God in the ministry of reconciliation that they do not apprehend. They do not see that God is employed in sending a message about Christ, not to the elect as elect, but to sinners as sinners! It is that particular aspect of God that their souls do not apprehend.

Suppose, e.g., the Brazen Serpent had been set in the midst of Israel but that Moses had not been sent to bid Israel because they were bitten to look unto it: suppose there had been no such ministration and Moses had not addressed each individually, would they not all have died? And suppose they had looked for evidence of healing first, to see if they had a title to look at the Brazen Serpent, they would never have looked at all! They found their "title" in the message that was sent to them; a message sent to them, not as healed persons, but as bitten persons, because of the fact of the poison being in their veins.

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Now, says the Apostle, "We seek in our ministry to meet neither of these conditions of heart. If persons seek that which is intellectually great and which satisfies their desires after wisdom, they will not find it in the ministration of the Cross: and, on the other hand, if they are seeking great and marvelous effects in outward signs and wonders, "they will not see that either!" A person comes into a room; hears the Gospel spoken; believes; and goes out translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son—made glorious and excellent and perfect in God's sight—all the inheritance of glory being given to him! But all this is unseen: it is a hidden thing, as the lamp in the pitcher of Gideon. It lay hidden till, at the midnight hour the earthen pitcher was broken, and then it was seen; but, as far as outward appearance went, it was nothing more than an earthen vessel!

So, when a person believes there is no outward sign. Angels see it; the eye of faith is able to recognize the change; but I am speaking of that which is addressed to the outward eye—that which men recognize—and they see nothing but a person burdened with sin and most unworthy; worthy of being despised: and though the moral symptoms are changed, men do not care for that; as far as the outward appearance goes he remains as before, and they say, "It is a strange thing you ask me to believe that that person is changed; translated into the Kingdom of God's Son;" and they look for a sign. But, says the Apostle, God will not depart from the nature of His instrumentality to please either the Jew or the Greek; it must be, as it is called here, "the foolishness of God;" meaning really the "foolish thing of God" speaking of the instrumentality used, (1 Corinthians 1:21). In human estimate it is a most weak and foolish instrument: it has all the characteristics of weakness in it; for it is simply a "message," and the more simply a message be delivered the better.

If you were sent by a Sovereign to catty a message someone, you would wish to convey it in as simple and intelligible a form as you could, and not wrap it up in words lest you should obscure it. Your effort would be to simplify it as much as possible, so that it might come as a "message." It is nothing to be reasoned about; all that is requisite to know is, whether this message is really from the person from whom it purports to come; and the moment that is certified, it has only to be delivered as simply as you can. Here then is no opportunity for "wisdom of words." It has simply the form of a message. You cannot suppose that Moses' began to "reason" when he told Israel to look at the Brazen Serpent. There could be nothing more simple than the message he had to bear, and he took care to bear it simply. It is a great thing to remember this. We do "speak wisdom," says the Apostle, "among them that are perfect," i.e., matured in faith: and then, not the wisdom of words, but certain things that do deserve to be deemed "wisdom" among them. But here it is the simple testimony to what the great Sacrifice is to all those who believe, and this testimony conveyed by feeble lips; so that to those who hear, it seems only "words." Faith sees indeed in those words the "arm of the Lord," because when those words are used and the soul believes in Jesus, they are "the power of God unto salvation;" but still they are only words—a feeble instrumentality. . . .and therefore called the "foolishness of preaching" or "the weak thing of God!" These three expressions are used to it. "The weak thing of God;" "the foolish thing of God;" "the foolishness of preaching." That is the place which the Gospel is to occupy to the end.

Now the Apostle says it is not generally received; and by very few among the great and noble (1 Corinthians 1:26-27), for God has been pleased to "choose the foolish things of the world." So that where worldly wisdom is, there so far, is a great barrier! It may be broken down, but still it is a barrier, a hindrance.

Again, what name is given to those who are brought to receive this message? “The called.” That is a thought to which the soul reverts after it has believed; and it is a word only to be meditated on by those who have believed. But surely, when any heart is able to say it has believed, it is no immaterial thing to consider whether it has believed in virtue of a special calling of God, or whether by the exercise of anything that attaches to itself. Few believers I suppose wish to reverse those words that the Lord Jesus spoke over the head of Peter. “Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” It is the act of the Father to reveal this salvation which is in Christ as the Brazen Serpent: for simple as it is, yet that “foolishness of preaching” is sure to be rejected unless God by a special act of grace open the heart. That person then is effectually “called,” and to such only is “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

God has placed in Christ all power to bring believers not only from their sins but into Glory. Is not power needed for that? Well, all that power is put in Christ, to work on and on till it brings believers into Glory! And is there no need of “wisdom” on the part of God to accomplish His purposes for those who are brought to Christ? It is said (1 Corinthians 1:30-31) Christ is made to us “wisdom from God:” that is the right translation. It is not “Christ is made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:” but the statement is this, that “Christ is made to us wisdom from God,” i.e., in contrast to what the Greeks were boasting in. The Apostle says we do not wish to be without wisdom; wisdom is needful; but we boast not in any wisdom that springs from men or from the world or from ourselves in any way. What we look to is, “wisdom from God” acting on our behalf. We wish the wisdom to be in Him and from Him, and to be applied on our behalf in and through Christ. “He is made unto us wisdom from God. And then he defines what this is: viz., “both righteousness and sanctification as well as redemption;” as much as to say, that if we were looking from above with all the intelligence of God on our condition as sinners, we should say “wisdom teaches us that we need these things. We need righteousness, sanctification and redemption and unless wisdom is put forth by someone in order to provide us with these, we are without blessing for ever.”

Now, the Apostle says, “God has made Christ to be these to us!” First, “righteousness.” If ever we are to enter into God’s presence for blessing He could not receive us except as righteous. Suppose He were simply to say, “I will forgive you; I will not take vengeance on your iniquities.” Suppose He had said to Adam, “I will not indeed follow thee with My wrath, but still, I cannot consider thee as righteous and cannot receive thee into My presence as righteous;” how then would any believer rejoice? He might be thankful that he would not be consumed with wrath, but he would feel far distant from the blessing that he has now received through Christ: for God not only forgives their corruption through Christ; not only looks on believers as forgiven ones, but as persons whom He esteems and regards as righteous! That is a very different thought, and consequently there is no aspect in which the Sacrifice of Christ can be placed, in which this thought of “imputation” or “reckoning of righteousness” is not involved. For, while one part of the sacrificial ceremony was, that the blow should be received which caused death—the stroke of vengeance was always connected with the sacrifice—yet, the other part was, that the sacrifice ascended as a “sweet smelling savour;” that “sweet smelling savour” being attributed to the person who came under the sacrifice; and these two thoughts could not be separated from the great Sacrifice that has been offered. Could John and Peter and Mary standing around the Cross help

seeing these two things? First, the Holy One smitten. That they saw most distinctly: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" when "it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him." They saw He was smitten, but could they for a moment divest their minds of the apprehension of Who the smitten Person was? Had they not always known Him as the Son of the Father, as well as His excellency in the Father's sight even though He was smitten?" So not only was the Sin-bearer seen on the Cross, but the Righteous One also, Whose excellency was offered to God; consequently, if the value of the Cross is attributed to believers, both these things come concurrently. They are inseparable, because the "Righteous One" and the "sinner's Substitute" are the same Person! An attack has been made in latter days on the doctrine of "imputed righteousness"—I see it increasing all around—but you cannot teach the right doctrine of the Cross without it, and therefore, I regard it as a subtle means of undermining the testimony to the Cross of Christ! I need not refer to more direct statements of Scripture, than e.g., the distinctive words which Israel when converted will use, "The Lord our righteousness:" and again "As by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be constituted righteous." These are statements as plain as words can make them: and the connection is so necessary, that when the Apostle quotes from Psalms 32:1-11, where David describes the blessedness of the man who believes; saying "Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom God imputeth not iniquity," he simply speaks of the non-imputation of sin; but how does The Apostle quote those words? He says in Romans 4:6, that they prove the imputation of righteousness, because that is involved. Seeing that God only forgives sins in and through Christ, it is impossible but that the non-imputation of sin should involve the imputation of righteousness. That is the reason the Apostle quotes it. In human arrangements these things might be severed; in Divine arrangements it is impossible, because they both come only through Christ. And then he adds "Sanctification;" which here is to be taken in its full final sense, as it will be estimated in Heaven when the saints are perfected in glory! What will they esteem to be their "sanctification" then? Their being separated not only from everything which they know as transgression and taint and defilement outwardly, but being separated also from their tainted natures; from themselves; from their own flesh; from everything that they are as the fallen children of Adam! That is the "sanctification" here mentioned. It involves indeed cleansing from sin; it involves all the blessedness of that truth mentioned in Hebrews 10:10, "sanctification through His blood:" but it includes something more; for "sanctification" in Heaven, I repeat, involves separation from our sinful selves; all that is connected with our nature; with us as "flesh and blood" which "cannot enter the Kingdom of God." So we are to be separated from all that is of self, and to be presented in the full likeness of the glory of Christ! That is the final sense of "sanctification." And then it is added "Redemption." Redemption means buying back from death; buying back from the dungeon of destruction. And the redeeming price that buys back is not merely a price paid as a ransom might be paid, but paid also as an atoning price, something that is compensatory to the outraged holiness of God; which maketh "appeasement" to justly awakened wrath.

Thus, while God says, "I am able to forgive thee," He is able to say "My justice is satisfied because of the redeeming price." He is able to say, "I receive you as righteous because of what Christ is! That being imputed to you, I am able to receive you and to cause you to be as those who are sanctified and separated from everything that is of the fallen nature, because I have given you union with Christ in glory!"

Now, these three things constitute the wise arrangement of God respecting His people. The moment our eyes are open to see what true wisdom would direct to as that which we need, these things are found in Christ, so that “he that glorieth may glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). We are not forbidden to glory; to boast ourselves. They are strong words—boasting, joy, exultation—we are not forbidden to have these things, but only let them be “in the Lord.” Nothing of nature can glory in His presence; but— “Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.”

17 - Message to the Church in Philadelphia

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 17 The Message To the Church in Philadelphia

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, [which is] new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and [I will write upon him] my new name," Revelation 3:10, Revelation 3:12 This passage stands in marked contrast with the address to the Church in Laodicea. To that Church not one word of commendation was given! There was nothing in their then practical ways that Christ could praise; not one feature that He could say was acceptable and pleasing to God! Yet they knew it not: they were utterly unconscious of it: their eye was so dim; they were so accustomed to try things by a false standard, that they knew not their ways were displeasing to Him! This is often the case. Believers can little trust the estimate they form of themselves unless they keep closely to the Word of God; unless they seek to keep His standard watchfully before their eyes. But, lest we should think that all attempts to serve God are hopeless, we find this address to the Church at Philadelphia. All was commendation there! There was not one single thing that Christ made the subject of blame; not one single thing that He did not make the subject of praise, even though they were things that were in themselves weak and poor; for observe, all "He who was faithful and true" could say of their strength was, that they had "a little strength." But that which chiefly marked the distinctive character of this Church was, that they had "kept the word of His endurance." They had regarded Christ's directions and not despised His words, and that will ever be found to be a path of "endurance." Were I to say to you "those paths will be very difficult to walk in; you will find many things to which you naturally cleave must be given up; many friendships and associations, etc. will have to be broken; many sacrifices made; you had better yield to circumstances and become acquiescent. Do not seek to maintain too steadfast a testimony for Truth, but give way, for it will cost you too much faithfully to adhere to it: spare thyself; do not for the sake of a truth which does not seem a very important truth, or that practice which does not seem a very important practice; do not for the sake of it incur detriment to thyself." Now suppose I addressed you so, that would not be "the word of Christ's endurance;" that would not be teaching you to "endure;" but on the contrary to "give way," feeling it would be too great a sacrifice of things deemed desirable here.

But, suppose I were to say the reverse: suppose I said "hold fast these things; buy the Truth and sell it Dot; keep it with a tenacious grip; compromise it not either by thy words or by anything thou doest; and if thou hast to give up things in consequence; well, give them up; bear what is to be borne; let the yoke rest on thee;" those would be words of "patient endurance." And the Philadelphians had done this: they had not tried to make Christian Truth flexible, to be bent by circumstances like a rule of lead; but they had striven to make circumstances conform themselves to it as a golden rule: therefore, as a reward, they were given the promise of being "kept from the great coming hour of temptation," the hour of Satanic delusion!

Now, though those to whom this was first addressed have been removed, these same features may be found in others; and whenever God sees this same character of “endurance,” He would recognize a Philadelphian so to speak, and to such, this promise in all its certainty shall remain. Scattered they may be and few, but they shall be regarded as successors in the place of blessing that the Philadelphians were then ostensibly holding. So we must not suppose that these promises have lost their practical power. God does not look at them as dependent on outward circumstances, but He looks to see where the same characteristics are rooted in the heart; and wherever they are, He says “There exists the family which I have promised to protect and preserve.”

Great indeed is this promise of “protection,” and the blessings are two-fold: those which are granted here and those which are granted above. If Christ speaks of final blessing to be known in the New Jerusalem—the City of God—He also speaks of a present blessing here; of having the “Key of David,” and of being able as a Steward to open all the resources of the palace of the Great King! When the hour comes for the glory of God to be displayed, this is one of the great offices Christ will hold visibly and manifestly to Israel. Why will Israel be so blessed, but because Heaven is open over their heads as the evidence of the relation in which the glory and riches of Heaven will stand to them! Therefore Christ is regarded as the great Eliakim of that day (Isaiah 22:1-25). But He says “though that is postponed to the day of future blessing, yet remember, I hold the ‘Key of David’ now, and am able to give you these resources of strength now!” This power was recognized by Mary His mother in the days of His humiliation, and though He seemed to rebuke her it was only to try her faith. “Mine hour (i.e. of glory) is not yet come.” Nevertheless, she said “Whatsoever He saith unto you do it;” and she waited for a great blessing; a blessing that indicated creative power; that indicated joy given where there was sadness—for wine is the emblem of joy—and “He spake the word and it was done!”

Now this was an instance of the way Christ was able to unlock and supply everything: It is not limited; so that whatever faith asks wisely according to the mind of God “that” He says “I can do.” Is not this a rich and great blessing in an hour when Satan is to be allowed to open other doors, to give access to his resources? Glorious, resplendent indeed, will that hour be with everything in which nature glories. Satan could show all the glory of the world in a moment, therefore he has his resources. And we know what is to be the end thereof? Yet that is what civilized humanity is about to come to, when men will rejoice for a season, but “perish forever!” So, if we expect that tribulation to come, when there will be a dearth, not of bread but of hearing the Word of the Lord; when it will be a sealed book (Isaiah 24:1-23); we see the blessing of this promise that, in that day the door should remain open before all those who have Philadelphian faith! But it is connected with practical grace. “To him that hath shall more be given,” and where this practical grace is found; God is able to meet it with multiplied grace. So always remember the connection between practical grace and the increase of practical blessing.

Then in Revelation 3:9 another promise is given. How continually do we see the effort of Satan to bring into contrast with that which is really of the Spirit of Christ and of His Truth, that which assumes to belong to Christ because of ceremonial ordinances and outward ritually-defined position! We can easily understand how it would be so. There had been a ritual order established by God religiously among the Jews of old by means of appointed ceremonies, as also there is a governmental order established in the world by God under Kings, governors, magistrates etc. [It

may be a Nero, but if in the place of authority, we must bow to him as having the authority of God. God may displace him, but it is not for us to raise the hand against him.]

Now, whilst that principle is introduced by God into the government of the world, has He introduced it into the government of His Church? The corruptions of Christianity have said “Yes; whenever you see a person outwardly appointed there is to be recognized the real authority of God; the real power of the Spirit of God!” But it is not so. In the Church of God “grace” and “spiritual gifts” are always needful even in such a matter as being elders of a local Church. Even the Apostles never thought of creating those who should be capable of ministering to the Church of God. It was made dependent on Christ, alone. But what a temptation for men under Satan to arrogate to themselves this power; to displace Christ; and to say “we can appoint persons, and when they are appointed they have the authority of God towards His people like magistrates in the world!” And though the consciences of God’s saints may have been uneasy under this and felt it a delusive lie, they have been outwardly acquiescent in it! Now these Philadelphians were not. When they saw persons pretending to be the Israel of God who were not, they disowned the claim; and how Christ praises them for this! So false ritualism may constitute a congregation (“synagogue” means congregation); but Christ calls it the congregation of Satan!

“They shall come and worship before thy feet and know that I have loved thee.” How, and in what way this will be performed it is not for us to say. Christ says that so it shall be; therefore, those who have maintained these Philadelphian principles will be acknowledged as “loved ones;” the synagogue of Christ—a congregation of blessing—when others will be marked as being “the synagogue of Satan!”

Revelation 3:11. See the importance that is attached in these addresses to the Churches to “holding fast;” because it is the reverse that is now seen in the professing Church. It is the special characteristic of the “overcomers,” and we find here an exhortation given. “Exhortation” is often made the means of causing those developments of grace in the saints of God which He, in the purpose of His own grace, intends there should be in them. “Hold fast that which thou hast” is a necessary warning to us all. We have to consider what it is that we have received from God—what instruction, what doctrine, what practice, what truth in any sense and then keep fast hold of it and not let it go. We always have to remind ourselves of the things we have received lest they should slip from us. It is wonderful how things which we thoroughly know are often allowed to evaporate from our hearts! We sometimes see in outward things a substance vanish, when touched by another substance that science brings near to it; and thus, Satan by his skilful hand is able to bring something that eliminates some of the most precious things which our souls have known; so what need we have of watchfulness!

Observe the definition of the word “overcome” in Revelation 3:10-11 and Revelation 2:26. It is made dependent on “holding fast.” Persons who “hold fast” are “overcomers.” Those in the professing Church who fall away—who do not continue to the end—let the treasure go; they let it slip from their grasp; Satan snatches it from them, or earthly things cause them to relax their hold. No doubt in these Philadelphians there was a humble not a proud consciousness of this “holding fast.” They clearly valued what they had received from Christ. They were like Levites to whom the boards and curtains and vessels of the Tabernacle were committed. It was a happy service in a waste howling wilderness to be entrusted with the care of the holy Tabernacle of God. There was

not a socket that was not borne along by their means as well as the Ark the Mercy seat, and all the holy vessels. They thought about them; they considered them; they did not say "this pin is useless," etc. they remembered it was God's Tabernacle. Not one thing was valueless; each had its place; and thus, while they thought about this, they found it their peculiar business in the wilderness. And so with God's Truth. It is a holy harmonious combination which we have to bear along for the blessing of our own souls and the souls of others; thus we shall be likely to hold that Truth fast. But suppose we turned from it to something not connected with Truth at all, then most likely some of its precious things would be forgotten! It is very important for the soul to remember St. Paul's injunction to Timothy with respect to the care of Christ's Truth, "Meditate on these things: give thyself wholly to them."

Then as to the future, (Revelation 3:12). There is a certain adaptation in the encouragements which God gives to the practical apprehension of the souls to whom they are spoken; and this is of great importance to those who desire to be strengthened and comforted by them. Not that all the promises will not be given finally to all saints, but God cannot always use them as a practical stimulus to hearts, because they do not all appreciate them; so we find what we should naturally expect, that the highest promises are put before persons who have made the highest advance in practical grace. The promise to this Church is "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God," The word "pillar" denotes that which sustains a fabric; and the "Temple" is used as an emblem of the system of the government and the worship of God. Men have their buildings; their systems; and they know who have been and who are "pillars" in them, and they honor them, They are able to point to this one or that as a support and sustainer of these buildings, and praise the skill and energy and wisdom to which they feel indebted. Think e.g. of the Church of Rome and other wicked systems, whose sustainers are marked with honor. These would be "pillars" in the temple of Satan; but God will by-and-by govern, and there will be certain holy principles connected with that government and worship, and it is said of the saints that they shall sustain these! It is His intention to use His saints in all those things that will by-and-by give blessing to the New Creation of God! He could do it without them. He could dispense with them if He pleased, but, for their sakes, for their honor, for their blessing, He will cause them to be those on whom things so momentous in their consequences will rest in order to be sustained; so that indeed believers will feel themselves to be necessary according to God's appointment, for the carrying out of things on which the blessing of all will hang. There is no greater happiness perhaps than being employed and being necessary to the carrying out of that, the momentous importance and value of which we well know. If the temporal comfort and happiness only of a household depended on a certain relation being sustained, we should feel it no doubt a privilege to be the sustainer of anything that would bring blessing to that household. . . .

Now, if there be a blessed happy feeling in this, and if we feel it an increased joy when the things which we sustain are the eternal things of God, so that we are able even here to be employed about them, what will it be when all the counsels of God are evolved and manifested, and when we are employed in sustaining them?

"And he shall go no more out." We shall not be as we are now, called away to "things which perish in the using;" things which we have to do as earning our bread. We shall not be called away any more by the necessity of these things. The priests of old might have to go out from the sanctuary; from its fragrance; from its light: they might have to go away into the waste howling wilderness

where defilement was around them. They might say “we like to remain where the incense is, where the light is burning: we had rather be sheltered by that than be in the midst of a scene where sorrow is.” Still, then it was needful for, them to go there. But an hour is coming when “we shall go no more out.” All will be encircled by the blessings of redemption. All will then be enclosed within the cords of the Tabernacle. All will be brought within its blessed circumference. All will be shrouded in the canopy of God, so there will be no need to “go out.”

Then as to the other blessings: “I will write upon him the name of my God, and the Name of the City of My God, and I will write upon him My New Name.” Three great spheres of glory to which believers are to have access! That which pertains to the throne of God; that which belongs to the heavenly city of the saints: and that which pertains to Christ as Head of the New Creation of God; to walk within them; to be as it were at home in them. From none of those spheres are those who overcome—i.e. all the family of faith—to be excluded! They are to be allowed to enter; to know them; to contemplate them: to view them as things with which they have fellowship, because of that being written on them which gives access and title to enter, and designates them as belonging there finally!

It is right our minds should be directed to these future blessings: Feeble are even our best thoughts about the things which are reserved to be known by-and-bye fully! Suppose we were brought to God and yet had no power to love Him there; to serve Him there. Suppose we felt the glory overwhelming; the holiness overwhelming; we could not be said to “live” there. Or, if we were placed in the heavenly City and felt unsuited to it, saying “we feel it is a blessing, but it is too high, we cannot feel it is our home;” that would not be fullness of blessing. Or, if we were brought to see the peculiar glory of Christ which, when John saw, we read “he fell at His feet as dead.” If we were brought to see that, without having the same power of life communicated to us that too would overwhelm us. But His promise here is, that He will so write on those who “overcome” the Name of His Father; the name of the Heavenly City, and His New Name, that they shall have full power to live and act in every one of those distinct spheres of glory! May we remember these are the heritage of the feeblest that believe: given by Him “Who is faithful and true.” I beseech you to remember these things are true because God has said they are true, not because we appreciate and apprehend them. That will vary according to our faith and grace and power of apprehension. If we choose to measure what God has said by our own thoughts, no wonder that our thoughts darken everything; but, if we remember that His Word is true and faithful, and that He intends we should credit it so that we may learn to live by faith and not by sight; then we shall find that the true basis for the establishment of our souls’ comfort is firm beneath our feet!

18 - Baptism, What it Signifies. Who the Right Subjects

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 18 Baptism: What It Signifies; Who the Right Subjects "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Romans 6:5 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16 A passage in Acts 8:1-40 sufficiently shows for whom Baptism is intended. In itself it has no "quickening" power. In itself it bringeth not to God. It is for those who, by the Word of Truth, are brought to faith in Jesus. Was it not so with the Eunuch in the wilderness? Could any narrative be simpler? He was a seeking, inquiring soul, for he knew not the "way of peace." He was reading the Scripture; reading it darkly; not understanding what he read. But a message of Truth was sent to him. Jesus was placed before him as the Lamb prophetically spoken of as "led to the slaughter," and Philip explained to him why He was led to the slaughter that it was God's method of putting away the guilt of sin for ever from the feeblest of those who looked in faith to Him—and the Eunuch believed; he cast his soul on God through Jesus; and he was received among those who are written among the "living" in the city of God. Instantly, in that moment God viewed him in all the value of what Jesus had done! It was simply the confession of faith. In other words, saying his soul relied on what God appointed as that which sinners should rely on.

It is one of the peculiar prerogatives of Christ to impart "Life," for He is the Object in Whom "quickening" power is. Thus, the moment the sinner looks believingly to Jesus he has Life in his soul; the germ of that glorious Life that will by-and-by be developed in Heaven! But great as that is, it is after all the lesser thing, for we are not only brought from death and corruption, but also into Glory! Salvation is not merely deliverance from wrath—it is that—but it is also deliverance to God into Glory and Heaven, where Christ's proper place is! He is the Representative of His people. Adam was one representative in Paradise. The downward step, and by that brought us willfully into ruin! Christ—the last Adam—is the new Covenant Head of His believing people. He took the upward step from earth into the Paradise of God, and carried with Him all those of whom He is the Head! Now that associates us with Heaven. He has entered there for us. This is what the hand of God wrought by means of the death and resurrection of Jesus! Well, do you not suppose that He would desire us to be acquainted with these things? Do you suppose He would hide this great work, so that our souls should not know it? Would He not desire to make our souls know that which is in Christ for us? Did He, when taking the bread and wine, saying "This is My Body, which is broken for you" seek to conceal from His believing people what His atoning death for them was; or, did He thereby desire to express to them very plainly what the result of His Body being broken was, even the remission of sins; all guilt being put away? "The Lord's supper" is intended to declare what that great blessing is, of "redemption through His blood." Well, it is equally so in Baptism. That too, is something declaratory: a sign appointed by God showing forth what that great blessing is. Like the Lord's Supper it is a sign; and moreover, a seal on God's part confirming by a visible open token that which His grace has wrought. Therefore, that which He seals visibly to our eye as a sign of the stability and endurance of the blessing must be a very firm blessing indeed! That it is on God's part of what it is on our part I will speak directly.

Well then, the sign to us is “water.” Now it is generally the habit of the heart to think simply of “water” as that which cleanses. We are so accustomed to the thought of defilement and evil, that through rapidity of heart and haste of spirit we think primarily of cleansing in Baptism. It is true a thought of cleansing is connected with it, but it goes far deeper than we generally think. Where is “water” first spoken of in the Bible? In Genesis 1:1-31! Had we gazed on that dark mass of waters where no light, no life was, how we should have shrunk from them and seen in them the power of death! And so there was until God’s power entered; wrought amidst those waters; and brought out of them a fairer creation than we now behold. It was like life brought out of death by the operation of the hand of God! A little further on we read of “waters” again—memorable “waters,” which we never ought to forget—“by which the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” What fearful waters! They steadily advanced as the messengers of God’s wrath even unto death, to those guilty sinners! They saw those waters rise, blotting out everything gradually, till at last they themselves sank under their destructive power!

And, again, when the proud “waters” overwhelmed all the haughty power of Pharaoh, it sank like lead in those waters of destructive wrath!

Then think of the type of Jonah, and how he speaks of the “waters” that encompassed him. “All thy billows and thy waves are gone over me.” To him they were the mighty power of death, but the mighty hand of God interfered when he felt himself in the presence of that which was death and destruction; and he was preserved!

Again, when the Lord speaks figuratively in the Psalms of what He Himself endured, how often He speaks of “waters!” “I sink in deep waters: the floods overflow me”—deeper waters than ever came on Jonah—even bitterness of wrath from the hand of God. So there the type is explained. There we see what it was for the True Ark to pass through the raging waters; and in that Ark, all who were connected with it—i.e. all the family of faith—were carried through within it! And so with the true family of God. Christ is the Ark: NOT the Church. Blasphemy is not too strong a word for that. It is ascribing to the creature a work and office that pertain to Christ alone! What can the Church preserve? It has collectively lost Truth, and cannot preserve anything. And the individual believer is he an Ark? What can he preserve? Can he preserve himself or anyone else? CHRIST is The Ark. He passed through the “waters.” He bore His believing people through the “waters,” and brought them into the New Creation, as Noah typically was brought into the new earth. So you see I think, that “water,” thus typically used, represents the power of wrath—overwhelming wrath—ending in death! And how plain is its application to Baptism! There the water is, and the Apostle says believers are buried typically with Christ in Baptism: God hereby showing, that He considers them to have passed through death—through the grave—when their great Representative lay in the grave. Then they were buried by the hand of God in Another. But they were not left there; they were raised, as the Apostle says, (Colossians 2:12), speaking of Baptism, “Wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead.”

Now in Baptism, God signifies to us that He has caused us to pass through death—through wrath—and has brought us into the life into which Jesus has risen! He expresses it in words indeed but also by this outward sign. Is it not true that God has wrought this for all His believing people? So they are immersed in Baptism; placed beneath the waters! It is God’s sign of what HE

has done. Do not forget that. It is God's operation. He caused us in our Representative to go through death, and He has also raised us up from those waters!

Correspondingly typical to that was the Ark that bore through those waters and that carried safely into another world those who were in it. This is what Christ has done for those who believe. So it is a most expressive sign. Of late years—because for many a century the thought of this having been lost—persons have been sprinkled) Yet, these who do that are obliged to confess that being immersed in the water is the only right type. Thus the Protestant Church of this country allows anyone to require immersion if he please. The force of Truth constrains to this. How could sprinkling ever express this truth? How could that ever direct the mind towards our union with Christ in death and resurrection w our being buried with Christ and raised with Him? Sprinkling could not and it would never have been thought of if the truth of this had not been lost. Thus then, it is a sign on God's part; not a sacrament.

“Sacrament” persons say, is either an oath, an engagement, on our part, or a mystery. Now, the word in neither of these senses can be applied here, for is it a mystery? It is the explanation of a mystery; a setting forth by an outward sign something so plain and simple, that it is anything but a mystery. “We use great plainness of speech” says the Apostle; we withdraw the veil; we explain enigmas; not put enigmas before persons. There is no mystery connected with it; and as to its being an engagement ratified by an oath, I grieve to see Protestantism has often been much mistaken as to that. There is always a tendency in the heart to go back to Sinai; to enter into covenant with God. But what could we promise; promise that we could bear ourselves through wrath? If there is any sense in promising, we should have to promise that: the very thing that God alone could do and has done! There is nothing like “a seal” in Baptism unless it represent something past and accomplished that God has already effected for us in Christ.

Now, I suppose you would see the wickedness as well as the folly of connecting ourselves with the work of Christ, as represented in the Supper of our Lord. Surely our bodies could not be broken! Surely the bread that represents His Body and the wine that represents His Blood refer only to Christ, not to anything the Holy Ghost may work in us. Now, Protestants at any rate have been clear of this as regards the Lord's Supper, but they have not been so clear of it as regards Baptism. But Baptism refers as much to the work of the Son exclusively as the Lord's Supper does, for He has passed through wrath for us, and He alone.

Well, God having accomplished this, what are we to do. A person might say “we will hold it fast; we promise to walk as those who are raised from the dead.” But, can we undertake that? Is there ever a single day in which we could say we have walked worthy of this blessing? Ah! if so, one would never be able to detect anything of the dross of earth in our testimonies and ways. I could not say that of myself or of you: but God, Who substantiates His Covenant towards His people, knows us in “grace;” so there is no thought of an engagement by oath such as is connected with “sacrament.”

Well, if it be a sign and seal on God's part, what is it on ours? On our part, says the Apostle very simply, it is “the answer of a good conscience to God.” God says “I seal this to you,” and we say “Amen, so let it be to us according to Thy Word, oh Lord.” That is all. It is our reply, our answer, our acceptance of that which is given us of God. That is all we creatures can do—God giving, we receiving—a blessed place, and the only suited place. Strange that we should be reluctant to take

it; but, let us say “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.”

Now, to return that answer, we must know what God has given. Surely, without understanding it, we can give no answer; therefore, if the heart cannot return it, it is no recipient of blessing. An unconscious babe cannot do so. How can it be possible that any should read those words “the answer of a good conscience to God,” and think of an unconscious babe being a right recipient.

Persons sometimes speak of the analogy of circumcision, and say “were not Abraham’s children circumcised?” Yes: and they had a good title to be, because the moment they were born they were Abraham’s children. They were proved to be that by the fact of their birth. Nothing more was needed to entitle them to be circumcised than the mere fact of being Abraham’s children; but, can we certify that any child born even to Christians is a child of Christ? You know we cannot. God has never said that any infant born to a real Christian, much less to a nominal Christian, is therefore spiritually born of Christ. So the parallel does not hold.

Again, suppose a revelation were made to us from Heaven, and it were said in the case of an infant, that it is quickened by the secret power of God’s Spirit; even then it would not be a right subject for Baptism till it could return “the answer of a good conscience to God.” I do not deny the truth that a child may be quickened; nay, I go farther, and say that every child that dies in unconscious infancy is, by the fact of its dying in unconscious infancy, proved to be quickened: and that can be certified by Scripture, for Scripture says that all who stand in the final judgment to be judged, are judged out of books according to their works (Revelation 20:12); and consequently, those who are removed from this state of being before they are able to do works which would be written in the books, will not stand there to be judged. It does not prove that they are not sinners, for there are two reasons why a babe is regarded as a sinner. First, because Adam’s sin is imputed to all his descendants. Secondly, because it has a depraved nature. So unless there were a Redeemer; unless God in the freedom of His grace could connect it with Christ’s righteousness and quicken it in and through Christ, no infant could be saved! But He does that, and the fact of its being taken away in unconscious infancy proves it.

Two things you see, are requisites for Baptism. The persons must themselves be “quickened,” and also be able to return the “answer of a good conscience to God.” So babes are not fit subjects; and no one thought they were, till the corruptions of Christianity were far advanced in the second and third century; and where this thought is mentioned, the writer who mentions it condemns it! But even if it were introduced earlier, it would be no proof. Could there be any proof of that which is not in Scripture?

What did the Apostle say of everything that would come after he died? “This know ye, that after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things.” He told them distinctly that times of darkness, evil, and corruption were to begin, and so they did; a period when falsehood would prevail and not Truth; when the simplicity of the Gospel would be set aside and forgotten; when the doctrine of satisfaction for sins by the death of Christ would be lost, and the thought of union with Him in heavenly places gone altogether! What they knew they perverted! The world was arrayed in the garments of the Church of Christ, and they said “Christ hath sanctified water to the mystical washing away of sin; He hath appointed our hands to apply this water and we are able therefore instrumentally to justify!”

“Baptism,” says the Church of Rome, “is the instrumental cause of justification!” How impious! But is it less impious to say it washes away sin? Does it do so really or is it altogether a lie; a delusion of Satan? Yet, how many have been carried away by it with a lie in their right hand! So it is an awful thing to tamper with the truths of God. God never sanctioned water to the washing away of sin, and there is no power in it to regenerate. A person is regenerate first. All those thousands who were converted at Pentecost were regenerate before they were baptized, and the sign of Baptism was given because they were regenerate—God having carried them through death in their true Representative that being true of them the moment they believed! When all this has been effected—not before—He gives the sign as a seal of it. And then as to there being “sponsors.” Persons have sought to avoid the force of the words “the answer of a good conscience toward God,” by saying there are persons to answer for them! I spoke of blasphemy just now: I must say again, to use the word “sponsor” of anyone except Him to Whom it truly belongs—the great Surety—is a solemn thing. Could we be surety for ourselves; and could we be for another? We could as much think of redeeming our brother.

What does a “sponsor” engage to do? To resist and overcome the flesh and the pomps and vanities, of this wicked world! Can we really engage to do this for ourselves? You know we dare not: you know we should stand as hypocrites and liars in the presence of God; then, could we promise it for another? Alas! how those very persons who do promise it love the world, its pomps and vanities! The very temptation to make Baptism what it is. made, is a wish to sanction the pomps and vanities. of the world by connecting the Name of Christ with them; to put, by means of ritual ordinances, the protection of the Name of Christ on that which is altogether alienated and separated from Him!

I speak not this to puff up. It is not an hour for that: there are too many links in ourselves binding us to evil, for us to be censorious judges; but we may be lowly, humble judges of what is around, in order that we may win hearts and keep our own garments; and when we think of it in that way and then see our own weakness, it will produce a feeling of solemn responsibility that will take from us self-complacency. A heart will never be self-complacent that duly feels the responsibility of Truth; which responsibility increases the greater the abounding evil; and we are told that darkness and evil will prevail in the latter days.

Now, may these things be a light to us, for we would not wish to conceal the heinousness of evil. There cannot be a greater evil than to deceive persons concerning their souls. To tell them they are regenerate when they are not. To tell a little child that it was made an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven and united to Christ and to God when it was baptized—that lie of Satan—and for this to go on in the midst of the light that shines around us year after year, is a sin so overwhelming, that nothing but the most wondrous grace of God prevents His sweeping all the systems that are connected with it with the besom of His wrath. Therefore, I do not wish but that you might judge it, yet that it might produce a humbled, chastened spirit and not pride of heart. And how plain a type this is of “regeneration” in its full and proper sense! For what is “regeneration” “in its full and proper sense? It is this; the being altogether divested and separated from a certain being that we have here; leaving it behind and attaining a certain condition that is new. That is “regeneration.” and moreover, it applies to everything we are in the integrity of our nature body, soul, and spirit—so all we are naturally, ceases, and we are brought altogether into a new condition, quite as much in body as in soul. That is “regeneration” in its full sense—the sense it has in glory. When we think

what our condition there will be, and the powers that we shall then possess; do we limit our thoughts to our souls merely, or do we include the whole totality of our being? We know that we shall be able to contrast what we shall be then with what we have been, and say “once we knew a condition very different from this—an earthly, groaning, unredeemed body; a soul that had in itself weakness; a sense of evil that was cast in the mould of the first Adam, earthly—but now, what powers it possesses: cast in the mould of what Christ is as the second Adam; even Him Who was the Fellow of the Lord God of hosts!” That will be our thought then! And when we think of the means by which we have been brought to it, shall we not ascribe it to Christ? Shall we not say “Christ, by being our Representative and taking us into union with Himself, has brought us through that deserved wrath; has become our Life, and changed us into His likeness!” That is the meaning of the words “begotten again” unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He has re-begotten us; regenerated us Scripture says, by means of the resurrection of Christ! It is by union with Him that God brings into ‘this new condition of being above. Having life in Him is one step. Its being communicated is another step; but , that final change will take place when we are brought into fullness of glory above. These three thoughts are involved in considering “regeneration.” It must always be connected with Christ. And being put down under the water, there we in the judicial sentence of God leave our earthly, corrupt selves—all that is of the old man—and we are looked at as “raised” in Christ. So it is a beautiful type, and clearly shows us how the thought of regeneration is properly connected with Baptism. Falsely, when Baptism is made to have regenerating power; but when taken only in connection with Christ, it is a beautiful type.

One thing more, Baptism was appointed after Christ was risen, and He said “Baptizing them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” Blessed words, indicating that a baptized believer is connected with that which pertains to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost: for the Name of the Father represents those powers, attributes, and wondrous operations which are connected with the Father and which are towards us; something that passeth knowledge—in height and depth unsearchable—yet all this made to be the servant of our need! And this we can equally say of the Son. “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” The new Name the mystical Name of the glory of Christ as Head of the new Creation of God—we scarcely know anything of. It will be known when “we know as we are known;” but all the power, strength and glory connected with the Son, is in Covenant relation to us—for us, not against us—the servant of our blessing! And the like may be said of the Holy Ghost, Who is very and true God. He will be the power by-and-bye in which we shall live in glory. Truly the great Name of God is put on the redeemed; not on angels—they do not stand on this Covenant relation to God but the redeemed do—and that, as the result of what Christ has done! All this is signified to us in the rite of Baptism!!

Now, once more; to whom does it belong? To the feeblest who believe; to the poor Eunuch; the jailer at Philippi, etc. Great as this blessing is, Grace gives it. It does not stand above the level of the Cross. The Cross is for sinners: it is what the Brazen Serpent was to the dying Israelites when brought to them where they were perishing. God’s message to them was “look there and thou shalt live.” So now, look to Christ and blessing comes and those who look to Christ have a right to Baptism; to the Supper of the Lord; and therefore, to all the blessings that God covenants and pledges thereby! We do not raise ourselves to any fancied elevation, but God gives it. He makes it a gift, and He gives it freely in Christ. May we not be proud or careless and despise this gift but

receive it with meekness, saying, "To whom else shall we go?"

"Lord we believe, help Thou our unbelief."

22 - Human Progress, Its Course and Doom

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 22 Human Progress Its Course and Doom, or "Withdrawal Unto Prediction" The place of the Prophets was in the midst of the corruption of God's professing people. Israel had received the testimonies of God; they were professedly the witnesses of TRUTH in the earth; but they had corrupted that TRUTH! Ungodliness had taken the place of HOLINESS! Falsehood had taken the place of TRUTH! All was corruption and evil; and the Prophets were set in the midst of that evil, to behold it, but, in communion with God; their title to that communion being simply the "grace" that had sanctified through the foreshadowed offering of Christ! See how Isaiah was prepared for taking a place for God and His service in the midst of iniquity; viz., by having his lips touched by a live coal from the Altar; i.e., sacrificial fire; representing the holiness of God that had received propitiation; not holiness apart from propitiation. This "remember" is what the present generation is rejecting! The advanced thought of the day, as it calls itself, speaks of this as a Jewish element, as they deem the "Old Testament": something that has passed away with past ages! Those who speak these blasphemies scorn "SACRIFICE!" "No doubt," they say, "humanity needs purifying; and there are divine elements in humanity by which it is purified; but not propitiation!" So what remains for them but destruction?

Now I say, if that be the step which "human progress" is now taking what shall we say of persons—Christian teachers nominally who bless "human progress" in the Name of the Lord? Of old, we read of "shepherds" of Israel who "gloried in the pride of Lebanon; in the forest of the vintage;" but when Lebanon was cut down; when the forest of the vintage was felled, the "shepherds HOWLED (Zechariah 11:1-17)!" Seek to carry that thought in your remembrance, for what is the "pride of Lebanon;" what are the "oaks of Bashan" intended definitely to designate? That glory of the earth; that "human progress" in which men glory! Well, God says it shall be cut down by a "mighty One;" and then, Christendom's professed "shepherds" shall HOWL! Think of those who "speak peace" of these things! and how this was done last Lord's Day! [Funeral Sermons for the Prince Consort]. Glorifying everything which God designates by "oaks of Bashan" and "forest of the vineyard" (i.e., a wild vineyard, not God's vineyard); pronouncing "peace" on all that! and those who so preach, unless they repent, will HOWL with anguish when the Lord comes! I beseech you, lay these things to heart if they be true; and guide your thoughts and feelings every hour by them. And remember, that the prophets, in speaking of the iniquity of professing Israel, did not confine their thoughts to that which at the moment was manifested before their eyes. It was only then incipient; the germ, the bud; not the mature fruit. But Prophecy, including the germ, always looks forward to the matured development of evil. It is needful to remember this in reading Prophetic Scripture, because it gives at once a present interest to those testimonies. If they merely concerned the past, they would indeed have a certain interest, as supplying the instruction that can be gained from the past; but, how far more, when we see they were only premonitory; and that the difference is between the "green tree and the dry," i.e., the youth and old age of iniquity. So remember, this is mainly a future scene; and see the connection there is between the "past," as that which forewarns us, and the "future."

Take Habakkuk, e.g., He mourned over the evil; but God tells him it would be worse; that that evil would be chastened by the rise of a worse form of evil in the Chaldeans! And was it not so? Did not the king of Babylon come and sweep the land with destruction, and make it groan under his yoke seventy years? That was a premonitory fulfillment, but it was only premonitory! Are not Israel when gathered into their own land, to shew their evil again? It has been stopped for a moment, but are they not to go back professing the Name of Jehovah, yet causing that Name to be blasphemed because of their evil? And there will arise again a greater evil to chasten it! And where will it arise? In the land of Chaldea! It will be a similar character of evil, and exactly in the same place! Babylon is ordained to be the place where evil will strengthen itself against God, to be used by Him in chastening on His professing people, and then to be swept into destruction! So what a living interest this gives to Habakkuk 1:1-17. But we have also to remember, that when ISRAEL had been tried by these premonitory judgments, God was pleased to suspend the course of things; and another "Body" has been allowed to come into the place of testimony that belonged to them. And is the history of CHRISTENDOM different? There is a difference between the subject of the testimony of ISRAEL and of CHRISTENDOM, and it is this. Israel were sent to be witnesses of the righteousness of God which met them at SINAI. They professed to be able to embody those principles in themselves, and then to work deliverance in the earth; put down evil; and bring the nations to God! Now this was a great profession to make and they failed! They did not exhibit those principles of righteousness, and "wrought no deliverance in the earth!" Their enemies became stronger and stronger, and at last put their yoke on ISRAEL!

Then came the testimony that was committed to the CHRISTIAN CHURCH—inaugurated in the dawn of its history by that song from heaven "Glory to God in the highest;" which Christendom repeats from end to end this day! (See Dec. 25, 1861). I really do not know of a text, that has been more perverted and misunderstood; and I do not think Christians understand the bearing of these words at all! It is a text that has wrought great deception in the minds of men! Also the hymn, "Joyful all ye nations rise; join the triumph of the skies; with the angelic host proclaim 'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'" Are the nations indeed to rise and join the triumph of the skies, because Christ is born into the earth? Born to be rejected; born to be crucified; born for His Truth to be set at nought; for Him and His servants to be abhorred! You see, hymns like this altogether deceive the soul; they place us virtually in the Millennium! They tell us that the visitation of which we read in Habakkuk is past! IF that really were so, and the nations were brought to the "fountain open for sin and for uncleanness," they might "rise to join the triumph of the skies:" but see how the human heart may be deceived by words of God's own Truth being misapplied!

Now, the words of the angels are really these. "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth the peace of well-pleasement or complacency among men." NOT "peace on earth, good will towards men." That makes all the difference. And what do the words mean? How was it there was "peace" and not only peace, but the "peace of complacent rest" on the part of God? It is the same word as was used over the head of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased;" i.e., in "Whom I complacently rest." So it indicates the complacency of peace on the part of GOD, resting on someone in the earth! But on whom could it rest in the earth? On man's ways? No! it was never intended to speak "peace to men" in the condition in which we see them. It was in One only; even in Christ; over Whose head Heaven could be opened, and it could be said "I rest in Him in Whom I am well pleased." Christ was among men, but all men were in the circle of darkness; under the

power of Satan; altogether lost and distant from God! One little circle of light was drawn, and that was around the Person of Emmanuel, and there God was resting; seeking to gather into that circle by the principles of Love and Mercy; but no peace of complacency to men as men. On the contrary, “the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men!” John Baptist announced what the condition of the world was “The axe laid to the root of the trees”—but he was able to say “Behold the Lamb of God;” and to that he sought to gather.

Now, who are in that circle? RITUALISM Says “All the baptized!” ROME takes it boldly; goes to the porch of the Church; meets the babe, and says to it through its sponsors, “What dost thou demand of the Church?” The answer is “Faith:” and they profess to give faith! They say, “We give thee true faith, and we receive thee so into the Church of God!” Those are the first words of the Romish baptismal service! Now this is RITUALISM! It is man taking the place of God, Saying “WE give it!” So I desire that this should strike your souls with horror, and that you should be against it wherever you find it. But there is something even worse than this! Men say that “the very fact of Christ being born into the earth has united humanity to God! That all men were united to God the moment Christ was born into the earth!” That is the rising doctrine of the day; the advancing step that men are taking! Ritualism has enlarged the circle by saying that all are in it who are “baptized;” but now it is being enlarged still further; and it is said that all men are in the circle “naturally!” Of course if that were so, the moment a person is born, Christ is in him; by which he becomes virtually God; each thus being a standard to himself! That is an advanced step! All society is divided between these two classes, and, if this be what is in the professing Church itself, is not a place analogous to that given to the prophets, given to all who abide in the truth, to stand as they did, contemplating the evil around? Is it not pleasing to God that evil should be discerned, but appealing to Him; not forgetting God, but turning to Him?

Now, I do not say that we should turn to Him with the same unrelieved mournfulness with which the prophets Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Moses in Psalms 90:1-17 did. We find but little glow of heart or joy of spirit, or any ability to rise above the evil, in them; or, if so, it is in something future, not present. The Apostles’ knowledge did not take away the sorrow. The eyes of John and of Paul were fixed as steadily as Habakkuk’s on the evil around, but then, another sphere was unveiled to them; the sphere into which Christ had entered in glory, and to the prospects of which He had brought them; for when He is revealed, they are to be changed into the likeness of His glory! That is added knowledge. If we were to learn the lesson of peace and glory apart from what the prophets taught, we should become careless and ignorant. Nature would become strong in us; we should be like the person who drank only of one cup—a cup intended to strengthen the new man—whereas, the other cup is intended to chasten and to produce godly fear. So, seek to combine. Seek to take all the aspects that God has opened in His word—not more. Do not take one single imagination that is not in the Word of God. I have often seen spirituality ruined by imagination, Nothing is more to be dreaded than unbridled imagination. Once let a person put before his soul imagination that God has not put there, and he is worth nothing; he spreads confusion wherever he goes. But, if he take the aspects of Truth that are presented in God’s word, and not any aspects of his own, the proper effect will be produced on the soul; not otherwise.

Well, the prophets mourned so much over the evil, because they contrasted it with the coming hour when all will be light and blessing and truth; and they looked for it, and said “How long, oh Lord, will this evil continue?” And is anything more important for believers, than that they should be

interested in the bearing of God's truth on everything human, and see the difference between the hour when false principles bear on humanity around—on national and social life—and the true hour of rectification, when the foundations will no longer be “out of course?” Even natural conscience is able to see that things are not right in the earth now; therefore, one of the present crafts of Satan is, to say “See, the earth has not been rightly ordered heretofore; new principles are needed; an alteration is necessary; a new day is coming: God desires His creatures to be happy, and these new principles will make them so!” Well, it is true that God desires this; and by and by He will make them happy, and all creation shall rejoice and sing; but not by those principles with which society is being drawn into further distance from God; viz., the putting away of Truth, saying “it is a sword in the household!” It must be so, if heavenly light comes into the midst of darkness that does not receive it. There must be a separating power, and the world has been conscious of it; and that power they desire to turn out of the world, in order that they may be undisturbed; and that they will be able to accomplish! And when that power, which is the only thing that brings sanctifying blessing with it, has been driven out of human society, and a vacuum thus made, then Satan will come in, and fill the chasm with his floods of falsehood and darkness! When Habakkuk complained of the iniquity of his day, God did not instantly remove it; but he said “Oh ye among the Gentiles,”—this I believe, is a special address to ISRAEL, who were chastened for iniquity by being scattered among and learning the habits of the Gentiles, —“regard, and wonder marvelously; for I work a work in your days which ye will not believe, though it be told you!” What work? “I will raise up the Chaldeans,” i.e., a worse iniquity to chasten! (Habakkuk 1:5-6).

Now these words are not past: in a certain sense they are more important to us than when first spoken. They were first spoken of the premonitory rise of the evil of the Chaldeans; but, imagine Israel restored to their own land; professing Christians united with them; and then think of those who have the Spirit of Truth in the midst of that scene; will they not groan and cry “How long, oh Lord?” and God will say “I raise up something worse! A power of violence is coming in, which will sweep away everything before it; not knowing Me, but utterly contrary to Me—a proud power of infidel blasphemy—and it shall chasten the corruption of My professed people!” That will be true of both Christendom and Israel! Now, do we believe this power is to arise and again to be connected with Chaldea? These remarkable words are borrowed and applied in Acts 13:41 to something else. To what? To the present proposal of mercy in the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus! When the Apostle said, “Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins,” he quotes these words and says, “Take heed that you do not reject this; as it is said, “Behold ye despisers; AND PERISH! for I work a work in your days, which ye will in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you!” So you see, these Two works will not be believed; neither the work of God's mercy in forgiving sins through the blood of Jesus, nor the warning as to the mighty power of evil that will come in due season; the head of which will fulfil the solemn description of Habakkuk 2:1-20. Neither of these things is believed; neither the mercy of God through the Blood-shedding of CHRIST; nor the exaltation by Satan of a man in the person of ANTICHRIST to a throne, not reached by abasement but by iniquity! (Habakkuk 2:12). Jesus reached His throne by abasement. “Because he humbled Himself God hath highly exalted Him:” but this man founds a city by iniquity! Satan will establish him in a supremacy and glory, the like to which the earth has never yet seen: not by peace, mercy, and gentleness; but by everything that makes human life groan, as if placed under the power of torture; for all humanity will be tortured as it were, to serve the glory of this man who is to be exalted! That is the last picture given to us. It is especially to be

true of ISRAEL. They are to be ground down even to the dust, that out of their woe, and the nations' woe and calamity, may be extracted the glory of this individual to whom Satan will give power!

Now if this be true, is it not a thing to hold fast? Yet it is not believed! And what are men interested in? In what they call "HUMAN PROGRESS!" They will be devoted to that; and the end will be a fearful development of human civilization and pride, in the person of that peculiar agent of Satan: and that is what the nations will reach by "laboring in the fire for very vanity!" (Habakkuk 2:13).

Now, this was gracious instruction to the people of God, concerning the relation of judgment in which He stands to the iniquity that abounds around; but we are not so to consider it, as if it did not affect ourselves. There is a relation in which God stands to His own servants, and we are to think "what God will say to us." The servant of God may be weak, and he may tremble and fear; and probably Habakkuk did fear and question with himself what God would say to him. But see how gracious the words of God! He did not rebuke Habakkuk, but comforted him! He was pleased to employ him, and he said first, "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he that readeth it may run and be the messenger of it to others." And what was the vision? It concerned first, the greatness and character of this last form of iniquity—the END of "human progress." So that when we hear of "human progress" we may think of this chapter, and say "THAT is the END of it!" I beseech you to consider whether you see the End of "human progress" according to these thoughts of God, or, according to human thoughts.

Then another subject of the vision is, the Day in which the glory of God will be displayed—the glory in which He will meet this evil: in which He will go forth for salvation, when He shall "sweep the nations in His anger, and ride upon the horses and chariots of salvation." This is the subject of Habakkuk 3:1-19. "Rivers" (Habakkuk 3:8) are the representatives of the means by which men strengthen themselves in their greatness: an emblem of the medium by which men avail themselves of the resources of the earth; using them for their own purposes of confederate evil! How would countries be united; their greatness be brought together; and men avail themselves of their resources, unless it were for these seas and rivers? So they are used peculiarly as emblems of the greatness of the world in the latter day. But see how God's wrath and anger are against these things! He is displeased with the use men have made of the "rivers." They are representatives to Him of all the combined evil of former generations which will be, gathered into one concentrated whole at the End! So you see against what the wrath of the Lord will be revealed; and how it will be developed; and, how it will accomplish His purposes and sweep away the evil! And the prophet said, "When I heard this I trembled." Do we tremble as we read it? We ought to! Oh! think of what the End will be of all that men cultivate for their joy and comfort in natural things! All to be cut off! There shall be no fruit in the vineyard; the fields shall yield no meat; all will be desolation (Habakkuk 3:17)! But Habakkuk was comforted; for though these were all to be swept away, he could still "rejoice in the God of his salvation:" that joy would not be swept away. He knew it would be the hour when all the saints of God will walk with Christ in no earthly place of glory, but in the glory of the highest heavens and be made like Christ! And that is our prospect. Looking through this dark scene, we can say "that is the hour of our elevation; and for that we wait."

One word more. In the midst of this address to Habakkuk we find a remarkable expression, “BEHOLD WITHDRAWAL!” but “the righteous by faith shall live” (Habakkuk 2:4). They are remarkable words. “Behold proud WITHDRAWAL;” a word that implies the swelling of human pride, but at the same time contemptuous withdrawal from God and His Truth! It is referred to by St. Paul in the Hebrews, where it is said, “We are not of them who withdraw unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” So it tells us that there will be proud “withdrawal” from God and His Truth to perdition; implying that some of God’s redeemed saints may wander in a measure; but that where there is real “withdrawal” the soul is not righteous; i.e., unjustified; there is nothing of Christ! It is a dangerous path to tread. How earnestly then ought we to watch against anything like wandering or drawing back from any part of God’s Truth that He has revealed to His Prophets and Apostles. Alas! even real Christians have wandered a great deal. The process of “withdrawal” has been continually going on; but there is to be a proud contemptuous withdrawal from it altogether; and that will be “WITHDRAWAL UNTO PERDITION!” And do we see no symptoms of this? When believers, e.g., give up any of the precious truths God has revealed, such as the imputed righteousness of Christ—which it seems to me Christians all around are discarding, yet without which we cannot be saved; for it is as necessary as the atoning Blood to our salvation—they are treading the path of “withdrawal!” It is a grievous thing; for all the arguments used against the imputed righteousness of Christ would equally tell against Atonement; so that would equally be set aside. We are taught the blessed truth that “Christ is made of God to us righteousness,” etc: which means that God has provided our righteousness in virtue of something that Christ effected on EARTH, and which HE FINISHED when He bowed His head in death on the Cross. This, He imputes to those who believe. So remember the passage “the righteous by faith:” i.e., those whose righteousness is founded on or derived through faith “shall live.” It is the opposite to “righteousness grounded on works or anything in ourselves.” Such shall not only be delivered from earth, but shall “live” in the power of that life in glory!

I beseech you, consider these words of comfort in the midst of this dark scene, where Scripture stamps “withdrawal” on all human society, excepting on those who are righteous “by faith:” who “believe to the saving of the soul.”

23 - Israel Seen in the Psalm 1; Psalm 2; Psalm 3; Psalm 4; Psalm 5; Psalm 6; Psalm 7; Psalm 8

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 23

Israel Seen in the Psalms 1:1-6; Psalms 2:1-12; Psalms 3:1-8; Psalms 4:1-8; Psalms 5:1-12; Psalms 6:1-10; Psalms 7:1-17; Psalms 8:1-9

You will observe the similarity between the expressions in Psalms 1:1-6 and Joshua 1:1-18. The words indeed are identical, more so even than they appear in our translation. Joshua you know was a marked type of the great Captain of our Salvation. Typically, he did bring Israel into their rest. He brought them across Jordan, and gathered them into Canaan—into the goodness of the land of their inheritance—a pledge to the redeemed of what the true Joshua will be to them when the wilderness is passed and the land of their glory truly entered. In Exodus we find them “separated” from Egypt. They had left the land of their natural bondage, being redeemed! It was Redemption that brought them there. It was only because they were sheltered by the blood of the lamb; so they were a “redeemed” and “separated” people. In Leviticus we see them as a “priestly” people brought near to the sanctuary; there taught to know the “ways of God” in Redemption; there taught to know His “holiness” as in His own presence. Not only to see the ways of His holiness and judgment as against Egypt, but to know them in the Sanctuary. There they learnt what sin was, but also that which was appointed to protect from the guilt of that sin. Thus they learnt more of holiness and more of the real heinousness of sin in the presence of God! That was one of the lessons intended for the “separated” people of God.

Then, in Numbers we read of them as a people who were to “serve the Lord:” to bring “offerings” to Him. They were not only a “sanctified” people but a “serving” people: brought nigh to God to serve Him both in the camp and in the Tabernacle; and there we find the chief record of their rebellion and evil! They began to serve, and in certain things they did serve; but how full is the book of Numbers of sin and evil; for it is in service to God that the deepest occasions of sin are found: teaching us, that according to God’s fear so is His wrath, (Psalms 90:11). i.e., the nearer we are brought to God, and seek in His fear to serve Him, the more, if our flesh worketh, is there occasion for wrath that would turn consumingly against us, if it were not for the Blood of Christ! Accordingly, in Numbers we find much respecting the power of the one remedy—e.g., the “red heifer” and the “brazen serpent” those resources of grace that were put forth to meet the circumstances in which the sinning people of God find themselves. In Deuteronomy there is a repetition of the “instruction.” It was not only instruction as primarily given, but instruction in those things which Israel had failed to remember. They were to realize their failure; so the instruction is repeated, but repeated to hearts that were not at the threshold of the path, but that had long trodden that path, and had learnt much of themselves and of God. So there was a repetition of the instruction in Deuteronomy; and at last Joshua brought them across Jordan and took them to Gilgal, where they again stood as the “circumcised” people of God; separated from that which was behind and brought in new circumstances to Him. But though they triumphed for a moment at Gilgal, we find

them soon after brought to Bochim; the place of weeping. It was because they had failed; failed to drive out the enemy and made alliances with those with whom God told them not to make alliances; so tears were their portion! See how mingled these lessons are. Goodness, mercy, light on the part of God; but what frowardness on the part of man when nature and the flesh work! Joshua was not to be discouraged because of what GOD was; but, how these circumstances manifested what Israel were and what was in Joshua himself too! Joshua had no merits by which Israel could be protected, and no power to work in Israel things that might conform them to the will of God. There was neither the personal power to abide in those things fully; nor, had there been, was there anything to reach others in the power of merit that could be imputed to them to bring blessing to them; to cause Israel to be blessed because one stood at their head able to bring down blessing on them. Joshua was no such head to Israel.

But, when we come to the Psalms—that book full of song and praise to God—whatever may be spoken of darkness or light, it is still God working in the midst of those circumstances; working for His own Name’s sake; working in the midst of all the iniquity of the earth; in the midst of sorrow or joy on behalf of His people; and at last bringing everything to blessing; at last filling this dark earth with the knowledge of His Name, and triumphing over all the moral evil around! That is the great secret of the Psalms; that not only outward foes like Amalek are to be triumphed over—God could always as easily cause outward foes to succumb as He did the walls of Jericho—but there was also moral evil, and evil working among the, people of God themselves! Therefore, if there were to be blessing, God must place perfectness in the midst of these things, and cause that perfectness so to work, that the result should be the overcoming of the moral evil: and this it is that we find specially in the Psalms.

Accordingly, Psalms 1:1-6 begins with the “happiness,” not so much the “blessedness” as the result of the blessedness: because God may bless those whom He may not at that moment make happy. That is the case with all the suffering people of God from the beginning. Blessing is on them, but all the results of that blessing are not found on them, enabling all to say “Oh, the happiness!” Consequently, the word “happiness” is used here. “Oh! the happiness of the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly;” as though there were One who had never walked in it! And surely there has only been One such, of whom these things could be asserted. Joshua was not able to be this, but in the true Joshua they were found. So on this our faith is fixed, that there has been in the midst of the world’s evil this manifestation of perfectness, and that by-and-by the preciousness and value of it will be declared. We have indeed to add what the subsequent revelations of God enable us to add, that God has opened the door of faith, and that through faith that preciousness that pertained to Him is made ours: we being brought into co-partnership with this blessing! We should not have learnt this from the Psalm as it stands; but we do from other parts of Scripture. That is one of the uses of the excellency that was found in Christ. It was so precious, that God is able to bestow righteousness on those who are far distant, and to reckon to them righteousness without works! Oh! the happiness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works,” saith the Psalmist. This then connects us with it otherwise there would be no link. We might marvel at it and see it afar off, but there would be no basis on which we could stand. And then when we go to Psalms 2:1-12 we find another relation of this Holy One to the earth’s evil—the kings and the rulers thereof gathered together against Him—saying “Let us cast away their cords from us! “Now, this is one of the ways in which the earth receives this

“holiness!” We have had the foreshadowing of it in what Herod and Pilate with the Gentiles and people of Israel did, (Acts 4:25-28); but the great fulfillment of it is to be in that last great gathering of human iniquity which we are to expect, and which signs tell us is not far distant. But we know the result must be, that “He will speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure!” That is the end; and if that be recognized by the heart of a believer, how it will separate him from the world! So we have not to consider the excellency and preciousness that has been dropped into the earth without also seeing what is antagonistic to it. And if we do not receive this instruction and let it operate on our hearts daily and practically, we shall not learn the full lesson it is intended to teach.

Again, we find the relations in which this “Holy One” will stand to all the Powers of the earth, when He will say, (vv. 13, 14.), “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling: kiss the Son, i.e., do obeisance to Him,” etc. That will be the relation of the spared Powers of the earth to Him in the Millennium! They shall hear and submit themselves and bow before Him! It is a relation of power; a relation too of mercy, when He who has the character described in Psalms 1:1-6 shall, as the King, speak to all the nations of the earth thus, and they shall submit themselves! His excellency and mercy shall be enthroned, and this is one of the uses which God will make of it towards this earth. In Psalms 3:1-8 we find another relation; a relation to circumstances that it concerns us well to consider; for God has been pleased to cause that the principles of Christ and the Truth of Christ and the ways of Christ should be made known more or less to the hearts and consciences of His people before the hour cometh for Christ to be manifestly glorified. Has there not been from Abel downward, a struggle against the evil of the earth through some of God’s people? He has ever had persons in whom His principles have more or less worked; precious principles that He has placed in their hearts. David perhaps was the greatest example of this, therefore he was said to be “the man after God’s own heart;” because his apprehensions and desires respecting the relation of the earth to God were so in fellowship with the thoughts of God. That was evidently the character of David. He saw, so to speak, what the earth needed. He saw what human evil and sorrow and woe and the power of wickedness in the earth were, and in measure he appreciated it. He saw it could only be met by a power applied by God; and he longed that it should be applied and labored to that end. So, principles of Truth greatly worked in the heart of David, yet it was David and not Christ; therefore, precious as were the principles that worked in his soul, he yet failed and failed grievously! He failed especially in judging evil in his own household, which a king who rules according to God must do. However near the evil may be in his household, wherever it is, it must be searched out; the viper is not to be nurtured but crushed. But that is what the Church has scarcely ever done. David did not: the Churches in the Revelation did not: they spared persons who were like Jezebel! St. Paul had great difficulty in making the saints in his day judge Hymeneus and Philetus. There was a slowness in doing it. Think too of the Corinthians in relation to the evil that was amongst them! They would not set themselves against the evil that worked so near to themselves! Saul too, would spare some of the Amalekites! David, instead of restraining and punishing Absalom, smiled on him; cherished him, and in cherishing him cherished a viper and the consequence was, that that evil strengthened and at last came to hatred! The hearts of Israel were gathered to Absalom! He said “David has not succeeded in giving you peace, but I will give you peace! See what derangement there is; what want of right order! You are not peaceful and happy, therefore David’s principles have failed but now, if you will only follow me, I will lead you in a new path which shall make you happy!”

Now that is the language of the present hour. It could only take effect on those who had been brought under the principles of God's Truth. It is only where those principles have been admired that evil like this can succeed; because the principle of it is the comparison between principles that have been long tried and new principles. No one could say that the condition of Israel was as it should have been. But why was it? Was it that Truth was in fault; that new principles were needed; or, was it that those principles of Truth had not been acted on, and therefore there had not been right results? The most grievous instance of human self-ignorance is, when men begin to find fault with the principles on which they have been acting instead of seeing the fault is in themselves. It is almost the worst phase of it, and it is beginning to prevail. Instead of finding fault with themselves, men find fault really with that which comes from God and they say "if that had been altered we should not find these results!"

I need not say to you that this tendency is all around us now, as it was in the days of Absalom; therefore, those who hold fast the principles of God's Truth as David did, are few and feeble. He acknowledged his own failure. He went up weeping. He said "do not forbid Shimei to curse; it may be the Lord hath bidden him." So you see David fully recognized his failure; he did not say he had used God's principles and applied them as he ought to have done, but, "I have failed, and so the chastening has come." Therefore, seeing he did take this place of truth and humility, and did not fail to recognize the preciousness of those principles but held them fast in all their integrity, saying "God forbid that I should think His principles one whit less precious than they are"—seeing his soul held fast to that, but yet took the place of humility, acknowledging his own failure—the consequence was, that when his enemies were all around him (Psalms 3:1) he was able to take the place of calm untroubled faith! No Psalm perhaps is more full of humble confidence than this. Even though many were saying "there is no help for him in God," yet he said "Thou Jehovah art a shield for me, and more than a shield; Thou wilt not only protect me, but lift up my head and cause me to triumph over mine enemies! I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people that have set themselves against me round about! I laid me down and slept, I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." He could rest in the midst of these circumstances, and at last was able to say in faith, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord, Thy blessing is upon Thy people."

Now I do not doubt that there will be some, it may be but few, as the latter day comes on and Apostasy increases and drives out Truth and hates and persecutes those who hold it, who will be as the seven thousand in the days of Elijah. That time is coming on in that part of the earth where this "Absalom" will flourish. Do you not see how men are abandoning Truth; abandoning doctrines; creeds; etc.; even Scripture itself casting all aside, and saying "What good have they done?" That is the voice we hear around now! We cannot deny that there is truth in it. There is departure; distance from God; and the people of God have grievously sinned; have talked carelessly about truth; have had little desire to come closely to the Word; have done little with all their busy energy. All these are cause enough why an "Absalom" should arise.

Now, do we, in seeing the rise and triumph of this Absalom-like Apostasy, recognize our own sin and the sin of our brethren? Are we able to take the place of David and confess it? I do not doubt there will be some as Apostasy increases who will be able to use the language of this Psalm, and quietly trust in God and lie down in the assurance that He will defend and be the "lifter up of their head," though it will not be in their case until it is the lifting up in glory: not here, so as for them to be restored to supremacy in the earth as David was. But to them there will be the "lifting up" in

heavenly glory: they wait for it until then. But, I say “blessed” are they who have this tone of spirit; who wait for this blessing and see it is their only true path of blessing. Those who see the importance of this path will greatly desire that it may be thus with them.

Well, in Psalms 4:1-8 we find one of the places in which the heart has been schooled for this blessing. Psalms 4:1-8 shews the servant of God in the midst of the profession, and in many cases the vain and empty profession of this world. Retaining the profession of Truth is a different thing from rejecting Truth in blasphemous infidel Apostasy. Both are grievous, but one is greatly in advance of the other. Worldly, vain profession abounds in Christendom as in Israel of old—a grievous thing—but still, vain profession and open apostasy are two things. One is mentioned in Psalms 4:1-8 the other in Psalms 5:1-12. Vain and glorious scoffers; boasters that speak lying; that delight in deceit—that deceit which is the great characteristic of the last Apostasy (Psalms 5:9)—where there is no faithfulness at all; nothing that can be trusted. See what prominence is given to lying and deceit as exactly opposed to truthfulness. And that deceit and lying are used destructively: used for the purpose of destroying others! This will give you the central picture of the hour. And the servant of God is seen standing in the midst of it; conscious of it; not hiding the character of it from himself, but apprehending it and turning to God; saying “However this may prevail, yet Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in it (Psalms 5:4). Evil may be permitted for a time, but Thou art against it;” and able to say to the Lord, as the Spirit of Christ in His servants will say “Destroy Thou them, oh God; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against Thee (Psalms 5:10).” That is the place the servants of God will have to hold in the midst of the dominance of evil! In Psalms 4:1-8 we find also the apprehension of evil; but admonition is given to those who still profess the Name of God, though they know Him not really. “Stand in awe and sin not; offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord.” So there is admonition. God, you see, is presented as the object of “trust.” That word brings in now all the full unfolding of the Gospel of grace, whereby God presents Himself to those who need a refuge!

Then there is the intimation Psalms 4:6, that many will say “Who will shew us any good? Lord lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us:” i.e., in the midst of abounding profession there are unsatisfied hearts who say this: who know they have not found good; who say “Who will shew it to us?” and whose hearts are so far softened and touched as to say “Lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.” That is just what is meant by the smoking flax—a little spark—that shall not be quenched. God’s gracious power when His Truth lingers, does cause hearts to be secretly touched from time to time; and where that is, He will not quench it. So there is encouragement for the servant of Christ. Though we see multitudes loving vanity and lying and despising Truth, there are yet some whom the Lord hath set apart for Himself (Psalms 4:4), and such can speak words of wisdom; of true wisdom; even the Gospel of the grace of God: and when the floods of Apostasy break out, many will be placed measurably in the position here described.

Then Psalms 6:1-10 is the place of the great Sufferer in the midst of this evil, by Whose sufferings we are saved. He did not place Himself merely in the midst of evil to triumph over it. That was one object. But His great object was, that it might triumph for a season over Him; not morally, but that He might be stricken because evil was found in His people! If it had been only found in His enemies, it would have been different He would have triumphed over it. But, if only one principle of it were found in His people, then He must bear bitterness and sorrow and wrath because of it!

That, Joshua could not do. None could do it but Christ. It required One who was more than man to let the iron enter into His soul; to bear the curse, and to triumph over it. So we find Christ not only as the Triumpher over evil in the Psalms, but as the Sufferer! And they were sufferings too which were appointed by God; because God's hand must be against evil wherever it is found: and it is found in His people. So, how needful to give a place to this in the Psalms!

Then we go on to Psalms 7:1-17 which points peculiarly to the end: and do we not find Christ there, standing as the great Sufferer? His voice in Psalms 7:1-17 is as if it came up from the midst of all the evil that will be dominant in the earth just at the close. How is it that Christ will be suffering at the close? He is now in heaven; why then is His voice heard as if it came from earth? Because He is with His people and in His people. There is Christ "personal" and Christ "mystical." His people are Himself! "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" So the enmity against Christ continues! Will you say the world has waxed better and wiser; that it would not persecute Christ again if He were here? That is what men say! Well, God will put it to the test. He will cause the testimony and the truth of Christ to shine forth in His servants in a peculiar manner before the last judgment falls. It will be exhibited quite sufficiently for the world to understand it fully; to have an apprehension of it, which just now they have not. There will be the same disposition to "tear their souls like a lion!" (Psalms 7:1-2). Exactly the same feelings shown to Christ when He was personally here, they will show to those who will then represent Him! That will be the relation of earth to Him! But then the time will have come for this prayer to be put forth "Arise, oh Lord in Thine anger; lift up Thyself because of the rage of Thine enemies; awake for me the judgment that Thou hast commanded" (Psalms 7:6). The time is not yet come for that. Christ did not say it in the day of His own personal suffering, but He will say, and His people will say, when that time comes and iniquity has come to the full, "Awake for me the judgment—not to the judgment—which Thou hast commanded; so shall the congregation of the people compass Thee about; for their sakes therefore return Thou to Thy high place:" i.e., to the high place of Zion, whence Christ will govern all nations. He will be the Stablisher of righteousness in the earth, and men will praise Him for what He has done in bringing the wickedness of "the wicked (one)" to an end, (Psalms 7:9-17); because judgment will be put forth which will effect it!

Then in Psalms 8:1-9 we see something more. He Who has so triumphed in the earth, has He not a glory "above the Heavens?" Is He simply a King and the Son of David in the earth; or, shall it be said of Him that He is crowned with glory and honour, and all things put under His feet, (Isaiah 8:6)?

We are able to say it now of Him personally, though we do not yet see all things put under Him. But in that day, not only as Son of David, but as Son of Man He will be glorified; made high above every name, and all things put in subjection under His feet—the least things and the greatest things in earth and things in Heaven—He only excepted that did put all things under Him; God the Father.

So, glory high above any glory in the earth is even to Him Who hath brought His perfectness into the midst of those things, that He might prevail over the evil and that He might gather into fellowship with all His own perfectness those who believe! See how these things shew the action of God in the midst of a sphere of moral evil; reaching it so marvelously, as to bring out of it into fellowship with Him in glory! This is what we have to consider: not only the operation of this power,

but how it worketh and where; and where it ought to set those in whom this power worketh. There is the great failure in God's people. They do not consider where it ought to set them in relation to this evil that is in the world. If they were able to receive it aright, their consideration of these things would confirm them in the "knowledge of God."

24 - Things That Accompany Salvation

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 24 Things That Accompany Salvation Romans 12:1-21: Moral Duties.

Perhaps no Scripture more fully sets forth what should be the practical walk of the children of God than the concluding chapters of this Epistle; and while we feel how the Church has failed to recognize them and therefore not walked according to them, we must remember that the general ruin does not take away our responsibility individually to seek these things and to desire that our steps may be regulated by them. That the original order and beauty of these things can now be restored, so that the building might again present its proper symmetry and proportion, is impossible: still, this does not hinder our individually seeking them; and while these two thoughts are borne in mind, we may most profitably and blessedly dwell on the precepts here given us, and seek in our measure for that sympathetic feeling spoken of (Romans 12:15); that ability "to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep," etc. This is no easy thing. We are also exhorted to be "of the same mind one towards another" (Romans 12:16): a oneness of mind and thought and feeling which is the result of the Spirit of God. How difficult is this! How hard to be attained now when there is such diversity on every side: so many diverse springs of thought and feeling; so many different things actuating each mind! Yet still, it is according to the Word to seek this oneness of thought and feeling; indeed, it will constitute one of the chief elements of our happiness in heaven. There will not be a thought or feeling in your heart that will not find a corresponding one in others. How precious will this be, and how to be desired any little manifestation of it now!

Then too we are to be earnest and diligent "not slothful." "Slothful in business" is not exactly the meaning of this passage. It is rather "in earnestness not remiss;" i.e., whatever we undertake in service to the Lord, we are to do with diligence; with earnestness. We are to do it "energetically:" that is the force of it. It does not allude, as many have thought, to our earthly calling and business. We are not to say "I will be diligent in my earthly calling; this is the sphere in which God has set me to serve Him and He has said I am not to be slothful; so I will be diligent in my business, and in that serve God according to this chapter." Now that is not the meaning of it at all. It is anything rather than that. It is the very reverse. Anything rather than the thought that all our energies are to be devoted to our earthly calling.

We may feel perhaps, at a given moment, "now I ought to spend this portion of my time in my earthly calling. God would have me engage thus. It is the right thing to do now." Well, if this question be settled, then do it "with diligence." But you see, how different will be the thought then—doing it because it is necessary and needful to be done, and so able to look to God in the performance of it—from doing it as the thing which is to engage all our thoughts and energies!

Then, we are to be "serving the time:" i.e., we are to know the how and the when anything is to be done. We are to be alive to opportunities; to seize them; never to let them slip. If you notice anyone wise in his generation; anxious to succeed in the world; mark how carefully he watches

every opportunity for getting on; seeks to avail himself of each one, and lets nothing pass which he supposes will be for his profit. Now, just as anxiously should we “serve the time:” be quick to see and avail ourselves of any opportunity in which we may serve God; desiring not to fail in doing it and accomplishing it in the given time.

We are also exhorted with reference to anger—not to avenge ourselves, but to give place to wrath—i.e., to give room for the Lord to act. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” saith the Lord (Romans 12:19). So that we are to leave it to the Lord, and not seek to displace Him from His office in exercising wrath by avenging ourselves; but rather to “heap coals of fire” on our enemy. He may brave out many things for a long time, but he cannot bear “burning coals:” and it will be a great blessing if we be able to avert from him it may be, that wrath which would otherwise be the result of his going on in his own way.

Romans 13:1-14 : Social Duties. The subject of this chapter is one of great importance, but one in which the Church has greatly failed; so that we find it very often not even thought of, that the “powers that be are ORDAINED of GOD!” if this were recognized, what an effect would be produced! If it were felt that the higher powers stand to us in the place of God, and that therefore we can obediently serve Him in recognizing their authority! But often this is forgotten, hence the evil-speaking; the reviling; the “speaking evil of dignities!” Now, it is the path of faith to see God in these relations. It is one of the special promises to Faith, where the eye does not see it and where the world of course would not discern it and where much appears contrary to recognize God, and to trace Him acting towards us. So that if even a tyrant be in power, to remember that he is in the place of God towards us, and be able to say “In this I can own God!” You know Christ Himself did so when, before Pilate, He said “Thou couldest have no power at all against Me except it were given thee from above.” He thus owned Pilate acting towards Him in the place of God; and so, “when He was reviled He reviled not again:” “in His mouth were no reproofs!” Thus, the greater the trial, the greater the opportunity for the exercise of faith and for serving God: for we are to be “subject, not only for wrath but also for conscience’ sake.”

Also, we are to owe no man anything not even honour; but to “render to all their dues” (Romans 13:8). If any man claims honor, then we have to honor him: if any tribute, then we must pay tribute. “Owe no man anything” means, that we are to render to everyone his due claim. We should always be in a position to render back to everyone that which they claim of us: e.g., if you lend me anything, and at any given moment claimed it, I ought to be able instantly to render it to you. That is the force of the expression. It does not mean that we are never to lend to another; on the contrary, it is well that the saints should thus act in love and grace one towards another: it is well that there should be called forth friendly intercourse in the kindly exercise of these things; but we must always be able to render that which is claimed of us. These things, the Apostle tells us, may be classed under one great law, viz., “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law,” for “Love is the fulfilling of the Law.”

Romans 14:1-23 : Church Duties. The subject of Romans 14:1-23, I would dwell on for a moment. We are there taught how we should act towards those who are weak; that we should receive them (Romans 14:1), but we are not “to judge their doubtful thoughts;” i.e., we are not to compel them, in cases where they may differ from us, to see as we do before we receive them. We may seek to enlighten them, This would be right; we ought to do so—to seek by all means in our power to

enlighten their consciences, by bringing the light of the Word to bear upon them—but if after all, we cannot succeed, then we are not to judge them, but to leave it with the Lord and receive them. We must not “judge” them. And this is the reason why the tribunal of Christ is referred to here (Romans 14:10). We are to leave it to that Day. WE have not to judge their doubts, and to decide whether there be more or less sin connected with them. GOD alone knows how far they are responsible for their unenlightened consciences—whether it be occasioned by sin or not—we must leave it; we can only act according to our conscience. We must never act contrary to our conscience: that would be sin! Our conscience may be unenlightened; and we may find, at a future time perhaps, that we acted wrongly in some case; but yet, that was the only way in which we could then act, because our conscience was not further enlightened. So that it might be said “You acted right as you did then, because you acted according to your conscience; but the act itself was wrong, though you could not then have acted in any other way.” See how important it is to have an enlightened conscience! We must seek not to have a morbid one: nothing is much more troublesome; and this is owing to it not being enlightened BY THE WORD. I believe this will be found almost invariably to be the case; because, if a person is not enlightened by the WORD and his conscience becomes sensitive, of course, he will be much troubled: and, if he keep away from the teaching of the Word his conscience does not become enlightened; he must go on his troubled way. And so with regard to days not commanded in Scripture to be kept (Romans 14:5). The Lord’s day is to be kept, and therefore about that there is NO QUESTION. But, where no direct instruction is given in Scripture, and it is left open to each one to act, we are not in such a case to judge one another. One may say “I think I ought to keep this day.” Another may say “I think I ought not to keep it.” Well each must “be fully persuaded in his own mind” and must not judge another as to these things. They are to be done by each one “unto the Lord;” i.e., with reference to Him. We are to “live” unto Him, and we may “die” unto Him (Romans 14:8). So that there can be no circumstance whatever, in which a believer can be placed, in which he cannot act unto the Lord and serve Him. And as in life we seek that all things should be done in reference to God, so in death we would desire to suffer its sorrows with reference to Him. The Sabbath.

Now, to speak of the Day which God has hallowed. The seventh day was not a type of anything “future,” but it had the character of “memorial” of a rest in which God rested; when He could look on Creation and rest in it as “blessed.” Adam and Eve, while they remained in innocency, could look on a certain day which God had hallowed, and say “It is an expression to us of God’s satisfaction in the work of His hands.” A blessed thought is thus connected with the Sabbath as a “memorial” day. But then, when sin entered, how soon all that was gone! God rested not in creation any more, and therefore the Sabbath was to be contemplated with reference to something “future;” to which Hope might look forward and Faith expect. How gracious of God after the ruin was complete, to introduce this blessed element of comfort to cheer our souls with a future hope; a pledge, that “there remaineth a Sabbath to the people of God” where all is perfect, and which will not pass away because it does not rest in the creature any more, but stands in the perfectness of Emmanuel. The Sabbath then pointed on to that, and therefore it was continued to man as man; so we find that before the Law was given the Sabbath was kept. Israel did not “gather manna” on the Sabbath day. And, when the Law was given from Sinai, God formally enacted it, and engraved that enactment on the same stone on which were engraved those two great moral precepts “Thou shalt love Me perfectly;” and “Thou shalt not even desire evil!” Two condemning precepts to us; but in Glory how we shall find them inwrought in us, and realize them to be “written on our hearts!”

And in connection with these precepts comes the enactment of the Sabbath; thus giving Israel a certain hope “under the Law,” because there are two things God intends for His true Israel; viz., to give them blessing and rest and joy in this earth; and also a better rest and more perfect joy in Heaven. These two things are never separated. He promised Abraham and Abraham’s seed blessing in the LAND—the earthly Canaan—and they will yet have it, when “God will rest in it and joy over them with singing.” Do not forget the earthly prospects of Israel; but there are higher and more blessed heavenly prospects—far better than anything that could be even in the Land of Emmanuel itself, blessed as that will be—and those two spheres of blessing it is the intention of God finally to give to His people. ISRAEL will have both by and bye. They will have rest in the earth, but they will also look forward to a happier rest in the New Heavens and New Earth in the glory of God.

Then, God gave them His holy Law to test and prove them. He knew that sin was in them, but He wished to make it manifest to them; so He gave them that Law; promising, if they kept it, they should have blessing in earth and Heaven; but He proved them first by blessing in the earth (see Deuteronomy 11:1-32). But, when it was proved that they could not attain the blessing proposed to them in the earth, of course it proved that they could not attain the blessings proposed to them in Heaven. But whilst they were tried as to the blessing proposed in the earth, the Sabbath was given, as peculiarly pointing to the blessing in the earth that shall be in the Millennial day; therefore, of course a prominence was given in His dealings with Israel to the seventh day. But when they were set aside, God did not immediately bring in Millennial blessings. They do not come to us. They are reserved for Israel. We have many tears; many adversaries; many trials; many things against us. We have not the outward blessings; we wait to see them given to ISRAEL by and bye; but we are blessed in “heavenly places.” And when the hour comes for those earthly blessings to be given to Israel, our blessing will be with Him Who is risen above the skies: therefore, we look for our “Sabbatism” there, in resurrection glory with Christ. So do you not see how necessarily, while God continues to hallow this day, it should pass on from the seventh to the first day of the week—the day of the Lord’s resurrection—for all our thoughts of the Sabbath are connected with that day. I have no sympathy with those who ask for a deliberate ordinance in Scripture for the change. The first day of the week is denominated by a special title in the Word of God, “the Lord’s day” —a day which peculiarly and especially belongs to the Lord—an expression only applied to two things; the “supper of the Lord” and “the Lord’s day.” It is not the same as the “Day of the Lord,” but a distinct expression appropriated to the first day of the week. Is not this distinct sanction? And do we not find that on that day the saints used to assemble for worship; to “break bread” as it is said? And what is its typical character? It points on to perfect rest in Glory. But does it embody more than the typical seventh day did? Yes; for the seventh day had the thought of “freedom” connected with it; i.e., rest from the necessity of that which sin had introduced. And it is a blessed thought not to be despised; this negative character of “rest.” But, whenever blessings are given to those who know labor and travail and sorrow here, there must needs be two thoughts not one only. There must always be the thought from what we are delivered; from what we rest; a retrospective view. Israel could look back and say “we have been delivered from Egypt;” but Israel would have thought that a poor deliverance if they had not been brought into the land of glory and rest; so there must always be a positive thought of blessing, as well as a negative one. Thus, while we are redeemed and resting from certain things, we are redeemed to certain things and what are they? All the glory and all the blessing that God has given

to Christ, with ability also to "live unto God!"

Think of the difference between the grave of Christ and the day of His resurrection! Standing by the grave of Christ, we see the Holy One in perfect rest. He had known travail, sorrow, persecution; but man's power could reach Him there no more! It was perfect rest. There can be nothing more perfect than that rest; when you stand as it were by that grave, and thank God that He Who is there doth rest from His labors, sorrow and travail. But suppose we only had fellowship with Him there. Suppose it had only been deliverance from sorrow and trial, where would have been the life, the blessing, the glory? So, Christ did not abide in that grave in which He lay through that Sabbath, but the first day of the week He rose; He entered into glory and then, though indeed the character of the grave remains in that there is no labor, no sorrow, no weakness in connection with earth, so that it is true rest; yet there is also "life unto God." "In that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." What is the joy of Christ? To live unto God: to have competent powers for it which He ever had, but which have now no hindrance from earth. And will not that by and bye be our Sabbath? It will be a rest from all below, but with new powers of "life." So you see why we keep the first day of the week. It is still hallowed by God; still separated from the rest of time; but what marks it? Two things. First, we rest from the sorrowful necessities of human toil and labor that come in the other six days of the week. As far as we can we rest from them; if not, we destroy its typical character. But secondly, we not only rest from these things, but we "live unto God." If we can use any thing for the Lord's service we are bound to use it. It is only rest as regards the necessities of human toil. It has the character of "living to God," and therefore there is energy connected with it. That is the character of this typical day. How careful then believers ought to be to stamp on it its typical character, and to make that character prominent! And as regards "living unto God." It is not always easy to live wisely to God. Merely to have the desire and intention of "living to God" and doing it in a right way are two different things; and here there are often grievous mistakes. Believers say on the Lord's day, "I do desire to live to God," and at once perhaps, they devote their energies to something; it may be the instruction of others: something right and desirable. But are they to forget their own souls? How rapid and hasty often is Nature; saying "I will act for God, and do such and such things;" forgetting that it needs a certain preparedness of heart to do them wisely and rightly. How can those who are famished act with strength and power? How can those who need the torch of light to guide them through their path walk there without it? How can they fight the battles of the Lord, unless the "sword of the Spirit" be in their hands? Now, have we it in our hands? Is every soul among God's people wise? Is there a skilful hand to wield the "sword of the Spirit?" Ah no! and the hearts of believers often are not strengthened to feed on Christ as revealed in the Scriptures and very uninstructed in the ways of God; and yet they go forth to teach others unstrengthened themselves! unfed themselves! so that it is very often energy unguided and undirected by the Word of God and the wisdom of His Spirit. And what is the result of energies like these? God may occasionally bless them; but are they the steadfast carefully regulated energies which ought to be found in the Church of God, arising from understood truths: truths which are known in the heart? How blessed is it when hearts, really established in grace and having communion with God, go forth; especially when they are united together! It grieves me often to see how the Lord's day is misspent by believers. They are engaged often in occupations which weary body and soul but are not careful to strengthen their own souls by private reading, meditation and prayer, more than they have time for on other days. So how important is this to believers, especially if, as is often the case, during the week they should be

tempted into paths of worldliness. I have seen believers working for God on the Lord's day, and in the week in their leisure hours engaged in the things of the world—the reading, the amusements of the world—and therefore, during the six days of the week what opportunity do they have of being instructed in the Word of God? And if the Lord's day be so occupied as to keep them away from instruction, how can they gain it at all?

One thing more, as regards our relation to present things in hallowing this day. Surely it is of the deepest moment to us as men, weak in body and very often weak in soul! Suppose the Lord had not in His great mercy and wisdom "hallowed" this day, and therefore not given a commandment to His saints to observe it: then, suppose an earthly master, whom you ought to obey, commanded you to work on that day, you would be obliged to do it! But, if you are able to say "There is a superior claim. GOD has commanded me to rest on that day," then you gain a period of rest for body and soul.

Others have said "Perhaps it may bear on the Church of God, but has it any relation to the world?" Yes. When men have the Scriptures, we are able to go back to Genesis, and say "The Sabbath was given then to men as men. From the first, God gave the command that there should be a separate portion of time in which men should rest. But, how blessed for those who see it not only as indicating the kindness of God to His creatures, but also as that which typifies our future rest when viewed with the eye of faith. You see, there are two ways in which to view our blessings. First, simply as things which in themselves may be good: but also, in the relation in which Faith may be able to view them, as pointing on to something yet to come. So, while it has a relation to the Church as indicating its privileges, it has a relation to men as men; and therefore, those who break this command break one of the natural relations of God to man as man. Are we to despise this? Is there to be no pity extended to men as men? Does not God feel for His creatures as His creatures? Is He indifferent to their welfare? Does He care for the sparrows and not care for men? It would be a grievous thing if God did not think of the world in its groaning and its trials; but from the very moment when Adam quitted Paradise, He manifested His kindness. So let a soul seek to act on these principles and be guided by these thoughts, and then see whether or not its path will be intelligent. Oh! how blessed is an understanding heart, when indeed the instruction comes from the Truth of God. Such a heart is able to look beneath the sign and see what it indicates! May we then ponder on these things; having a desire to walk now as approving those things that Christ will approve and sanction in the final day, when He will make distinction between what is confused here; and, where there has been any right principle; any right practice; it shall "by no means lose its reward."

27 - Under Sin, Under Law, Under Grace

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 27 Under Sin, Under Law Under Grace In Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25 The great endowment of the Church having been set forth in Romans 5:1-21 of everlasting Righteousness and Life given in Christ Jesus, it was open to this caviling of the evil heart. "Why should we avoid sin if it has been set aside by God as though it existed not? If it give opportunity for the exercise of the grace of God let us sin that grace may abound!" This might be the wretched objection of the natural heart, for there is no doctrine that is not open to such cavils: yet, whether men abuse it or not, we must not refuse the full testimony of grace. All we can say is "God forbid." The wretched suggestions of Satan turn these things to evil, and if the evil heart will do so, it must: but they that believe will receive these things rightly, and increase with the increase of God.

Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25 : Romans 6:1-23 should be read as one chapter with two divisions; forming a separate section of the Epistle and showing the relation of the believer to Sin and his relation to the Law of God.

Sin is personified in Romans 6:1-23, having a claim upon us of penalty to be borne. The Law is "personified" in Romans 7:1-6, having a claim upon us of obedience; and we cannot free ourselves from either; but the Apostle here shows how we are justified from both. In Romans 6:1-23 Sin stands in the relation to us of a master, and we so entirely the property of that Master that we have no power or title to free ourselves from the claim it has over us. One thing alone could free us, and that is Death. A master has no title over a slave when dead, but not until then is he free. Now here it is said "Christ died unto sin once," i.e., Sin had a claim against Him! Not personally, but because He had taken by substitution the place of His people; so, because Sin had a claim against them, it had a claim against Him when He stood in their stead. They would have remained in bondage forever, unless God had sent One Who could answer the penalty by His death and after that rise again, thus showing Himself superior to the power of Death. And when we see this—that what Christ has affected was made ours by God—we are enabled to use the words of this passage and say "We have died and we live again!"

It is a chapter of declaration and of exhortation. The declaration is made by God concerning a thing that has been done. He does not exhort us to be alive, but says we are so, and declares it as our blessing! We see in this the difference between the first and second Covenants. Of old it would have been an exhortation. The Law would say "Make yourselves alive unto God; meet God's holiness; obey His precepts; so you shall live." But how could one in whom Sin essentially dwells do this? When Christ was sent it was on the ground of the impossibility of this, and God by one act freed His people from the place of Sin, and by one act brought them up to a place of Glory. When Jesus rose into the presence of God, God viewed His people as "atoned for" in Him Who was raised. He triumphed gloriously in bringing down the strong household of the enemy and leading His people into His own holy habitation. It is utterly impossible for such to be the slaves of Sin again. We do not say it is impossible to commit a sin or a trespass, but to be the slaves of Sin. If

they sin it is not as belonging to Sin's household but to the household of God; to a new family. And in order to show this, the Apostle says "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under Law but under Grace." The believer might say "I have sinned against light and knowledge, and I fear I am again brought under the title of my former master Sin." It is not so. This would have been the case under the Law, but the believer is in a different position. God, having called him by His grace, He is able to say even to Satan, "This is a brand plucked from the burning, he shall not go back again under the claim of his old master."

Thus, Romans 6:14 so used, becomes one of the most comforting and confirming in the whole Scripture. It discloses the great secret, how it is the believer does not fall back into Sin's household again. May we holily remember that God has set us free in order to be His servants, as belonging to His household, (Romans 6:13, Romans 6:18-19, Romans 6:22).

Now as a pledge of these truths, "Baptism" is given and the argument is grounded on this type. We are planted in the waters of death, which typically represent the death of Christ. He died under the full weight of the damnatory wrath of God. We never know that. The waters are to us the likeness, but only a likeness of death. God shadowed forth to us mercifully and peacefully that, whereby He seals to us visibly the blessings which He has verily performed for us. And seeing that we are not allowed to remain under, but are raised up out of the water, we are "raised in the likeness of His resurrection." We are not yet personally in resurrection, but we wait for the fulfillment of this type; knowing that what God has thus promised will be fulfilled in due season. This is one thing that Baptism typifies to us. It is not an ordinance to bring to God, but for those who have been brought and who are able to confess that, whereunto they are brought: and Baptism in any other way is disobedience. Yet, in the professing Church, this ordinance is made a means of bringing to God if received by a priestly hand! This is a lie of Satan. God never appointed Baptism for that end, but as a sign and seal of the blessing already received through personal faith—a past blessing received in Christ—so no wonder the Church is overrun with false doctrine!

Baptism is a seal of the blessing received in the second Person of the blessed Trinity, and does not refer to the work of the third Person as is usually supposed. There is need of discernment here. If we confound the work of one Person with that of Another, all the doctrines of "grace" are confused and foundation truths are touched; so that it is needful to keep all the truths of Redemption in their proper place: to the Father what belongs to the Father; to the Son what belongs to the Son; and to the Holy Spirit that which belongs to Him. Being brought to God in Christ, we belong to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. Their Name is placed on us in Baptism. The source is in the Father; the channel in the Son; and the application through the Holy Ghost; so that we now belong to the "family of God." Accordingly, God has undertaken to work till we are really brought home into the full power of that which is essentially ours in Christ and to be fully ours forever! Such is the blessed standing of those who believe; and to them comes the exhortation "Yield your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Romans 7:1-6. Then, there is another power against us; something very different indeed from Sin. Sin comes from us, but the holy blessed Law of God comes from Him; and just because it is holy, it is against us, and it brings Curse on us seeing we are unholy.

Now, says the Apostle, this also was met by the great Substitute! Did He not die under the curse of that Law? Did He not meet its claims? Therefore, believers have died to that Law and no longer

belong to that husband. In Chapter 6 the figure was of master and slave: here (Romans 7:1-6) it is of husband and wife: but in either case says the Apostle, the tie is broken by "death."

Romans 7:7-8 This section reveals the relation of God in making man acquainted with Himself and also with the flesh, and should be read as one chapter. Man is here presented in four conditions. The first was seen in Adam when he quitted Paradise. How little he knew of his real death-like condition before God; how little conscious of the condemnation and sin under which he was! He had found mercy where he expected judgment for his first transgression, but the effects of it were not yet proved; he was still a stranger to the evil of the "flesh." Sin was as it were slumbering. It was in the heart like a viper coiled up, but the moment it was touched by a fresh commandment it revived. When God says "Do this," the flesh desires not to do it, and vice versa. This is the necessary result of the fall; that every natural feeling is at enmity with God, though it is not every heart that is aware of the strong flow of evil against God within. This condition of human nature is described in Romans 7:9. "I was alive without the law once." "I" represents humanity, and Paul said this as identifying himself with humanity in that condition. It was the experience of man; and inasmuch as he was man, so far it was his experience. Had he lived when Adam did, before the Law was brought to bear on man or the holiness of God fully revealed, he would have "felt alive" and quite unconscious of his "death" before God; but "when the commandment came, sin revived and I died," i.e., felt himself brought back into the same condition of curse as Adam when he ate of the tree. This is the second condition of humanity. And suppose a person in that state to be caused to delight in the inner man in the Law. This can only be by God being pleased to create in him the "new man," and this He does the moment anyone believes. It has new affections; new feelings; new joys; entirely contrasted with all man naturally is. This "new man" is to be distinguished from the Person of the Holy Ghost, because it is created by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is God. This "new man" is not God. It is a "creation" of the Spirit of God but not the Spirit itself. These should be carefully distinguished. In a believer there is the old self—all that he is naturally—but there is also the new self—instinct with spiritual life. Not called into exercise perhaps, but, just as a weak babe has undeveloped powers of life in it without strength or vigor, so is it with the "new man" created through the Spirit. And God is pleased to deal with this "new man," because He desires a believer should be able to understand what His ways are; and in this second condition God acts towards him by means of His holy Law; not revealing to him His Grace in Christ, but keeping that apart, and exercising him by the knowledge of His own holiness as revealed in The Law.

Suppose I could take from you as believers all that you know about Redemption in Christ—all the power of the Spirit of grace now given in measure to all who believe—there would then only remain in you the "old man" and the "new man," And suppose I then made to you a revelation suddenly of all the claims of God's holiness in vivid power, so that you saw the terrors of the Holy Law according to the sensitiveness of the "new man," what misery this would be! You would say "This holy Law I ought to meet in all its length and breadth, for it is holy, just, and good; but, He is so holy, He requires a spotless unblemished service; no taint must attach to it." Then, looking at yourself, you would see the "old man" with all its evil; and that, not in weakness but in giant strength! In the "new man" is weakness like as in a babe, but in the "old man" is mighty power and developed energy as in a giant; and the heart would soon find that these things were so opposed, that even if there were a feeble desire to serve God in the "new man," it would be in an instant

overpowered by the giant life and power of the "old man."

It is the figure of a babe chained to a giant. The babe may struggle, but the giant quickly overpowers it and is sure to drag it where he likes! It would say "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the Law of my mind, bringing me into captivity, etc., (Romans 7:22)." And its cry would be "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Now this cry is what God desires should be elicited. He seeks to lead to this exercise of soul. Probably the nearest approach to this experience was in the case of the Apostle Paul during the three days after he believed in the Lord Jesus and before Ananias came and the Spirit was given to him. Most likely during that interval he was greatly exercised by the knowledge of God's Law. He had delighted in it ignorantly, and in his natural state thought he had kept it; but now it bore on him in a different way. The "new man" in him began to apprehend it, and to see what the power of evil within him was, and he no doubt uttered that bitter cry before Ananias came "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" as though chained to a dead body. And it was not until he knew of Redemption that he found peace, and said "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

[Thus it will also be with the remnant of Israel whom Paul represented. It will be some time before the ways of Redemption are explained to them and the Spirit given personally to dwell in them. Though quickened, and their sin forgiven; yet, considerable time will elapse before they are brought to the peaceful knowledge of Redemption; and they will probably go through something of this experience.]

It is true "the flesh still lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh;" and this conflict will continue to the end even in the most advanced believer; but there is not conflict only. The real question of the passage is not one of God acting merely by means of Law on the New man, for God does not now try the soul by Law, but presents to it the fullness of His Grace in Christ.

Suppose Sinai confronted us, and God presented His Law, saying "Keep this;" how different our condition! We should be met by that instead of the Grace in Christ Jesus as the Mediator of the New Covenant! But, when God sees us now in conflict, He says "My Law has been kept; it has been glorified and made honorable; and as an instrument to bring to Myself it is no longer used!" This explains how the "condemnation" can be put away. We see how the giant "sin in the flesh" as the Apostle calls it, received its death blow and is judicially set aside, for "God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, and condemned sin in the flesh" —i.e., poured damnatory wrath on this evil corrupt thing—on the Cross. (Romans 8:3). To "condemn" does not mean to express disapproval but, "damnation!" It is a strong word of judgment. "Sin in the flesh" is our name by nature; thus, damnatory judgment has passed on ourselves; on our evil flesh. So, though the "old man" is not actually abolished; though it still struggles; it is judicially set aside and slain. It is so regarded above in the courts of Heaven; and it is a great point to see this while the flesh struggles. Its continuance is a question of time only, but it is set aside judicially, as fully as if every feeling and sensation of it had passed away!

Then the believer desires another thing. If the flesh be judicially slain while it actively struggles; and if the "new man" be like a weak babe, the believer says "Oh that some strength might be given to the babe to resist the practical power of the giant Sin."

Well, God does this by giving "the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:4). There is a motive principle of sin in the "flesh" and there is also a corresponding principle of good in the "new man" through the Spirit, so that strength is given to the babe. God feeds it by His truth and nourishes it by faith and His promises, so that it grows and disputes the title of the "old man." It is now able to resist the practical power of sin and to obey what God commands without being prevented from measurably carrying out its desires; and in the power of the "new man" through the Spirit the believer can serve God. Instead of being a prisoner under the power of the giant, he is able to drag it along as a rebellious struggling thing; and, according to his strength in the Spirit, he will less and less feel the burden and be able to walk in new paths though still carrying the evil burden. When we see the guilt of the flesh, we think of the Cross of Jesus; and when we see its power over us, we turn to the Law of the Spirit of Life which is given to sustain and cheer. God regards us as in the Spirit and not in the flesh. We are considered by Him as identified with the new thing and not with the old; and this encourages and gives us confidence to serve Him.

Then comes the fourth condition "Human nature" in Resurrection (Romans 5:11), when brought into the likeness of Christ in Glory, and the "old man" actually as well as judicially set aside! Thus, there are four conditions of humanity here described:

I. When unacquainted with the Holy Law of God.

II. When met by the claims of that Holy Law.

III. When there is an acquaintance not only with Law, but with Redemption in Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost.

IV. When made like Christ in Glory. When St. Paul wrote he was in the third of these conditions. He will be in the fourth when his body is raised and glorified. So with us as believers: yet it is profitable to consider the others, for they teach a lesson which will endear to us the preciousness of Redemption, and lead us to appreciate more the real character of the evil with which we struggle and to be less disposed to fret under it. The Spirit is also the Spirit of "sonship," crying "Abba Father." Of old it was the Spirit of "servantship" leading to fear; not slavish fear, but the feeling a right-minded servant would have towards his master. Eliezer was a faithful servant to Abraham, but his relation was not the filial feeling of Isaac. Although saints of old were truly sons, yet, as to their feelings and the way in which they were dispensationally treated, they differed not from servants. They were as it were, at school until Christ came, when they were brought home to their Father's house as sons and heirs and able to say "Abba Father."

Then follows the practical place in which those are set who have these blessings; one in which there is "groaning." Although "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed," yet there are sufferings. God might have removed all. The work of Christ gave full title for it, but He has been pleased that they should continue, for ours is a salvation of Hope; and we, through endurance, wait for it. The circumstances around too, are very contrary to the blessing promised; for Creation is "made subject to vanity," i.e. to frustration. Everything both outwardly and morally God has been pleased to subject to frustration because of Adams sin; and, by reason of our being linked to that which is thus subjected, "we groan" even naturally.

Besides this, when God has given the greatest present gift to us in the world, even the possession of His own Spirit as the Comforter—I say the greatest gift in the world, for Christ is in Heaven above—when that Spirit comes, He also causes us to "groan," because He makes us more sensitive of the evil around. Not with a mere natural superficial feeling, but with a deep-seated remembrance of it which we carry about with us day-by-day; so that there must be the "groan." But we must take care that our reliefs in these things are not of Nature: "sparks of our own kindling," (Isaiah 1:10-11). The reliefs of God are great and precious, and one reason why He has allowed sorrow to remain is, that He may show His power in bringing comfort into the circumstances, just as by and by: He will cause all to pass away forever. These reliefs of God are of great importance to consider. The chief of them is Hope. Faith and Hope have a wondrous power to sustain under all disastrous circumstances; enabling the believer to glorify God yet to look steadily at sorrow; to say "We wait for something that will not fail or disappoint when it comes." Unless there were endurance there would be no room for Hope. Divine power keeps it there like a little spark floating on the billows, and it glorifies God by looking to Him Who alone can help, and thus enables us to feel that "all things work together for good."

Circumstances of misery and sorrow also afford opportunities for service in relieving "the groan" around: and that is one reason why the believer is left here. God might easily relieve it Himself; but He waits to see whether those who have the sympathies of His heart will do it and take His place; as it is said "It is more blessed to give than to receive." He loves not to hear the "groan," but waits to see whether our ear will hear it because we desire to act for Him; and that He will own in the Day of glory. The close of the chapter gives the great assurance of His unchangeable love from which "nothing can separate." As the soul contemplates surrounding circumstances, it would be terrified if left to look at them apart from God: but if we had a vivid apprehension of God's glory in the Heavens and then of the vastness of His power in the depths below—for there are "heights" and "depths" —if God were to withdraw the veil, we should tremble and shrink, and say "Shall not these separate us from Him?"

Nay, says the Apostle. These are all creatures; but God knoweth us in Christ Who is not created; and "nothing shall separate us from Him!" Thus the soul can rest, and say "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us!"

28 - The Purpose of God According to Election

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 28 "The Purpose of God According to Election" In Romans 9:1-33; Romans 10:1-21; Romans 11:1-36 "An if by Grace, then it is no more of works." Romans 11:6 "For Christ is the End of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes." Romans 10:4 "Whom he hath called; not of the Jew only, but also of the gentiles." Romans 9:24

It is at this point the Epistle divides. Former chapters reveal in their great fulness the blessings which personally belong to every believer, with the assurance that "nothing can separate" there-from. But then, the sorrow connected with such thoughts is, that these blessings are so little diffused and known. They may be like a "garden enclosed;" a "spring shut up;" a "fountain sealed;" i.e., reaching very few: and if so, there must be sorrow. But it is not the intention of God that the order of the age should always exclude the power of blessing. He intends the order of the age to be itself molded under it. And, is there no desire in a believer's heart that the present condition of things should be altered? Yet, if it be altered, God will alter it in His own time. He has His own methods, His own plans for affecting His purposes; and remember our hearts are just as likely to be wrong respecting the methods whereby God reaches His ends as the ends themselves. So it is of great importance for hearts to be instructed respecting the mode in which God attains those ends. That is the subject of Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36 : which show the application of these blessed truths not only to individuals but to nations: first, to God's own nation Israel, and after that to all nations of the earth: and it is the diffusion and application of these blessings in this wide sphere, which will at last result in the earth being brought into that condition of blessedness, of which it is said "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the (Land) as the waters cover the sea!"

Now, the reason for this continual heaviness and sorrow of heart in the Apostle was, because they, for whom this blessing was designed and to whom it was, primarily presented, refused it; and he well knew that until Israel received it the nations of the world could not be blessed; because God has appointed that Israel shall first be blessed, and then, but not till then, shall "all the ends of the earth see the salvation of God," (Psalms 67:1-2, Psalms 67:7). And this was an abiding condition of his soul. Though blessed and honored in his ministry, yet this did not take away the sorrow of his heart day by day. Has this, I ask, been the character of Gentile Christians? Have they had an estimate of these things? Have they shared in the feelings of the Apostle of the Gentiles? No! This thought has been almost entirely lost to the minds of Christians! They do not understand this sorrow; they have not seen the consequences of their failure and the ruin around, and thus do not apprehend the nature of that power which is necessary to remove the hindrances and to bring Israel into that blessed position! So as a rule, if Christians in their experience have advanced to the end of Romans 8:1-39, they have gone no farther! They are satisfied with individual security and blessing, but neglectful as to blessing on the nations and the means of its introduction! But it is deeply important to awake from this slumber and to understand the relation of God to His people Israel and to those who have nominally received His salvation while Israel has rejected it. This is spoken of in the chapters that follow; and any heart truly

interested in these chapters must necessarily be led to all that the prophets have spoken, but not otherwise. And in following out these thoughts, we have peculiar need of submissive minds; of hearts that do not seek to “reply against God;” that do not expect now that everything should be explained respecting His ways, so as fully to understand them. It is not for you or for me to perplex ourselves with seeking explanations, but to learn what God has revealed; and, if a question arise, to bow our hearts and say “Who art thou that repliest against God?” (Romans 9:20).

Now with respect to this chapter, see what joy the Apostle himself had in Christ! I need not say how he recognized the blessedness of the truths in the preceding chapters, but yet he had “great heaviness” because he thought of others; of Israel. He loved them because they were his brethren, but also because he understood what their prospects were “whose are the promises, etc.” reminding himself that “God’s gifts and calling are unrepented of,” (Romans 11:29).

There is a parenthesis in Romans 9:2-3. “I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart on account of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” That is the connection. The inter-vening words “for I used to wish myself accursed from Christ” are a parenthesis, showing to his own people that he sympathized with them; that he had had exactly the same feelings once. Many of the Roman Christians were con-verted Jews, and numbers of unconverted Jews lingered among their converted brethren, so he knew that Jewish eyes would rest on these words, and he wished to show that he did not boast against them, as if he had not once been darkened as they then were. And what was the thought that they had and that he had once had? That he had wished to have nothing to do with Christ; and in wishing that, he of course wished to be “accursed from Him!” He did not then see what was involved in wishing not to have anything to do with Christ; but now his eyes were opened to understand what those will be manifested to be in the Day of Christ’s glory, who have nothing to do with Him now. It was not the then present wish of the Apostle, but a statement of his past experience, when he was as ignorant of the blessing of being in Christ as they. In Romans 9:4-5 he speaks of what the blessings of the real Israel are, and then announces a most important principle in verse 6: “They are not all Israel who are of Israel;” for a delusion has rested on the Jewish mind, that all who have the outward name of Israel are the real Israel of God! Now God has not so appointed. He has appointed an out-ward Israel; a typical Israel; but His thought always has been of there being another character-istic beside the outward mark and call; and that wherever “faith” was not found, whatever the outward calling might be, there was not the true characteristic of an Israelite. This is the principle on which God ever has and ever will act; and when the time comes for Israel to be gathered in, everyone who has this inward principle of “faith,” whether belonging to the outward Israel or gathered from among Gentiles, will belong to the Israel of God in the eternal sense; and in that sense the name will be continued even into the New Heavens and New Earth; as it is said “Thou art My servant O Israel, in whom I will be glorified!” So the blessings pronounced on Israel are ever mentioned as eternal blessings; being blessings that end not on earth but go on to the everlasting day!

Well, having mentioned this principle, it in-volved that great question respecting which even the converted Jewish mind felt much difficulty; viz., the “calling of the Gentiles:” for it is very evident that if they were brought out of their despised condition into anything like a parity of condition with them in blessing, it must be simply on the ground of “grace;” for “nothing but God’s effectual calling in grace” without works could effect it. It was strange that they did not see themselves to be no better: but that is the reason why, in the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus so continually emphasizes

the word “world;” to prove to Israel that God had sent Him on a mission to a lost “world;” and, if they were willing to stand on that ground and own they were not better than the “world,” they could receive what He was sent to minister, and find in Him that which they needed, even Manna and Light (John 6:1-71). But, if they said they were morally superior to the world, then His mission was not to them, for He was sent to the lost world. This, they were unwilling to acknowledge. They wished to stand on a higher elevation than other men; therefore, the object of the Apostle was to prove by a reference to various instances in their history and various texts, that God had always dealt with Israel on the principle of “calling and election in Grace;” that He was dealing thus, and that He would in future deal on that principle. And first, he takes the case of Isaac. There was Ishmael and there were other children of Abraham, but were they not set aside and Isaac “chosen” by the sovereign will of God? So the foundation of Jewish blessing rests on this principle of God dealing in sovereign, elective Grace!

Again, in the case of Jacob and Esau was not the same principle seen? Esau had the comeliness and the goodliness of nature which were not found in Jacob; but Jacob was “chosen” and Esau set aside, and that before they were born or had done good or evil! And to go still further in their history. After they were called out of Egypt and put under special blessing at Sinai, did they not forget all blessing as a body by the worship of the golden calf? Then God said they would all be cut off unless He dealt with them on the promise “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, etc.” (Romans 9:15). There again was the avowed principle, for their only hope was through God dealing with them in “grace.” All had broken the relation in which they stood to God! He could justly have blotted them all out and saved Moses alone; but He reserved in His own hand the right to pity and to show mercy where He would!

Then the Apostle pursues the history of Israel. When Isaiah began to prophesy, he stood almost alone, saying “There was only a remnant in the midst of all Israel that God could own;” and looking forward to the future return of God’s blessing to them, he declares that “only a remnant will be saved, because a short work i.e., a concise work, will the Lord make upon earth.” Not short as to time, but as to that which is coincided or pared down till only a few are left (Romans 9:28). And Hosea says the same (Romans 9:25): —“call” being a word of “electing grace” —so that this principle is shown in the history of Israel from beginning to end. And on this principle God is acting now, not to Jews only but also to Gentiles (Romans 9:24), for the same sovereign Grace enables Him to “call out” from the Gentiles as well as from the Jews; and those on whom this blessing rests are “children of Abraham.” And do you ask who they are? I answer. “Those who do not refuse to submit to the righteousness of faith,” (Romans 9:30). There is the “stumbling-stone” at which Israel has stumbled, but which God has set as “a sure foundation.” Two passages are combined in Romans 9:33 (Isaiah 28:16 and Isaiah 8:14); and wherever there is an inward eye, open to see that this “stone” is indeed precious and to build on it as a foundation, such shall “never haste away confounded.” No circum-stances shall terrify them. The hail will indeed overflow and sweep away the “refuge of lies,” but they shall stand firm and unmoved! In Romans 9:19 the Apostle anticipates the objection that it is unjust in God to act thus. I need not say that any attempt to explain this is vain; but at the same time, what must be more evident to any heart that honestly looks at its individual condition, than that everything that has been the result of its own energies; of its own willing and doing, has ever been to hinder the operation of the grace of God? If then, it were not revealed in Scrip-ure, yet, what would the instructed heart more readily rejoice in, than that “all is

of God;" that He has guided; that He has led? The flesh is so hard; its evil so great, that it never would have regarded this salvation of God; it would have spurned it and "stumbled at the stumbling-stone" unless God in sovereign Grace had "called" and been pleased to "show mercy." In this we may rejoice, leaving all in His hands; not daring by means of this truth to interfere with any testimony of the love of God to lost sinners. We reason not on such questions; we judge not God nor explain His ways; but we wait to understand them. On the one hand we say that nothing but "sovereign Grace" can open any heart, and that some will become more and more hardened; yet, it does not prevent our presenting the love of God in Christ to souls. We attempt not to reason, but we take things as God has put them and set them in the light in which He has set them. It is as daring to interfere with God's manner of setting forth truths, as it is to set aside the truths themselves. In both we are to exercise Faith: to subject our minds; to take the Word as our guide; and the result will be peace to our hearts. If we take up one particular truth alone, we shall lose the combination of the truths of God, and also produce damage to others: for the truth we may have set aside may be the very one by which God seeks to lead and comfort and help another's soul. We must not nullify or reason down one part by another nor profess to reconcile all statements of Scripture, but keep our minds in subjection to God; and when the end comes it will explain all, for we shall then "know as we are known."

Romans 10:1-21

You will observe the earnestly expressed desire of the Apostle in verse 1 respecting Israel as a people "that they might be saved:" for he well knew that all his hopes concerning the universal progress of the Truth; the rectifying of the nations; the putting down of the power of Satan; the bringing in of the appointed order and blessing of God all depended on the return of Israel to the Lord through the veil being taken from their heart. Therefore, if he desired the earth's blessing; the release of creation from the bondage of corruption; if he desired "the times of refreshing and restitution to come, when God would send Christ," he must have had that anxious desire respecting Israel.

Now, it is of no slight importance as to healthfulness of soul and true spirituality of heart, whether or not our desires and thoughts are turned the same way and directed to the same objects as the Apostle's were. Then, speaking of the condition of Israel, he says "they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge," (Romans 10:2)!

Observe that strong expression. Few knew better than he what "zeal" was; so, for him to say they had a zeal for God was a great acknowledgment indeed; but it profited them not, because not according to revealed truth! They were "ignorant of God's righteousness" —of that which formed the basis of all knowledge of God in peace and salvation—of that "righteousness" prepared by God, which He as it were, holds in His hand and presents for sinners to be accepted in. But Israel spurned it! They wished to "establish a righteousness of their own," and refused "to submit themselves" —observe those words, "refused to submit themselves—to the righteousness of Christ" prepared by God! They imply that the good hand of God sought to subject them to it but that they resisted, and therefore all their righteousness went for nothing; it brought them not to God (Romans 10:3): whereas, Christ's righteousness brings believers to the same end, to the same final point where they would have been had they kept the whole Law (Romans 10:4)! for His obedience to the Law as the Substitute forms the righteousness in which they are accepted!

Then the Apostle tells of that which connects with this righteousness, viz. “the Word of Faith” which he preached; referring (Romans 10:6-9) to a passage in Deuteronomy 30:1-20 where Moses speaks of the Law, saying “it is not necessary to range over the wide creation to find the will of God, for it is here taught by my lips; only do what I propose to you to do, and you shall live.”

Now says St. Paul, we too like Moses, are messengers of God, and are able to tell you the nearness of the message which we bring. Yet, we do not say as he did, “Hear these things, do them, and live.” but we say “Hear, believe and live.” What a difference! So how important for us to know the instrumental means by which God bringeth us to life and acceptance! How emphatically the Apostle declares it to be “the Word which he preached,” (Romans 10:8); elsewhere called “the foolishness of preaching.” So it is a momentous question; for we are not concerned simply with the link that connecteth with it. Yet, how Satan has labored to deceive souls, even when not able to turn them entirely away from Christ: but, how simple are the words of Romans 10:8-9! There is no uncertainty; “thou shalt be saved” —the word “unto” meaning unto; not merely a tendency towards salvation without reaching it—and such an one shall not haste away like a discomfited fugitive in the confusion of terrified flight, but shall stand his ground: and this, whether he be Jew or Greek; for in Romans 10:12-13 the word “whosoever” is emphasized: making it as comprehensive as possible, and quoting a passage from Joel referring to the same principle obtaining in the Day of the Lord. The Holy Spirit must indeed open the heart to receive the message, simple as it is otherwise it would be sure to reject it; but is it not a mercy to have a word to speak to others respecting the justifying work of Christ, and that if any believe “that word which we speak” they are saved. Eternal life enters their soul! So, it is not by priestly ordinances, rites, ceremonies: it is not by a course of educational training; it is not by waiting for something that is not sent, that souls are to be brought to God, but by words addressed to ears directing to Christ, which, if received, they are brought as the Apostle says to those two great things, to righteousness and salvation!

Now as usual, the heart, especially the Jewish heart, reasoned against this, and was disposed to say preaching was a foolish instrument, and not of use to bring to God: so the Apostle refers to their own Scriptures as to what is said of that coming hour, when the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace are spoken of as “blessed” and as the means by which God brings to Himself. But, says the caviling heart of the Jew, “at that time the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace will be welcomed: not despised; not rejected; not spurned;” but, turning to the Apostle would point out the contrast in his reception: that his feet were not counted “beautiful.” “True,” says the Apostle (Romans 10:16), that while “faith cometh by the report, and the report by the Word of God” yet, do not your own Scriptures also speak of a time when the report (it is the same word) is rejected (Isaiah 53:1): and that this Gospel is to be preached in a period of rejection before the time comes for the feet of them that preach it to be esteemed “beautiful?” And then he uses words to show how Scripture recognized Israel as a “gainsaying people” at the time salvation comes to some who are chosen from among the Gentiles (Romans 10:20-21). Thus Romans 10:1-21 concludes with a sorrowful picture of Israel. Not that there was not mercy in the message sent, but they despised and rejected it! and a quotation in verse 18 from Psalms 19:1-14 tells of the extent of the testimony to them. But are they always to remain so? Is all blessing taken from Israel? Nay, says the Apostle I am myself a witness that “God hath not cast away his people.”

Romans 11:1-36

There is also a remnant in every generation of Israel (Romans 11:2): and by and bye, Israel as a nation is to be gathered in (Romans 11:26)! The olive-tree, planted in the earth when God called Abraham, remains. Israel despised it; consequently they were broken off (Romans 11:17) and another branch grafted in, viz., Gentiles, who professed to welcome this grace. So, imagine to yourselves a tree with the branches on one side broken out, and those on the other side standing; but even those branches cankered! for, have the Gentile branches continued in God's goodness? Have they not also despised the righteousness of God and sought to build up a righteousness of their own? Where has "the faith once delivered to the saints" been more trampled down than in midst of Christendom? Think of its condition this day (Dec. 25, 1856), rejoicing professedly in the birth of Christ: yet what ground is there for that joy? Has not the wickedness of Christendom made the name of Christ to be blasphemed amongst the Jews, and is not the Antichristianism finally to be manifested an excrescence of Christendom? Yet, it is supposed that the salvation of Christ has reached and sanctified them in this condition! Hence the festivities and songs of mirth when there ought to be the cry "unclean, unclean." Yet, on the cankered branch there may be berries—few perhaps—nevertheless, berries are fruit, and God will esteem them the more because growing in an evil day. It is a day when there is considerable testimony to "Grace," but without it being sufficiently added that the "Grace," which brings priests—which all God's people are—into the sanctuary and presents them sprinkled with the Blood and the anointing oil, also sends them forth again to put a difference between clean and unclean. That part is forgotten or but feebly estimated, yet both are needful. This would keep from the tone of feeling predominating at this season, and preserve a sorrowful one in the soul. "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep," your comfort passeth away: but, "blessed are they that mourn now, for they shall be comforted." And did not the grace in these chapters nerve the heart of the Apostle? You know it did: and what does Romans 11:1-36 end in? Sorrow or thanksgiving? Where do we find in all Scripture more blessed words of thanksgiving than Romans 11:33-36? So it is out of the night of sorrow that this joy comes; and we shall not then repent us of the trial and sorrows, for they will stand like the darkness of the departing night in contrast to the bright rays of a cloudless day. Thus may these thoughts chasten and comfort us, that so in our measure we may be "just and devout," waiting for the consolation of Israel."

See Patmos 7 and 24 for Romans 11:1-36; Romans 12:1-21; Romans 13:1-14; Romans 14:1-23.

29 - The Calling of the Gentiles/ The New Meat Offering

B.W. Newton The "Patmos" Series No. 29 The Calling of the Gentiles.

"The New Meat Offering."

Romans 15:1-33&Romans 16:1-27

"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:" Ephesians 3:5-6

"For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:"

Galatians 2:8

It seems to have been one object of the Apostle here to exhort the saints to likemindedness; to oneness of feeling and unity of thought which were especially needful on account of the character of Jewish believers' attitude towards Gentile converts. It was so difficult for them to believe that the Gentiles were recipients of the same grace and blessing as themselves, for the tendency of the human heart is always to narrow round itself; whereas, the thoughts and desires of God are expansive and always of enlarged blessing. Therefore, the Apostle exhorts them to remember that these Gentile Christians were made sharers of the same privileges in Christ Jesus as they (Romans 15:6-7): and speaks of his "ministrations" to them being acceptable to God, that fruit might be gathered from among them also to His praise. In Romans 15:16 he regards them as having all the excellency of the "meat-offering;" for Christ had been ministered to them and all His perfectness of character, His developed character, was connected with them! The Apostle loved to look back upon' Israel; to remember their priestly services; and in doing so, he would think with himself that he also was a priest consecrated to God; able to go forth in the power of that consecration and to bring an "offering" which would be accepted by God!

He remembered also the "loaves;" those "two loaves" which represented the Jewish and Gentile Churches (Leviticus 23:1-44). But how could those "loaves" be accepted for leaven was there and also sin and failure in those poor believers? But the "sin-offering" being connected with them they could be presented before the Lord, and be accepted! The Apostle was able to wave them as it were, before Him, and thus "the offering up of the Gentiles was acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost;" and he had fruit and widespread blessing in his ministrations towards them! From Jerusalem even unto Illyricum "he says; a wide tract of country over which he was allowed to spread the blessed message of the Gospel! And are we not also priests consecrated to God, and have we not an altar at which to feed? Yes: and able in the power of our priestly consecration to go forth as ministers of blessing to others; and whenever we are made the means of gathering in any to the same priestly privileges, ice bring an offering, "acceptable to God!"

St. Paul here seems to be reviewing the past. It is rather a dangerous tendency to look back on past labors when our thoughts ought to be looking forward, thinking of the onward course to which we are called. I do not say it may not be well sometimes; that the past may not thus be reviewed without harm; still, it is rather a dangerous thing. But the Apostle does not seem so much led away in this respect as he was in another way, as we shall presently see.

He appeared to think the time was come to quit his then present work for a while; and spoke of leaving it and going elsewhere (Romans 15:23-25). No wonder his heart should be drawn to Jerusalem with a desire to minister those things which the saints in Macedonia and Achaia had contributed for the poor saints in Jerusalem. It was "an offering well-pleasing unto the Lord," that they should evidence their love for and sympathy with the poor among those from whom they had received so much spiritual blessing. But now it was that the Apostle failed. Here, he went wrong; for elsewhere (Acts 21:4), we learn that he was told "he ought not to go up to Jerusalem;" expressly told so by those who spoke to him "in the Spirit!" Yet, in disobedience he was bent on going, and a new temptation presented itself. There seems to have been an apprehension of death brought before him. "Bonds," it was said "awaited him" if he persevered (Acts 21:11)! Still, he persisted in going, saying "he was willing and no doubt feeling he was ready to die at Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus."

He did go; and though preserved from death, from bonds and imprisonment he was not delivered; so that the Gospel in his person was "bound," and he never after was able to spread it as he desired nor allowed to go back with the same blessed message as he intended! It was stopped at Illyricum. He did indeed dwell in his own hired house; and there, while watched by soldiers "he expounded the Word to all that came unto him;" but he never was allowed to return, nor did the Gospel afterwards meet with the same reception: and we also find failure soon coming in even among those Churches over which he had watched! [It is seldom a believer ends his course as favorably as he begins. St. Paul did not. After his wrong step in Acts 21:4 and Acts 21:12, he did not have the same triumph in preaching as before, and difficulties arose in many ways. Shipwreck, imprisonment, many troubles unknown before came upon him; and in Jerusalem danger threatened him, so that he had to take refuge in a compliance with Jewish customs! He had got into a wrong path and the best thing he could do was to go into the Temple; but the best in a wrong path is not always a good thing.] And now in days like these, when everything around has failed, is there not great blessing; is there not peculiar honor for those who seek to cleave to the principles of God and to maintain and spread the truths of His Word when all is in opposition thereunto? Yes, and in one sense even more peculiar honor than in the Apostle's case, when it was comparatively an easy thing: for you can suppose how his success must have urged him on and given him spirit as it were, and renewed energy. But, when everything is contrary and circumstances so entirely against us, still to press on in spite of all that seems hopeless, is just the character of Faith that will meet with reward, on the principle on which the Lord spoke to Thomas. He did not say it was not a blessed thing to believe in Him and own Him when he had seen for himself, but He did say that far greater blessing belongs to those who "have not seen and yet have believed." May we then seek these things, remembering that God's way of dealing in the midst of failure around has been to raise-up individuals here and there who have owned and maintained His Truth. The interferences of God for blessing have ever been through individuals, not through large bodies, and I have a strong conviction that individuals, beginning in that slow way, will be His

instrumentality for rectifying present things. Take Deborah, e.g., who of old sat under an oak solitary and alone; her heart imbued with the principles of God and instructing all who came to her. Even a woman God thus owned and raised-up to be a deliverer in Israel! For many a long year did she thus go on under that oak imparting instruction, and there seemed to be no result but, when the time came and it was needful for some to be called out, and for it to be made manifest who were “on the Lord’s side,” there were found many who had listened to her; who had heard the truths and principles of God from her lips, who were therefore ready “to come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty,” (Judges 5:1-31): so that her labor was not in vain! Thus was it with the Judges in Israel and with others since who have sought to maintain and to spread the principles of God.

[There is such a thing you know as the crowned priest. Only once do we read of this and that not in a day of great things; of strength and triumph; but at a time of weakness and failure around, when a few poor and feeble ones were engaged in building that House of wood, so different from the former House in its glory and beauty (Haggai 2:1-23)! Yet the Lord did own and bless their work, and accept their feeble efforts; honor and blessing were put upon them and we see them crowned as priests (Zechariah 6:1-15)!] So should we seek thus to go on, even if it be only to be engaged about that which is lowly as “wood;” yet, if it be in endeavoring to cleave unto the Lord and His Truth and to own His principles, rest assured it is that which He will accept and bless. This “ministration” still remains open to us. There may still be the Phoebe—the servant of the Church—and there may still be those who, like Priscilla and Aquila, cleave unto and seek to uphold and help those who do maintain the Truth. And, if it be so, it matters not whether our energies are connected with that which has the strength of an Apostle or the weakness of Phoebe; equally will it be owned, if wrought in humility and lowliness of heart, by Him Who “despises not the day of small things.”

Appendix I. The Conversion of the Philippian Jailer.

Acts 16:1-40. The present object of the action of God’s Spirit is to guide the steps of those who declare His Truth. How little the world realized that the Spirit was intently watching the steps of these two servants of God, because they held “the power of God unto salvation!” Men despised them. They did not see that “the power of God” was hidden in the feebleness of preaching or that that was the appointed means for bringing sinners into the glory of Christ. The Apostles too had inclinations contrary to the leadings of the Spirit, for they essayed to go into Bithynia (Acts 16:7), but they were not permitted. The Spirit of God does not allow His servants liberty to say they will go where they please. Some places He seals up, for God has a mind as to where His Truth shall be spread and also as to the occupation of private individuals. All have not the same gifts, and there are certain positions of service which He wishes held. This may be difficult to ascertain, but we often make it more so, because we like to have greater positions than God wishes us to have. The duties which servants have to masters and children to parents, etc., God wishes to have filled rightly. These are solemn questions now, and need to be rectified. Then, employments such as Dorcas are those God wants. Every female should be a Dorcas. It is duty to appoint a certain time everyday to serve the poor with the needle. It would be the greatest blessing to the Church if these little things were attended to, instead of aiming at positions never intended for them. They are of vital importance, and the neglect of them is a great hindrance to progress.

Well, Troas was the place they came to. We ought to think about Troas. It was the place God sent His servant to when He meant him to bring the Gospel to us! Had the Apostles followed their own course instead of God's direction, we, in these Western nations, might never have heard the Gospel! Yet, what mercies have been wasted on these Western nations! It is also the place whence the Devil spread the greatest idolatry over the earth, with the halo and sanctity cast over the cursed influence of Homer's writings. It influences still, but not yet to its fullest extent. Persons under that influence never get out of it to their dying hour! I never shall myself. Yet, young men know more of Homer than of the Bible! That is "Education" now: so God has not in vain brought this name before us.

There has been an evil influence from Troas, but God has sent another thence by weak human instruments; which if received, will bring to the true glory of God in Heaven! A vision came to Paul here, inviting him over to Macedonia, and he and Silas went to that city under the direction of God, but they found no open door! They abode several days and the Sabbath came: yet they found the only place no doubt, where the true God was worshipped, was by the river's side—outside man's city, the right place of Truth—where a few women resorted! How little they expected to find no preparation when sent by God! but God's servants are to know discouragement and to have their faith tried. One heart only was opened, and for many days this was the only encouragement. This teaches us not to be in haste, but to wait on God for mercies which He intends to give, and also shows that it needs God to open hearts or else the testimony will not be received: but, when the heart is thus opened, it is the result of the work of God and abides; it cannot be overthrown.

They remained at Philippi many days; and there "the spirit" that ruled the whole Grecian and Roman world for 500 years through the "Delphic oracle" —Pytho—met them! Socrates, Constantine, all men who ruled did nothing without consulting it! It was a mighty spirit in that damsel, and it was met by the mighty power of God in these two Apostles! Men now scorn the idea that that "oracle" was directed by evil spirits: but here is God's witness to the fact that it was so energized.

What did that "spirit" do? It said "These men are the servants of the Most High God!" Did you expect it would say that when all around were despising them; that devils should say what was true? But, that "they shew unto us the way of Salvation" was a lie! Satan never says pure Truth. If we had heard this, we should probably have said in our haste and folly "There's a witness for God:" and for many days it was the only witness! But see the faithfulness of the Apostle. He detected and cast out the demon Satan wanted to get into alliance and apparent association with them in "instruction." Paul saw the snare and cut the link directly! This is what Christians have not done. They try to get into connection with the Devil and his servants, and they succeed; and this is the reason of the condition of the Church now—linked with things that come from Satan—and until these are broken we shall not see any strength or firmness. God will seek to do this in some way, to form a body against Antichrist; so that we must take thought about it if we are seeking to cleave to Truth, for Society is going away whoring from God and is seemingly prospering! Satan will put forth his whole strength to avenge himself if we won't ally ourselves with him. He did so here. Immediately he is denounced, the saints are imprisoned; as if he said "If they will not accept my sustainment, they shall experience my enmity." It was a strange commencement for their obedience to the leadings of the Spirit—the stocks—but they learnt that God's choicest blessings are those which seem to come from death! A fell swoop was made by Satan, and he appeared to

succeed! They were cast into prison, but suddenly God interfered! The doors opened and the prisoners could have fled, and then it was that the earthquake and terror brought in the blessing to Philippi. It is a warning to us in these Western regions the manner in which the Gospel effected its entrance that we may know what we have to expect. All human progress is to be visited by an earthquake that is to shake all things; for God says "I will bring evil upon all flesh!" Jeremiah 4:23-28 is the only aspect in which to view human things, or we shall be misled by them.

Well, conviction of sin and of his own personal danger was wrought on the mind and soul of the jailer, and he was about to destroy himself; but the Apostles interposed, and they "spoke unto him the Word of the Lord." They not merely said "Believe on the Lord" but explained how He was the Sacrifice for sin; giving absolution from all penalties and bringing His own "sweet savor," that every poor sinner who casts himself on that work of righteousness would be saved. Not saved in the power of His essential righteousness, but in that which He by His personal obedience worked out in the world, forming the garment in which He arrays us! That spotless robe—a robe of excellence unspeakable, His greatest gift—was given to the jailer, and is given to envelope all who cast themselves on God's mercy.

Some persons say it is far better to be changed into His likeness than to have this robe! Damnable thought this! "Get thee behind me Satan" we should say to such. This robe is the groundwork of all blessings. It has all the perfectness of God; and because of having this, God brings into a condition that beseems that robe. So what a fearful thing to despise it! The jailer believed and was baptized; the sign that he shared in the death of the Substitute, the peculiarity of Whose death was, that it was death under judicial wrath, which no "creature" could go through and live: but which the Holy One could carry us through in Him! This death had in it a fragrance as incense, which is given as our endowment. Thus the jailer became possessed of all the perfectness of Christ—a precious gift of which the women's spices told—a death that had an excellency in God's sight which enables believers to say they have died in their "Substitute." This is a gift almost beyond belief, and this perfectness was put on him and on all who believe the message this poor man believed. Thus, they expounded and unfolded the work Christ had done, and explained that he was associated with all the consequences dependent on the value of that "death" in God's sight! Death not Life is the procuring cause, for God is pledged to give this to all associated with the value of the "death" of Christ!

After the jailer had heard, believed, and was associated with them, the Apostles were set free and the Church at Philippi was founded. It was one of the most blessed of all the Churches; so that Paul was able to say, that whenever he thought of them he rejoiced and thanked God, (Php 1:3)! The Gospel began here under this cloud, and sorrows continued! Years passed on, and Paul found only difficulties and sorrows, and he wrote this epistle in bonds (1:3); yet the Philippians never faltered! They had fellowship with him in sunshine and in storm; and he was comforted having this confidence, that the work was abiding in them, and that the faith they exhibited they would manifest to the end (1:6). A rare blessing this! The faith of many drooped. Few had this adherence to the Apostle and the Gospel through this dark time, and he speaks to them (ch. 3) of the manner in which the goal should be attained. There might be either a continuing in faithfulness and strength; or, a giving up before the end.

How he should “attain to the resurrection from among the dead” was Paul’s anxiety. He desired it should be as one whose faith had not waxed feeble. God had promised glory, but he felt that the path through which he passed to it was un-certain. He wished it to be with firm, conquering steps, and he prayed to be preserved from hindrances which would cause him to come in crippled. His course and his end were most blessed; may it be the kind of course granted to us. So this is the picture of the introduction of the Gospel to us in Europe. All the particulars are brought out in detail for our consideration and thankfulness that we may look back upon the darkness, and be able to appreciate the Light that has been caused to shine in the midst of that darkness. What a mercy to be rescued from this darkness, yet how feebly it is apprehended! Traitors are allowed to come in and take away doctrines such as imputed righteousness, &c.; and we not caring anything about it: whereas, we ought to feel thrilled through our whole system when we find these things so assailed.

Appendix II.

Leviticus 23:22.

We have in this chapter two aspects of the Church as a “new Meat offering” unto the Lord: the one the Pentecostal Church; the other the Gentile Church. Paul was left as an “outstanding ear” after the Apostles were gathered, to be used to gather in the Gentiles. The grains of it were to be scattered over the Gentile nations, or we should not have been saved. Paul was sent as the minister of the Gentiles, and his instrument was the Gospel. He consecrated them by the ministry of the Gospel, “being sanctified by the Holy Ghost;” having the characteristics of the new meat offering in Leviticus 23:1-44. It is the only gathering that is well pleasing to God. We don’t see it now collectively, and it is a great pity; but we may find individuals in whom the principles of revealed Truth are really received and practiced; and though scattered, they have the value of that which was once seen collectively. The baptism of the Spirit is still in the world, though not in any organized body.

Romans 12:1-21, Romans 13:1-14, Romans 14:1-23 show the principles which would make the “New Meat Offering.” Little things may be done, e.g., being joints and bands; almsgiving; washing saints’ feet; watching for opportunities for concurrent labor; or exercising numberless other lesser gifts, as Gaius or Dorcas, &c., and endeavoring to cherish any practice which the Meat Offering signifies.

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