

KEY DOCTRINES

OF THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL

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CHAPTER ONE: THE GOSPEL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



The Problem and the Plan

WHEN SIN ENTERED THE world through Adam's disobedience the consequences were catastrophic. The apostle Paul, in the early chapters of Romans, investigates man's predicament as the result of that fateful act. The diagnosis is thorough and the conclusion irrefutable. The charge laid against both Jews and Greeks is, "they are all under sin" (Romans 3:9). All mankind without distinction are in bondage to sin and death. That indictment is basic in the Christian message and inseparable from it. All Biblical treatment of man's sorry plight is founded on the account of his creation and fall as given in the early chapters of Genesis.

But although marred by sin and in bondage to it, man was not abandoned by his Creator. The challenge laid down by the serpent was accepted by God and His great rescue act was at once set in motion:

"Soon as the reign of sin began

The light of mercy dawned on man,

When God announced the early news,

"The woman's Seed thy head shall bruise".

The tragedy of Eden was met by a divine initiative of stupendous proportions. The recovery and perfecting of fallen man now became the quest of the Triune God. He would retrieve men from the bondage of sin and death, and fashion them anew for service in a new heaven and a new earth. In the process there would be divine choice and divine judgement consistent with God's sovereignty. The central Figure in the glorious pro-

ject would be the Son of God Himself. In due course He would become incarnate by a human mother, submit to death, and by resurrection triumph over it.

The Spirit of God would then dispense to the redeemed the merits of the Son's atoning sacrifice. Thus, fallen beings would be re-born, justified, and finally, raised and glorified. Conformed to the image of the Son of God, they would "bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:49). The plan here reaches full circle; a groaning creation eagerly awaits its consummation (Romans 8:18-23). This, briefly and imperfectly stated, was the divine answer to the ruin of Eden. The plan is progressively unfolded in Scripture, and its fulfilment plotted step by step through various ages and epochs.

Throughout this book, we shall have occasion to refer again and again to Paul's wide-ranging coverage of the scheme of redemption in his epistle to the Romans. At this point it seems appropriate to reflect on the grandeur of our theme, and on the wisdom and love that devised it. When the apostle had traced the wonderful story, from guilt through grace to glory, he pauses, as it were, to view in retrospect such amazing grace and enquires, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?" (8:31). Then, in a series of rhetorical questions, he brings into focus the many perils and uncertainties that beset the redeemed during their earthly life. He faces all these adverse powers not merely with calm resignation but with joyous confidence.

Triumphantly, he proclaims, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (8:37). Victory is fixed and certain. Paul's reasoning here, though superbly eloquent, is thoroughly rational. It is the language of the exultant faith that sustained him in all his tribulations on to eventual martyrdom. As the next three chapters of Romans show, there is mystery and wonder in the ways of God which even a Paul could neither

fathom nor explain. He can but worship, and does so with a sublime doxology:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? ... For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:33-36).

May that lofty tribute to the Author of redeeming grace echo in our hearts as we pursue our studies in this book.

“According to the Scriptures”

We have already alluded to the gradual unfolding of God’s saving purpose throughout various ages and epochs. Behind the Christian message is a detailed, consistent build up of prophetic witness. It began with the initial announcement in Eden and continued until the Old Testament canon was completed with Malachi’s prophecy. This unique feature of the Christian gospel is frequently emphasized in the apostles’ teaching. We refer to it again because of its great importance. The gospel which I preached, wrote Paul, is “according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1,2). It is “the gospel of God, which He promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (Romans 1:1,2).

Similarly, the apostle Peter refers to the Holy Spirit’s use of the Old Testament prophets in foretelling “the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them” (1 Peter 1:10-12). And throughout the four Gospel narratives there are numerous references to events which, as they occurred, are identified as fulfilled prophesy. In John’s account of the crucifixion the phrase “that the scripture might be fulfilled” is prominent (John 19:24,36; see also vv.28,37). God’s plan of salvation was no sudden crisis measure. The coming of the Redeemer has been the burden of

prophetic utterance “since the world began” (Luke 1:70). The plan was conceived “before times eternal” (Titus 1:2). All would be executed in its appointed season.

The Old Testament fore gleam of the gospel was a lamp shining in the darkness, awaiting the dawn of the full revelation. And what a glorious dawn it was when the Dayspring from on high shone in all its splendour on those that sat in darkness and the shadow of death (Luke 1:78,79)! The Sun of righteousness, Himself the embodiment of the gospel, endorsed and fulfilled all that the prophets had foreshadowed. Then He sent His chosen apostles to carry the good news to the uttermost part of the earth. “The whole revelation is a circle, and Jesus Christ is the centre of this circle. He is the sun, and from Him the whole circle is illuminated” (Sauer).

To recap: The gospel came to mankind solely by divine revelation. It is not the product of human intellect or research. God is its Author and Preserver, and in the early twenty-first century it remains the ...

Unchanged and Unchangeable Gospel

Seeing that Holy Scripture is the one and only source of information available in the study of this sacred subject, we require disciplined minds to receive without reserve what is revealed there about it. Further, the entire process of revelation has been controlled by the Spirit of God, “men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). The reverent student will acknowledge his dependence on the enlightenment of the Divine Spirit. This will deter him from loose thinking and from a merely academic approach to God’s Word. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways”, was the Lord’s message to His erring people (Isaiah 55:8).

This is a sobering warning against mixing human ideas with concepts which are wholly divine. There have been would-be Christian expositors,

ancient and modern, who have dared to do this, with disastrous consequences. In the days of the apostles, subtle attempts were made to distort the true gospel, and to discredit those who contended for it. In the epistles of Paul, notably in Romans and Galatians, the apostle exposes and refutes these attempts to undermine the authentic gospel with which he was entrusted, and which he was commissioned by the ascended Lord to preach. That he discerned the deadly menace of the tactics of the false teachers is evident from his trenchant condemnation of them: "... there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema." (Galatians 1:7,8).

The Christian gospel is unchangeable. God has enshrined it in His unchanging Word, which has been preserved inviolate by the Divine Spirit. In a world of change this is the Christian's sheet-anchor - "I the LORD change not".

"Man, like the grass of morning,
Droops ere the evening hour;
His goodliness and beauty
Fade as a fading flower;
But who may shake the pillars
Of God's unchanging Word?
Amen, Himself hath spoken;
Amen, - thus saith the Lord".

"Not of Works"

The perversion of the Christian gospel which raised its head during the days of the apostles grew formidably after their decease. It is no part of our present purpose to trace in detail the grave departure from the Faith which blighted those early centuries. 'Church' history of that period makes melancholy reading. There were dissident minorities who strenuously opposed the false teachers but were not able to stem the tide. Eventually Church and State joined hands and 'Christendom' began its infamous reign. The application to the sinner of the merits of the atoning work of Christ is the sole prerogative of the Holy Spirit. This was now assumed to be the monopoly of the apostate Church. There was no salvation outside its bounds. Those who sought deliverance from the fearful bondage of sin were shackled with numerous observances and ordinances by a mediating priesthood. "Salvation by grace" was discarded and replaced by the old error of the Judaizers - salvation by works.

The notion that divine favour can be secured as the reward for good works is foreign to all Scripture. If this were possible, "then Christ died for nought", wrote Paul (Galatians 2:21). Yet this caricature of the gospel is still widely regarded as orthodox Christian doctrine. It is deeply embedded in Roman Catholic theology and ritual, and lies at the root of heretical cults such as so-called Jehovah's Witnesses. All such pernicious teaching is exposed, and denounced 'at a stroke' by Paul's comprehensive summary: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, that no man should glory" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Throughout the dark ages the professing 'Church' held men in bondage until liberating light from heaven began to dawn towards the time of the Reformation. The crucial issue joined in that great movement was, "The Bible or the Church". In the long and bitter struggle which ensued valiant men of God laid down their lives for the gospel's sake. Under God we owe them a great debt. The great achievement of the Reformers was the restoration of Holy Scripture to its rightful place as the supreme au-

thority for the Christian Faith. Salvation by works could never stand the light of God's Word; it is "a different (Greek: 'heteros') gospel" (Galatians 1:6).

Modern Deviations

During the past century or so there has been among the Reformed Churches of 'Christendom' a gradual yet fatal surrender of much of the truth for which the Reformers contended so nobly. By many, these truths are dubbed 'divisive' - a hindrance to the cause of ecumenism. The re-union of 'Christendom' takes precedence as a goal to be achieved at all costs. But the 'Christian unity' they seek is a spurious one; it is a step back to spiritual bondage.

And the process of surrender does not stop there. One of the leading features of our times is the rise and feverish propagation of various 'world religions'. It is now mooted that eventually it will be necessary for the Christian Faith, in the cause of world peace, to come to terms with these. The argument runs like this: "All religions acknowledge the same God. Does it not therefore make sense to bring together the best from the whole bunch and form one great world religion? This would at last achieve the brotherhood of all mankind, and remove ancient enmities which are the cause of wars". The reasoning is naive yet has growing support. It is an outright denial of the claim made by the Founder of the Christian Faith, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6), and of the testimony of His accredited apostle Peter, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:10,12).

Later in this book, it will be necessary to refer to the menace of the so-called 'liberal' theology which brings dismay to many born again Christians. For the present we conclude these observations on the spiritual climate of this early twenty-first century with this summary:

What is needed today among those who value the apostolic gospel above all price is renewed emphasis on the great Reformation watchwords - Sola gracia (by grace alone), Solus Christus (Christ alone), Sola fide (by faith alone).

CHAPTER TWO: SIN AND THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

Sin - Its Definition

THERE ARE SEVERAL HEBREW words in the Old Testament describing sin in its various forms. The leading thought is “to miss”, in the sense of missing the mark, as for example in Judges 20:16 where certain men “could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss”. The Greek word most commonly translated sin in the New Testament has the same meaning. Sin therefore may be looked upon as failure or refusal to meet the requirements of God in the doing of His will. Or, as defined in the Westminster Confession, “any want of conformity to or transgression of the law of God”. Its effect is to alienate from God the person who sins. It so violates His holiness that the sinner is placed under the righteous judgement of God and is exposed to His wrath.

Its Origin

There was a time when there was no sin in the universe of God, for “As for God, His way is perfect” (Psalm 18:30). He introduced every phase of His vast creation in absolute perfection. When therefore angels were created, in the vastness of their various responsibility groupings, they came sinless from the hand of God. In this state they continued till unrighteousness was found in one of the highest rank, known as “the anointed cherub that covereth”, guardian presumably of the throne of God, the Most High. His condemnation is tersely stated in Ezekiel 28:15, “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee”. The five “I wills” of the pride of Lucifer are given in Isaiah 14:13,14.

As a consequence, he was cast out of the holy mountain of God in the Eden above, together with those angels who sinned with him. Thus “the kingdom of Satan” came into being, destined to live in ceaseless enmity against God, in unforgivable sin for the years of time, then in eternal punishment in the place prepared for them, the lake that burns for ever and ever (Revelation 20:10). Satan sinned because he gave way to pride; cast off any desire to be in subjection to his Creator; replaced his assignment in the service of God with the pursuit of his own selfish ambitions, a pursuit which, in the course of time, stooped to the lowest of practices to achieve the foulest of ends.

It Reaches the Human Family

Not only did the angelic order come perfect from the hand of God. So also did the whole range of physical creation in the universe. And it was equally so with the human family. Adam and Eve came perfect from God’s creative hand, sinless in nature, excellent in beauty, their surroundings being of comparable delight. They enjoyed the freedom of the garden except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was the tree of test; if they ate of that, God said they would surely die.

For a time this presented no problem. In what has been described as “their terrible freedom” their Creator had given them a will and a conscience; a capacity to reason and conclude on the merits of obedience and disobedience. Hitherto their loyalty to God was unbroken. But a day of supreme test came. When the subtle serpent came in from the field he charmed the woman with the seeming desirability of the fruit of the forbidden tree. He planted in her mind great doubt as to what God actually said, and as to whether after all He really meant what He said. On reflection, Eve may have concluded that there was some substance in what the serpent pointed out, that God was deliberately and unkindly withholding from her something extremely desirable for her, now and in the future. Deceived, she set aside the plain command of God and ate what she

ought not. She gave also to Adam and he ate in the same spirit of disobedience.

That day sin entered the human arena and our first parents both died spiritually. No more sweet, unhindered communion. Never again would they hear in the same way that loved Voice in the garden in the fragrance of the evening. Instead, they were driven out. And as they looked back, doubtless with hot burning tears, to the gate of the garden, they could see the cherubim with the flame-like sword. There was no way back; it would have been death to try. But the Spirit is careful to say that the armed cherubim, sentinels of the holiness of God, were keeping the way to the Tree of Life. They were keeping it against another day when the Seed, regarding whom the promise in the garden had been made, should come, when the slumbering sword would be awakened against the Man who would be the Fellow of Deity, when at Calvary the great representative Son of Man would Himself cause the sword to be sheathed, and the way of life would be open to men again.

As Adam and Eve contemplated the animal skins with which God had clothed them, they were being introduced by God to the primitive law of sacrifice - life for life, death for death, substitution. So they doubtless built their altar in search of recurring atonement; a truth which they also imparted to their sons for, when it says that Cain and Abel "brought" their offerings, a place of sacrifice is implied. Abel's offering was in appreciation of a Saviour who was coming one day; Cain's, an indication that no Saviour was either required or desired. And members of the human family began to follow the one or the other.

Sin Reigning in Death

Years later, Adam and Eve died physically. Centuries later, the Holy Spirit, in expounding the whole subject, wrote through Paul's lucid pen, "Therefore, as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Ro-

mans 5:12 RV). Nothing could be clearer. Adam sinned of his own free will and choice, in plain disobedience to a basic commandment of God. If evidence of the sin were needed, it was seen in the death which followed. So in Genesis 5, “the book of the generations of Adam”, covering a period of some 1,650 years till the Flood came, the pointed comment which follows each successive generation, save Enoch, is “And he died”. Thus God was “right after all”.

Sin’s Onward Transmission

As we have already noted, “death passed unto all men, for that all sinned”. It is not here a question that all have sinned, a truth found in another context in Romans 3:23. But the whole human race sinned in Adam. It is written of Levi that he was in the loins of his great grandfather Abraham when the latter paid tithes to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:10). And the human race was in the loins of Adam when Satan contrived the fearful injection of sin. It was “by the trespass of the one, death reigned”. It was “through one trespass the judgement came unto all men to condemnation”. It was “through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners (Romans 5:17-19). In Adam all died (1 Corinthians 15:22) because in Adam all sinned. Children have ever since been born with a fallen nature, transmitted from parent to child, being “by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Ephesians 2:3).

In his book, “Convictions”, Dr. Coggan devotes considerable space (The Purpose of Life, pp.139-148) to such questions as, ‘What is man?’ and, ‘What is the purpose of life?’. He deals with the dignity of labour in Eden, Adam’s masterly control of the animal creation and his introduction to community life with Eve. “So man can rejoice in God, that is to say, he can live in community, he can develop as a son of the Most High ...” But not a word regarding the Fall. Again, the wrong implication that all members of the human race are by nature children of God is clear on pp.94 and 151.

Sin Monitored by Conscience and Law

From the days of Adam, men had a knowledge of God. This was in part the product of an understanding handed down through God-fearing generations. But there was a knowledge of God available to all men everywhere, as Romans 1:20 expresses it, "For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse".

Thus sin has always been monitored in the human heart by "conscience". But though conscience could alert, it was not an infallible arbiter of what is sinful in the sight of God; nor was it ever able to restrain sin. So sin abounded and reigned as a monarch in death. Apart from men and women of faith, such as Noah, all known to God, the entire human race was alienated by it from God, held in captivity in the enemy's camp.

Then from all the nations God chose Abraham and from him came the nation of Israel. To this people God gave another great means of bringing home to the individual the consciousness of committed sin as well as an assessment of its seriousness in the reckoning of God. This was the law of the ten commandments. It defined clearly the requirements of God but gave the sinning Israelite no power over indwelling sin to control it.

The Introduction of the Old Testament Altar

In the early days of human history those who acknowledged the consciousness of personal sin had recourse to their altar. There must have spread abroad from the post-Eden days some even faint understanding of propitiation by means of the death of an animal substitute. Gradually many family groups of men, as they widened out into nations, cast off both the knowledge and the acknowledgement of the one true God. Heathen deities emerged with powerful sway. To these also offerings

were made and altars were in general use even among the nations which forgot God.

Israel's great national altar stood in Jerusalem with its attendant law of sacrifice. But neither the law nor the altar gave an Israelite power over indwelling sin, nor could the system of sacrifice do anything more for the offerer than secure the passing over of his sin in the forbearance of God (Romans 3:25). Meantime out among the Gentiles were some who sought after Him in the dim shadows of revelation. Known to God is how He assessed their spiritual standing, or the basis of His condemnation in the case of those who refused to have Him in their knowledge (Romans 1 and 2).

When the Fulness of the Time was Come

But the message of law and altar and sacrifice, and the burden of all the Old Testament prophets who spoke in the Name of the Lord was clear - a Saviour was coming whose death would be effective in relation to sin; retrospectively, "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant" and prospectively in securing a basis for the complete remission of sins under the new covenant. The writer remembers there being read to him from an old Spanish writer, that each of the prophets in his day seemed to be painting a part of a large portrait without ever seeing the whole. Then one day, when the canvas was complete, the Baptist unveiled it by the river Jordan, exclaiming, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Which Sin Then Did the Lamb of God Take Away?

Not sins, as the reader will have noticed, but sin. What was the sin which was common to all the human race? It was doubtless the basic sin, transmitted onward from Eden from parent to child, the inevitable fallen nature in the new born babe. This was the sin which was the cause of sins. In another sense, "He was manifested to take away sins" (1 John 3:5). So

we are considering root as distinct from fruit. In the case of the child up to a time in his life known to God, during the period of innocence, the sinful manifestation of the fallen nature is not attributed. The death of the Lamb of God has covered it. Many will remember the words on the tombstone in the St. Andrews churchyard:

“Blind infidelity, turn pale and die,

Beneath this stone two infants’ ashes lie:

Say, are they lost or saved?

If death’s by sin, they’ve sinned, for they are here

If heaven’s by works, in heaven they can’t appear;

Ah, Reason how depraved, revere the Sacred page,

And the knot’s untied:

They died for Adam sinned; they live for Jesus died.”

When years of responsibility are reached how is sin judged in the sinner? As we noted from 1 John 3:5 (to which could be added a host of other scriptures) the Son of God came in sinless Manhood that He might be accepted by God as Representative of the human family. So that in His vicarious suffering and death on the tree of Cavalry there would be provision for the complete remission of the sins of all who would come to Him in faith and repentance and accept Him as Substitute and Saviour. One of the great works of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost has been to convict men of the sin of not believing this.

Every person is in the bondage of sin to a greater or lesser degree (John 8:34; Romans 3:23). On acceptance of the Lord Jesus, forgiveness is received of all sins committed, be they past, present or future (see e.g. Romans 3:30). But in the case of the person who will not come to the Lord

Jesus for forgiveness, “the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). This is expressed in Matthew 25:46 as eternal punishment, in relation to which Luke 12:47 indicates the principle of degrees of punishment in the eternal judgement.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ATONEMENT – BEING COVERED

“PREACH THE WORD” (2 Timothy 4:2). In this concise phrase the veteran apostle defines the primary task of the Christian evangelist. Such a solemn responsibility is a constant burden, yet at the same time it is a stimulating challenge, to every true gospel preacher. He knows he must handle the word of God faithfully, and that if he fails to do so his ministry will be found wanting. It will be lacking in that indefinable quality which the Puritans referred to as ‘unction.’ The preacher’s authority lies not in himself but with the Master who sends him. He may have a ready tongue, outstanding powers of persuasion, and a winsome personality. But whatever talents he possesses must be subservient to his main business, which is to preach the word. And if he is to do this he must, above all else, feed his mind from the Holy Scriptures, waiting humbly in God’s presence for the Spirit’s light on the sacred page. Thus only will he become, to use further words of the apostle Paul, “nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine ...” (1 Timothy 4:6).

The Words of the Faith

The Christian Faith has been committed to us in words. In this book, some of the great ‘key’ words of the gospel will come under review. We will be searching for the meaning of these words because they are vital to the understanding of the authentic gospel. It may be well, then, to restate briefly at this point the grounds on which our belief in the inerrancy of Holy Scripture is based.

Scripture is to be distinguished from all other writing in that it is “inspired of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). This phrase is the translation of the Greek word ‘theopneustos’ (from ‘Theos’, God, and ‘pneo’, to breathe)

God-breathed. We accept that Inspiration extends to the very words of the original autographs. Words are vehicles of thought, and profound thought needs precise definition. The mind of God is disclosed in the words used by the writers of the sixty-six books in our Bibles: "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). This does not mean that the writing was mechanical. The faculties of the writers were in full operation, the Holy Spirit controlling without superseding the human personality. We can go no further than this in defining how the inerrancy of Scripture was ensured. The divine and human blended in a way we cannot fathom: "In combining His divine power in perfect union with the exercise of man's faculties, God was surely able to effect results accurate in every detail in spite of natural fallibility. The divine ray, while using the human medium through which it passed, yet retained its own purity" (Westcott). We are fully aware that the doctrine of inspiration as defined above is now widely discarded, and that, to the dismay of many believers, it is being surrendered by some leading 'conservative' theologians. We submit that any view of inspiration which deprives the words of Scripture of their absolute integrity is untenable.

The Good Doctrine

Salvation, as was emphasized in the opening chapter of this book, is "by grace ... through faith". It is not to be expected that the convicted sinner will grasp at once the great fundamentals of the Faith. But the preacher, if he is to be a competent workman, needs a working knowledge of what we might call (for want of a better term) the 'mechanics' of the gospel. That is to say, the principles on which it is based, how it is adapted to man's desperate plight, the perfection of its structure, the glory of its achievement, and so on.

For this purpose the preacher will pay special attention to the apostle Paul's exposition of the doctrine of the gospel in the epistle to the Romans. The more he quarries in that mine of spiritual wealth the more he

will be impressed with the magnitude and solemnity of the task he has undertaken, and of his need of divine grace to fulfil it.

“No message can match the gospel in the vastness and profundity of the matters with which it deals ... The master-themes of Scripture demand a lifetime of study, and will occupy a lifetime of preaching” (J.B. Watson). And if, in conscious weakness, the preacher cries, as did Paul, “Who is sufficient for these things?” let him take courage from this assuring answer, “our sufficiency is from God” (2 Corinthians 2:16; 3:5), and from the apostle’s exposition of the role of the human medium in gospel preaching, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Atonement

Contemporary theologians of the various schools use this word in a somewhat loose way. It is evident that it means different things to different people. Therefore it is most desirable to rid our minds of any ambiguity and be clear precisely what we mean when we use the word. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word ‘kipper’ is usually translated “make atonement”. In the New Testament of the Authorised Version (1611) the word ‘atonement’ appears once only, in Romans 5:11, where it is the translation of the Greek noun ‘katallage’. The Revisers (1881) discarded the word ‘atonement’ (Romans 5:11) and replaced it with the rendering ‘reconciliation’. Why did they do this? Because, “Words are not static things, they change their meanings with the passage of time. Many words used in the KJV no longer possess in current English the meanings they had in 1611. A most important example is the word ‘atonement’, one of the great technical terms of theology. When ‘to atone’ still had its etymological force ‘to make at one’ then ‘atonement’ (as in the KJV) was quite a suitable rendering for the Greek ‘katallage’ in Romans 5:11. But ‘atonement’ has long ceased to mean ‘reconciliation’, and its continued

use leads to confusion of thought on a theme of the greatest importance” (F.F. Bruce).

The Revisers were evidently right in preferring ‘reconciliation’ to ‘atonement’ in Romans 5:11. W.E. Vine concurs, “The KJV rendering ‘atonement’ (Romans 5:11) is incorrect ... We do not receive atonement. What we receive is the result, namely, reconciliation” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary; see in full, helpful note under ‘reconcile’). See also Notes on Romans, “Reconciliation ... is not atonement” (J. Miller).

When considering New Testament terms that refer to the death of Christ we should always bear in mind that the thought of the apostles was steeped in concepts from the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant, all of which foreshadowed the one great Sacrifice. Further, the Spirit who guided the prophets to portray the coming One, and the salvation He would accomplish, was also in control of the New Testament writers. Under His guidance they interpreted the significance of the types and shadows of the Mosaic economy which, although superseded, are on record “for our learning”. Moreover, the New Testament writers were familiar with the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and with the Greek terms used in that version as the equivalents of the original Hebrew. This, too, influenced their thought and their writings. The Septuagint was used by God to prepare for the dissemination of the gospel world-wide. Hitherto Greek had been a pagan language. This translation, however, “did most to fix the idiom and form of the Greek for the expression of religious ideas ... For two centuries and a half this Greek Bible worked into the hearts and minds of the dispersed Jews, and words that before in pagan Greece and Rome meant little beyond the mortal and perishable of this world, took on a new meaning - fired with the flame of the sacred Hebrew” (Huddilston).

So, under divine guidance, Greek became the language in which the New Testament was written. It was spoken and read throughout the Roman

world. It has been called “the flower of all languages”. And modern research has established that the Greek of the New Testament was that of the marketplace, the everyday speech of the people, more readily translatable into other tongues than its Classic parent-speech.

“Propitiation”

We now comment briefly on this important term. Reference has already been made to the Hebrew word ‘kipper’ which is used frequently in the Old Testament and rendered mostly “make atonement”. Two variations of this rendering (‘pitch’, Genesis 6:14, and ‘appease’, Genesis 32:20) give a clue to the meaning of the Hebrew word. Noah was commanded to cover the ark with pitch. When Jacob went to meet his brother Esau he approached him under cover of the present he sent on before. The purpose of this was to turn away Esau’s anger, to ‘appease’ him. There is an easy transition of thought in these two renderings. In the Septuagint, the Greek equivalent to kipper is ‘hilaskomai’.

Hilaskomai is used twice in the Greek New Testament: Luke 18:13, where it is translated “be merciful”, and Hebrews 2:17 “make propitiation” (RV). The noun ‘hilasmos’ is used twice, 1 John 2:2; 4:10, translated “the propitiation”, and ‘hilasterion’, twice: Romans 3:25, “a propitiation” and Hebrews 9:5, “mercy-seat”. Of these New Testament references four only are directly related to the death of Christ. But frequent references throughout the Scriptures to the “wrath” of God demonstrate that if guilty men are to be reconciled to Him means must be found to avert that wrath. Man’s fearful guilt and God’s perfect hatred of everything that is evil have created a gulf which from the human side cannot be bridged. And a just God can “by no means clear the guilty”. This grave problem can be resolved in one way only, by means of a propitiatory sacrifice.

The publican who went into the Temple to pray perceived what all sinners who seek peace with God must learn; that propitiation is the only

way of bridging the gulf between a holy God and His sinful creature. “God”, he prayed, smiting his breast, “be merciful (be propitiated, RV margin) to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

Sin - Its Nature and Consequences

In the last chapter, Jack Ferguson examined the fearful nature of sin and its consequences to mankind. He showed from Scripture that the sins of individuals are the fruit of the universal depravity of Adam’s race. This is known to theology as Original Sin. Actual sin is the acts committed by such and such a person at such and such a time. Original Sin is the state of alienation from God which lies behind.

The social consequences of sin are as appalling now as they have ever been. Because sin is a plague wherever man is found it is accepted as inevitable - something to be tolerated and lived with. If in some degree it can be brought under control, or kept in check, so that men can live together in reasonable amity, that is the best to be made of the situation. This shallow conception of the problem of sin is behind all human expedients to come to terms with it. But the Scripture treatment of sin exposes its most damning feature, that all sin is anti-God. It is the challenge of the creature to his Creator. Not until this is recognized can the true guilt of man, and his desperate plight, be appraised.

King David’s terrible lapse is a case in point. Even a man after God’s own heart can succumb to the worst of crimes (2 Samuel 11). His offence against Uriah the Hittite was the ultimate in infamy. But when his sin was exposed to his awakened conscience he cried in deep distress, “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight” (Psalm 51:4). And, if never before, it now came home to him that, like all other men, his heart was desperately wicked. “Behold,” he exclaimed, not as an excuse for his sin but in the realization that it arose from the very depths of his nature, “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (v.5).

Before setting forth the exceeding grace of God to sinners, the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, embarked on a thorough analysis of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Every true preacher of the gospel will not only study that analysis but also recognize in it a picture of himself. This is a superficial age. One of its outstanding characteristics is the lack of a sense of sin. This emphasizes the need to keep in the forefront of the message the desperate plight of the sinner. One notable feature of the Puritans' preaching was their heavy emphasis on 'the terrors of law and of God'. Some have thought the emphasis was excessive and produced an inevitable reaction. Whether that be so or not, there can be no doubt that the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction. This shift of emphasis may have contributed to the complacency of many uncommitted believers. Shallow preaching will not result in deep spiritual response. "Where there is no vivid consciousness of the guilt of sin, there can be no deep craving for the Forgiveness of sin, no serious sense of the need of an Atonement for sin, and no real belief in the awful fact that Christ died for the sins of the world" (Dale).

Pardon from an Offended God

Since the gulf between a rebellious race and an offended God can never be bridged from the human side, any initiative must come from the offended One. And if mercy is to be extended and pardon granted it must be on grounds consistent with the righteousness and judgement that are the foundation of His throne. The principle of substitutionary sacrifice was embedded and exemplified in the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant. It was the basis of God's relations with His people, Israel. And it was clearly prophetic, pointing on to the one great Sacrifice which would be the basis of reconciliation and peace with God.

The good news to be proclaimed is that God took the initiative and, according to promise, provided that Sacrifice, and thus demonstrated finally and gloriously that His love for man is unquenchable. The great sacrific-

cial Victim on the cross “bore the wrath to sinners due”, and God’s anger was averted from the sinner. His death was the means of propitiation. “Love found a way”! “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). In its scriptural connotation the term propitiation does not imply that man uses the death of Christ as a means of appeasing God. Propitiation is God’s work, God’s provision. “It is an act initiated by the grace of God on behalf of sinners. It is not something that sinners have to do in order to appease God” (F.F. Bruce).

The terms ‘penal’, ‘vicarious’ and ‘substitutionary’ are among the terms used by theologians in discussion of this aspect of the death of Christ. Space forbids discussion of them here. (Appended to this chapter is a short bibliography. Students wishing to study these points in greater depth will be enriched by referring to one or more of these books. And they will be better equipped to assess and combat the serious errors which are prevalent on this all-important subject).

One other matter we should refer to is whether the translation ‘expiation’, preferred to ‘propitiation’ in some modern versions, is an adequate one. It is conceded that the Greek verb ‘hilaskomai’ and its nouns may have either meaning, yet the context of their use in the New Testament strongly favours the rendering ‘propitiation.’ ‘Expiation’ which means, “to pay the penalty of, or make satisfaction for”, is a much weaker word. It does not necessarily imply a substitutionary sacrifice. If its use in place of ‘propitiation’ is designed to exclude that aspect of the death of Christ which has to do with the turning away of divine wrath from the sinner, then it fails to do justice to the Scriptural concept. Thus, “One fears that modern translators have been influenced by their refusal to admit the wrath of God” (J. Stafford Wright).

The doctrine of the Atonement as outlined in this short study is offensive to the so-called ‘liberal’ theologians. The arguments they use are set out,

and adequately refuted, in the books listed in the Bibliography. In the main they reject the doctrine of inspiration, as outlined at the commencement of this article, and then proceed to pick and choose from the document which is the foundation of the Christian Faith. When a professedly Christian teacher expresses himself, "Sometimes I think Paul is wrong, and I have ventured to say so" (C.H. Dodd), then we prefer Paul to the learned doctor. But it is the more disconcerting when a 'conservative' scholar, widely respected by evangelicals as a reliable Bible expositor, admits that the penal substitutionary view of the meaning of the cross is found in Scripture, yet rejects it on other grounds as untenable. "If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?"

Returning now to our earlier question, "What do we mean when we use the word 'atonement'?" The answer, we suggest, is that in its present common use 'atonement' means, "The satisfaction offered by our Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of men". In this use it is the foundational truth of the gospel. All the Christian blessings (forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, justification, sanctification) depend on atonement. Often the term THE ATONEMENT is used in an inclusive sense, not improperly, we suggest, to comprise the whole content of Salvation. Thus, THE ATONEMENT—> PROPITIATION (Greek: hilasterion)—> Forgiveness Redemption—> Reconciliation Justification—> Sanctification.

In concluding this study, I invite readers to pause so that together we may reflect on the amazing grace of God demonstrated in His saving work. Consider, first, our personal involvement in the guilt of our race, and then, the agonizing unavoidable consequence that Another must be "stricken, smitten, and afflicted" in our stead. That at the cross, where sin was exposed "in all its blackest hue" by the foulest crime in human history, the One "wounded for our transgressions" was none Other than the Son of God Himself. It was, wrote Paul, "the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself up for me". Amazing, yet gloriously true! My salvation

and yours was worked out by the Son of God as He hung on that Roman cross. In lonely grief, forsaken by God, He uttered the cry all creation awaited, "it is finished". As we reflect, may Paul's noble resolve echo in each of our hearts: "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14).

Bibliography

The Atonement (R. W. Dale); The Scripture Doctrine of The Atonement (Prof. T.J. Crawford); The Death of Christ (James Denney); The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross (Leon Morris); Notes on Romans (J. Miller); The Gospel and its Ministry (Sir R. Anderson).

CHAPTER FOUR: REPENTANCE AND FAITH – BEING TURNED AROUND

IN HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS to the overseers of the Ephesian assembly, Paul the apostle claimed that he had not shrunk from “testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). The two truths are linked together. Paul preached repentance as a command from God. Man’s course by nature had proved to be leading downwards - away from God. The creature had moved away from his Creator on a track contrary to His desire. In nature and results the controversy had always been the same. Even when the Son of God was manifested on earth, under these decidedly changed conditions the result was still the same - downwards and away from God. Thus Paul preached “repentance toward God” - turning towards God and looking towards Him.

Linked Together

With the appearance of Jesus Christ on earth, both repentance and faith were brought into sharp focus. They are not essentially successive stages in conversion, and it would seem to be unwise to consider them chronologically as to which comes first. In the presence of a rejected Christ, the controversy between God and man now centred in Him. All would need to acknowledge their need of Christ, believing in Him, and turning to God through Him. To place faith in Christ would involve a turning of the heart to Him, as the only true way to God. There is no coming to God but in the strength of Jesus Christ as Mediator. It is the goodness of God that leads to repentance and opens the door of faith (Romans 2:4).

Repentance

The New Testament word for repentance signifies a change of mind, so leading to a change of conduct. To repent is “to think differently or afterwards, to reconsider”. This afterthought obviously implies a reversal of an earlier decision or line of conduct, from bad to good. There is a turning of the heart from sin to God. The person has a conviction of the evil consequence of sin, a conviction produced in the mind by the Holy Spirit. The result is godly sorrow, accompanied by faith in Christ. This change of mind is not merely an intellectual one but a change of the man himself, the real man. It is not comparable with the Roman Catholic penitence or penance, but is the turning of the mind or heart to God. As Paul says, “I myself with the mind serve the law of God” (Romans 7.25).

Let us take an example. When Paul stood before the influential court of judges on Mars Hill, he made it very clear that God was now commanding all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:22-34). Among the Athenians idolatry was rampant. Objects of worship were numerous gold, silver, stone, “graven by art and device of man”. So Paul sought earnestly to lead them to the knowledge of the true and living God, that they might worship Him.

He cogently set Him forth as the great Creator of heaven and earth and of all men. The eternal Giver, the omnipotent God, provides for all, life and breath and all things. Of one man He had made every nation on all the face of the earth, having predetermined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitats. In Him all men live, and move, and have their being. Every one of the human race is within easy reach of Him, and if they only felt after Him they would find Him.

How absurd of the Athenians to be worshipping other gods – man-made idols and images, and even an unknown god! They needed to repent of their idolatry - it was sheer ignorance on their part. It was obviously necessary for them to turn to the living and true God. He Himself was commanding them to do so, to change their minds and their ways, to turn

with sorrow and shame from sin, and with cheerfulness and resolution to every Christian duty. Especially so, as God Himself had provided a Saviour in the person of His only begotten Son whom He had raised from the dead and ordained to be the Judge of all the world.

Did any of the people of Athens repent? Happily, yes. Certain of them repented and believed. Dionysius, a learned judge at the court, was converted and entered into fellowship with Paul and other disciples. There is some reason to surmise that he was eventually burnt to death as a Christian martyr in Athens itself. Another convert was "a woman named Damaris", of whom very little is known. And there were others with them. These are splendid illustrations of repentant ones as denoted in Paul's address to king Agrippa, when he attested that he had declared to Jews and Gentiles "that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Faith

Faith in Christ is especially reliance upon Him for salvation. It comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). Not by persuasive words of man's wisdom, nor by clever reasoning founded on basic facts. The sinner hears the voice of God, he believes in Christ, and he is accounted righteous in God's sight. He is born again, of the Spirit. The record God has given of His Son has been accepted, the testimony to Christ, and he has placed his faith in Him personally. This gives assurance and conviction.

It is a mistake to look on our faith as the little we must do to make up the price of our redemption. There is only one Redeemer, and He has paid the whole price. The ransomed sinner has heard the voice of the Redeemer, and on hearing the gospel message he has placed his trust in the living Christ of God. His faith at first laid hold on the message and "by it he gained an eternal standing-ground upon the Rock of Ages". He be-

believes with his heart (Romans 10:9) and the free gift of God is his - eternal life.

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for”. In things we hope for it gives a sure confidence. There is a spiritual conviction, a trustworthy expectation that God will perform all that He has promised to us in Christ. “Faith is ... the proving of things not seen”. For things we do not see, it provides certainty and proof. “It demonstrates to the eye of the mind the reality of those things that cannot be discerned by the eye of the body”. It reveals as real fact what is not revealed to the senses. The believer is served by faith instead of sight (Hebrews 11:1).

Conclusion

During His life on earth the Saviour recognized faith in those who appealed to Him for help. He looked for a response to Himself, a readiness to accept what He had to give. After the crucifixion and resurrection, faith in the sense of utter trust in Jesus for salvation became richer in content and stronger in grasp. The Saviour still looks for this response in sinners coming to Him, as they turn towards Him in faith. Not only at the time of conversion but throughout the whole Christian life. “We through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness ... faith working through love” (Galatians 5:5,6). Faith becomes operative through love: this is the all-important link between faith in Christ and love in Christian character.

CHAPTER FIVE: REGENERATION – BEING BORN OF GOD

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew ... Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be?” (John 3:5-9).

NICODEMUS WAS CONFUSED by this dialogue, and he could not appreciate the profound statement by Jesus on the reason for a new birth in order to enter the kingdom of God. The Jews believed, and no doubt Nicodemus taught, that entrance into the future kingdom was their natural right as descendants of Abraham, or at least that this was true for the righteous in Israel. Someone from another nation might take on the yoke of the kingdom, and as a proselyte be described as a new born child; but Nicodemus could not believe that such a new birth was necessary for him, who was not only a true Israelite, but also a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin.

Although there was not very much teaching on the subject in the Old Testament to guide him, as the teacher in Israel he should have been reminded of the passage in Ezekiel “I will sprinkle clean water upon you ... and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezekiel 36:25-26). This and other references, such as Jeremiah 31:31, were however interpreted as referring to Israel nationally, but it should have been evident that the change must start with the individual; indeed in the way that John the Baptist had at that time been calling on them to repent and receive their Messiah. Nicodemus was by no means alone in this misapprehension. Some of

the early Fathers fell into diverse errors on the concept of the new birth, and various forms of their teachings still survive.

The word regeneration occurs only twice in the New Testament, that is in Matt. 19:28 and Titus 3:5, where it is a translation of the Greek ‘palm-genesia’, which means born again; some modern translations have used the word rebirth. There are several associated words that are used more frequently - born (John 1:13), begotten again (1 Peter 1:23), quickened (Ephesians 2:5), created (Ephesians 2:10) and the new man (Ephesians 4:24). These words have different shades of meaning. For instance, Vine in his Expository Dictionary explains that “There is a distinction between the new birth and regeneration, which although referring to the same event represent different aspects. The new birth stresses the communication of spiritual life in contrast to spiritual death. Regeneration stresses the inception of a new state of things in contrast to the old”. It is important therefore to see the comprehensive nature of the work, and not just limit our use to one expression. Regeneration or the new birth, is primarily understood as the beginning of a spiritual life (Titus 3:5), but it is sometimes used in the secondary aspect of the resultant transformation (1 John 3:9).

The Need

Man was created perfect in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), but in the Fall the likeness has been defaced, and man in turning away from God has become obsessed by a love of self. As a result of sin mankind has become degenerate and spiritually dead with no ability to do what is acceptable to God. This is variously expressed in many parts of the Bible, such as “The heart is deceitful above all things and it is exceedingly corrupt (Jeremiah 17:9 ASV), and “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Everyone born into this world inherits a corrupt and fallen nature,

which being controlled by sin rebels against God. Man is sometimes described as totally depraved, which does not mean that he is without all sense of moral values, but that sin has penetrated his whole nature, and his will is enslaved by the lusts of the flesh. Hence man naturally loves what God hates, and hates what God loves; this was fully demonstrated in the rejection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

While man has no power to rescue himself from this situation, he has been so deceived by Satan that he continues in his pride to imagine he can reform himself. Despite continued failure he still remains confident that he can overcome evil by means of education, civilization and religion. Even some religious teachers would maintain that man is essentially good, and that all he needs is an ethical change of character so that man's lower self is dominated by his higher self, but the Bible teaches that before God all his efforts are useless and he will continue to be separated from the life of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" is a general principle and there can be no evolution from the natural to the spiritual realm.

The Means

The initiative could therefore come only from God, who in His wondrous grace has provided the means of restoring the communion that was lost in the Fall, and in fact He has done very much more. Regeneration is a sovereign act of God effected through the operation of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5,8; Titus 3:5). This unique act is associated with the sinner's repentance towards God and faith in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some have contended that regeneration precedes conversion, that is, a person must be regenerated before he can come to God. This view not only confuses different aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit, but it restricts man's free will; this is contrary to the principle that God wills that all men should be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

There are various churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran) which teach baptismal regeneration. Their teachings differ appreciably, and it is not possible to contest them here in detail, but there is no support in Scripture for maintaining that baptism in water is a means of receiving the new birth. Indeed baptism in water is the sequel for the believer who seeks to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

The Nature

The nature of regeneration is a profound subject and it is therefore difficult for us to understand. Theologians have defined the subject on the following lines, “regeneration is that act of God by which the governing disposition of the soul is made holy, and by which, through the truth as a means, the first holy exercise of this disposition is secured” (Strong). Such a definition can be challenged on various points, and it may not help towards a better understanding of the subject. From a collective appreciation of the Scriptures we can understand that regeneration is a secret act of God performed on man, but not in any sense by man.

The recipient is not conscious of the action, the precise nature of which is beyond his comprehension. The Lord likened the mysterious effect to the wind (John 3:8). Much care is needed in the use of any terms which attempt to explain the change. In this instantaneous act the Holy Spirit implants a new principle of life in the believer, so that he becomes a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17 Revised Version margin). In the Fall man died spiritually, now he becomes alive to God, and fitted for communion with God. This does not result in a complete change of our whole nature, nor is sin eradicated. Sinless perfection is not attainable in this life for the flesh is still present, but the evil principle need no longer dominate our thoughts and our lives. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our transformation into the likeness of Christ at His coming again.

The Effects

While the new birth is the work of God alone, the believer is very much involved in the subsequent development as he is encouraged to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Such growth is expected from the mind that has been enlightened and that feeds initially on the milk of the word and later on the meat (1 Corinthians 3:2). Progress will vary from one person to another as we seek to show out the fruit of the Spirit. While all who have been born again become children of God, only those who are led by the Spirit of God to obey the will of God become sons of God. Children of God are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ and before us is the incomparable prospect of an inheritance in Christ, which will be the source of our eternal wonder. Further, those who suffer with Him will additionally be glorified with Him (Romans 8).

Although our primary concern in regeneration emphasizes the new birth of the individual in the present age, it should not be forgotten that sin has affected the whole of creation. Hence the Lord has promised that when He returns to earth in judgement all rebellion against God will be eliminated (Matthew 19:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10). The full accomplishment of God's purposes in salvation will be brought about with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness (2 Peter 3:13). Finally the Lord has promised "I make' all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

CHAPTER SIX: REDEMPTION – BEING BOUGHT BACK

REDEMPTION IS A LOOSING or buying out of what has been held in bondage. The term is used in reference to the release of Israel from their physical bondage to Pharaoh: “Thou in Thy mercy hast led the people which Thou hast redeemed” (Exodus 15:13). So sang Moses. And so said David as he sat before the Lord: “And what one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem unto Himself for a people” (2 Samuel 7:23). It is used also of the buying back of one sold to a stranger: “After that he is sold he may be redeemed; one of his brethren may redeem him” (Leviticus 25:48).

So, as we consider the meaning of redemption, our thoughts turn to the practice of slavery and to men and women brought under the absolute power of a master who is able to compel their unremitting toil and complete obedience. A master who, often enough, was callous in his treatment of them while they lived and, at the end, left them to die uncared for, like the Egyptian slave of the Amalekite found by David in the field. From such a master they had no means of freeing themselves. Their only hope of release must depend upon the action of a willing, free man who could pay the price of their redemption. The prospect of such servitude was dismal indeed and happy must they have been who were released from it. The hymn writer says: “We have known redemption, Lord, From bondage worse than theirs by far”.

What bondage could be worse? The answering line of the hymn says, “Sin held us by a stronger cord”. Bondage to sin! This is the plight of every human being since Adam fell into sin in Eden. Largely, the practice of physical slavery has disappeared but still sin holds men by a stronger cord. Men like to boast of their freedom: freedom from tradition and

convention; freedom from the observance of long accepted standards; freedom to speak their own words and go their own way. But these are illusions. Long ago the Jews claimed, "We ... have never yet been in bondage to any man" (John 8:33). But the Lord Jesus showed them how far from reality their thoughts were: "Everyone that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin".

THEY WERE AS SURELY in bondage to sin as their forefathers were in bondage to Pharaoh. He, who knew their hearts, told them so in no uncertain words: "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (John 8:44). It is all too evident today to those who will honestly look at themselves and others that men are in a bondage they have no power to break; a bondage of bad habits, of lying and deceit, of hatred and strife, of the inability to do what they feel they should do and the readiness to do what they should not. The scripture says "bondservants of sin" (Romans 6:17, RV margin), "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14), "the whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19). It is not within the power of man to deliver himself from that bondage; he must be redeemed by a willing, free man who is able to pay the price.

There was only one such man - the man Christ Jesus, God manifest in flesh. He alone was born free: conceived without a human father as Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. "That which is to be born", said the angel, "shall be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). In His life blameless before God and men, He alone was able to buy back those in bondage to Satan and because of His love to men He was willing to do it. The price of it was the shedding of His blood at Calvary. That price has been paid:

"The Son of Man came ... to give His life a ransom for many"
(Mark 10:45).

“Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold ... but with precious blood ... even the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18,19).

Redemption is finished, the price has been paid, and those who by faith avail themselves of it may sing:

“I am redeemed, but not with silver,
I am bought, but not with gold,
Bought with a price, the blood of Jesus,
Precious price of love untold.”

To those who have been thus redeemed Paul writes: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

God’s will is that those who have been redeemed from Satan’s bondage should live out the rest of their lives in willing service to their new Master, manifesting His power in their redeemed lives, ceasing from the vain manner of life handed down from their fathers, and living a new life, speaking and acting as men judged by a law of liberty. Paul, in his letter to Titus, gives some of the characteristics of the new life (see Titus 2). On the negative side the redeemed must deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, even though those still in bondage “think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot” (1 Peter 4:4). On the positive side, they should live righteously (that is, in their actions to those with whom they come in contact), soberly (in relation to themselves) and godly (in their attitude to God), thus adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

That such redeemed ones should be united in service is evidently the will of God. It was so in the case of Israel. They were redeemed from bondage to be free to serve God as a collective people; a people to whom God could give His law; amongst whom He would dwell and from whom He would receive worship and service as willing offerings from those who rejoiced in His redemption. Not only so, but through this people He would dispense blessing to others.

So is God's will today. The apostle Paul instructed us that Jesus Christ, "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). Those redeemed at so great a cost, united into one because of their obedience to the will of the Lord, should render worship and service to Him in His house and be zealous of good works so that others may receive blessing through them. Paul also exhorts the believers to live - looking for the return of their Redeemer. When that time comes - and it must surely now not be very far away - we shall know the redemption of our bodies for He "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Philippians 3:21).

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:52,53). Then will redemption be complete. For this day we wait and meanwhile we rejoice to be able to say like Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth: and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27).

CHAPTER SEVEN: JUSTIFICATION – BEING MADE RIGHT

THE WORD JUSTIFICATION is used in more than one sense in Scripture. It usually refers to God's act of grace in reckoning righteous in His sight the repentant sinner. Other meanings concern the demonstration of righteousness, usually before men. We will deal here mainly with the major aspect of the justification of the sinner before God; other aspects, being of less importance, will be dealt with more briefly.

The necessity for the justification of the sinner on the basis of his faith in the atoning work of Christ on the cross is a fundamental scriptural teaching. But it is completely contrary to modern ideas. Man, says the liberal philosopher, is basically good and has the ability to save himself if given the opportunity; he can stand before the supreme Authority and give a good account of himself.

Such a proud attitude stems from a false conception of man's origin, status and nature. Man is the crown of God's creative work, now fallen and forfeiting all claim to blessing; subject to death because of Adam's sin. So we begin our present study at the dawn of human history, as recorded in the book of Genesis. The Creator, surveying His six days' work, described it as "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Man, made in the image and likeness of God, stood at the head of earthly created things. He was placed in the paradise of Eden to dress it and to keep it, in subjection to his Creator. God, in His sovereignty and for His ultimate glory, gave man a free will, but sadly Adam chose a course of action in direct defiance of a clear divine command.

Tried in the court of heaven, the sentence of death was passed upon Adam and, of necessity, upon his descendants. "As through one man sin

entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

That sentence meant separation from God, from whom all life and blessing flow. Physical and spiritual death now became man’s lot. And unless means of reconciliation could be found, eternal death would be the ultimate penalty for all mankind.

But already in Eden the promise of deliverance had been given. Before Calvary but in view of it, a merciful all-wise God made provision for the forgiveness of sins. Scripture cites the case of Abraham in illustration: “And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6, see also Galatians 3:6). Probably other faithful men before Abraham enjoyed the same experience (see Hebrews 11). David, many years later, experienced the joy of sins forgiven and peace with God. He expressed it like this: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity” (Psalm 32:1,2).

Various Old Testament writers refer to similar experiences (e.g. Isaiah. 53:4-12; Habbakuk 2:4), so it is clear that God in those times dealt with His creatures in the same way as He does today. The mercy of an unchanging God is still offered to men. The message to the repentant sinner is: believe God and His word and be reckoned righteous, a true “son of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7,9).

It is sometimes said that the word justification has a “forensic” or legal meaning. The apostle Paul approaches the subject in this way in the opening chapters of Romans. First of all; and in some detail, he proves the charge that all men are corrupt in’ God’s sight, summing up in the words, “There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none that understandeth, There is none that seeketh after God; They have all turned aside, They are together become unprofitable; There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one” (3:10-12; Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3).

He then shows that justification cannot be obtained by the keeping of the law, which brings the knowledge of sin but cannot cure it (3:19,20). So man's efforts are futile, but God has provided a way of escape in the cross of Christ (verses 21 and 22). The sinner is justified by divine grace (verse 24) and "by His blood" (5:9) that is, by the atoning death of Christ on the cross.

In human courts a man may sometimes be set free, not because he is innocent, but because no adequate proof of guilt could be found. Indeed it is possible for a man in certain circumstances to obtain a pardon although at the same time it is recognized that he bears a measure of guilt. In contrast, in the court of heaven a man who is justified by faith is not merely acquitted but there remains not a single stain on his character. The past has been expunged; in the eyes of God he is reckoned righteous and receives God's free gift of eternal life. "As sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:21). And there are many other blessings besides, for God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

At this juncture, the problem of the apparent conflict between the forgiveness of sin and God's absolute righteousness may, quite correctly, arise in the reader's mind. Divine holiness and righteousness are emphasized throughout Scripture. God says, "I will not justify the wicked" (Exodus 23:7). Men are required to be righteous in dealing with their fellow men; judges must justify the righteous and condemn the wicked (Deuteronomy 25:1). How then can God be just and at the same time justify the sinner? The answer is to be found in the cross of Christ. There "He was wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5).

The blood of Christ shed at Calvary is the supreme demonstration of divine righteousness, showing that God can be both "just, and the Justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:25,26). The cross ensures

that God cannot be accused of unrighteousness nor can the elect be condemned (Romans 8:33,34). As Sir Robert Anderson puts it, "God imputed the sin of the believer to Christ ... He died under sin and for sin. Not that the guiltless died as guiltless for the guilty, which would be horrible; but the guiltless passed into the position of the guilty, and ... died to expiate the guilt imputed to Him". Why God has so ordered it we may not stay to enquire. That is within His own sovereignty to decide. We can only bow in humble gratitude to understand that it is so. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past tracing out!" (Romans 11:33).

The truth of justification by faith, although clearly stated in the New Testament, was largely lost sight of during the Middle Ages but was one of the major truths contended for by the Reformers. The prominent part played by Martin Luther in this important movement is well known, but a hard-fought battle was waged for many years by learned and dedicated Christian scholars, both before and after Luther, in order to re-establish this divine principle in the body of true Christian teaching. At the same time, many aberrations were rife and continue with unabated popularity to this day. This vital truth of Scripture is watered down or even completely rejected by the mass of religious thought, represented by Roman Catholics, a large part of the Church of England, "Jehovah's Witnesses", Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Christadelphians etc.

Justification by works is more satisfying to man's proud nature, and so is more acceptable to those who do not give the word of God its proper weight. Readers should beware of the slightly more subtle heresy that justification is not simply reckoned or imputed but is merited because of the act of faith of the recipient. But Paul argues that we are "justified freely by His grace" (Romans 3:23,24), and, "To him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But him that worketh not,

but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness” (Romans 4:4,5).

So that justification is by faith alone. The believer opens his hand to receive what God freely offers. The works which follow faith have nothing to do with the obtaining of eternal salvation. They receive recognition in another court, the Judgement-seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:13-15; 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Abraham and David, as we have already seen, had personal dealings with God over the question of their sin and its cleansing. Every person must have the same personal experience, for God will allow no earthly intermediary. Like the publican who went up to the Temple to pray, the man stands alone with his God, owns his nothingness, asks for mercy and accepts the forgiveness freely offered. God justifies him (Luke 18:9-14). In taking his proper place before God, man is not degraded, as some would assert, but on the contrary he regains his true dignity and the honourable place in creation which was divinely intended for him in the beginning (Genesis 1:26-28).

Before leaving the subject a final word should be said to put justification by works in its proper perspective. It is sometimes said that James disagrees with Paul on this subject. But since both wrote Scripture under divine inspiration we must assume that what the Holy Spirit caused to be written cannot be inconsistent within itself. It is in this light that we examine both what James wrote in his epistle and the Pauline argument in the letter to the Romans. First of all it should be noticed that James wrote, as also did Paul, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness” (James 2:23). With James this is the concluding statement in his argument about Abraham’s being justified by works in the offering up of Isaac. His works were coupled with his faith, making his faith “perfect” or complete (verses 21,22). The distinctive propositions of Paul and James can be brought together by accepting that Abraham was justified before God because of his faith but before men because they could see his works, the product of his faith. Justification in the lat-

ter sense is that which is outwardly demonstrated rather than that which is inwardly imputed.

God sees the change in a man's heart and is satisfied. The human onlooker has to wait in order to see the outward effects of that change. Perhaps some difficulty arises because James's main point seems to be to warn his readers about the sterility of a mere profession of faith which does not reflect a real change in the heart. His telling argument is, "the demons also believe, and shudder" (2:19 RV margin). True faith must result in fruit being seen. None of this militates in any way whatsoever against Paul's grand theme of justification by faith.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SANCTIFICATION – BEING SET APART (PART ONE)

THE IDEA OF SANCTIFICATION is commonly represented as advancement in holy living. Whilst this aspect does relate to a very important practical application of the doctrine, and will be examined in another chapter, sanctification fundamentally relates to something which God has achieved for every believer. “Sanctification is not an attainment, it is the state into which God, in grace, calls sinful men, and in which they begin their course as Christians” (Hogg & Vine). This precious truth of “sanctification accomplished” is the theme of this chapter.

Definition

An English dictionary defines sanctification as ‘making holy’ and sanctify as “... set apart, observe as holy ...”. The Old Testament Hebrew verb ‘qadash’ implies something being made clean or pronounced clean in a ceremonial or moral sense, and in the Revised Version is translated at least six different ways, including “hallow”, “sanctify” and “set apart”. There are two nouns, one rendered “holiness” and the other “saint” and “holy one”. The equivalent New Testament Greek noun implying purification is ‘hagiasmos’ and is translated “holiness” in the King James Version, and “sanctification” in the Revised Version.

Background

Gospel doctrines are foreshadowed in the Old Testament, its ordinances and imagery helping us to understand our blessings under the New Covenant. Even everyday events illustrate spiritual truths, as in this case. For example, cups were often cleaned and put on one side, ready for special use or a particular person. This is sanctification, and within the terms

of the Old Covenant, persons or things, either clean in themselves, or cleansed, were so set apart. Although this cleansing from pollution was frequently implied, sanctification related primarily to position and status, rather than to character and condition.

The first Old Testament example of sanctification was the Sabbath day (Genesis 2:3). Others included the Tabernacle and its furniture, and Aaron the high priest as we show below. And most importantly, God's entire Covenant people were physically set apart for God.

The idea that persons or things can be sanctified without any apparent change or improvement is confirmed by the Lord in Matthew 23:16-19. The gold in the Temple was not intrinsically holy but was sanctified, being installed in a holy place. This is a precious lesson when applied to believers as we shall see. We are also told that a person is sanctified through marriage to his partner, although he personally may not change (1 Corinthians 7:14).

The Human Situation

As emphasized earlier in this book, "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), and before a holy God we "are together become filthy" (Psalm 14:3), "we are all ... unclean" (Isaiah 64:6). So "who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Proverbs 20:9). This, our natural defilement, can only be appreciated as we try to contrast our own nature with the uniquely intense purity of our Creator, alone "glorious in holiness" (Exodus 15:11). "Yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight" (Job 15:15).

The Gospel Blessing

This holy God is able to change such filthy sinners into saints; this is the gospel blessing of "sanctification accomplished". We rejoice in this divine achievement now, for like the Corinthians; we are among 'them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be "saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Yes, God takes unholy persons and makes them holy. Defiled sinners are

cleansed thoroughly and fitted to be received by God and used by God. He changes their position from being “afar off” to being “made nigh” (Ephesians 2:13). To accomplish this, certain things have to happen, as typified for example, in the children of Israel, as already mentioned. They were freed by power and blood; and God changed their position and status to bring them to a sphere of service as a holy (set apart) priesthood. Then Aaron, as mentioned, was washed in association with his sanctification, and also anointed with oil (Exodus 40:12,13). Likewise we have been redeemed by blood, washed with “pure water”, and anointed with the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:18,19; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22; 2 Corinthians 1:21,22).

Although Aaron frequently needed to cleanse his hands and feet, his initial sanctification, when he was washed, was once and for all. Similarly, we understand, there is a vital sense in which the believer is once and for all sanctified; an accomplished fact, not a process. Hence the Corinthians were told, “ye were washed, ye were sanctified” (1 Corinthians 6:11), and the Hebrews, “we have been sanctified ... He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:10,14).

This sanctification, as a blessing of salvation, is associated with justification, but should be distinguished from it. “Justification implies deliverance from the penalty of sin, sanctification ... deliverance from the pollution of sin” (I.V.F. Dictionary). We now consider how the triune God has procured this blessing for the believer.

The Divine Achievement

The Father’s Choice: “The Father ... chose us ... that we should be holy” (Ephesians 1:3,4). Our sanctification originated in eternity, we are “elect ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification ...” (1 Peter 1:1,2).

The Spirit's Energy: The Holy Spirit makes sanctification effective and communicates the blessing to us. This is symbolized by the anointing oil on Aaron. Hence the Corinthians were “sanctified ... in the Spirit ...” (1 Corinthians 6:11), and the Thessalonians were told, “God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit” (2 Thessalonian 2:13).

The Son's Sacrifice: The Holy One, as the “Holy Thing” in Mary's womb (Luke 1:35 KJV), so entered into manhood and manifested the purity of true humanity. In this respect He was completely set apart from the polluted human race throughout His life; yet in His death He was totally identified with us. We rejoice that our defilement was borne away by Him. His blood effected our cleansing when “He ... made purification of sins” (Hebrews 1:3). This was a universal provision so that all believers are “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

The Human Element – Faith: Sanctification is one of many blessings automatically bestowed in response to initial faith in Christ. Hence He spoke of “them that are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18). We are sanctified by faith we enjoy it in faith. Belief in Christ sets the believing one apart in Christ. This we term ...

Union with Christ

Noah and family, responding to God's invitation, stepped from a condemned world into the place of security. Set apart from others, they were saved from judgement to serve divine purposes. This illustrates accomplished sanctification, when those who respond to the gospel become “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:2). What does this mean? When we came to Him He received us and built us into His Church, destined to be always with Him. God already sees us raised with Him, for our position and status have changed. The Father has “delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son ...”

(Colossians 1:13). This position is one of sacred intimacy which we now consider.

Our Creator became human, as already noted, expressly to offer His perfect human life, body and soul, in order to make of the ugly sinners of humanity something beautiful for God. Our Saviour willingly gave His human body to be hideously tortured in death, “more than any man”, in order to remove our loathsome sin, and secure us for His eternal pleasure (Ephesians 5:25-27). Consequently, He regards those who have come to Him as belonging to Him just as much as do the members of His physical body which He so lovingly gave to acquire us. Now this body is glorified in heaven, and we the members of His mystical Body the Church, destined for the same glory, are pure “in Him” for “in Him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). “Hidden in the Saviour’s side, By the Spirit sanctified”. This leads us to our final consideration ...

Sanctification Accomplished in Relation to Eternal Purposes

The sinner is made a saint entirely through the work of God, and nothing will destroy this. “The LORD ... hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand” (Isaiah 14:24). We rejoice in the permanence of this divine achievement, borrowing Solomon’s words, “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it ...” (Ecclesiastes 3:14). This is why we read, “He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).

Sanctification was planned in eternity for eternity; we were chosen to “be holy and without blemish before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4). It is “according to the eternal purpose” and assures us an exciting future “in the ages to come” (Ephesians 3:11; 2:7). We may have felt unsure of ourselves when this work of God started in us, but with faith which will sanctify our lives we enter into the glorious eternal purpose in our sanctification “to the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory, we

who had before hoped in Christ” (Ephesians 1:12). This development of the subject introduces the aspect of day by day sanctification which, in the will of the Lord, will be dealt with by in our next chapter.

CHAPTER NINE: SANCTIFICATION – BEING SET APART (PART TWO)

SANCTIFICATION IS A cardinal truth of the gospel. It differs from those previously considered in this book in that it has an essential element of human responsibility in addition to the initial response of faith. As was seen in the last issue, sanctification is that relationship with God into which men enter by faith in Christ, and is made possible through the death of Christ on the cross. 1 Corinthians 6:11 shows that the believer is immediately sanctified and the basis through which this is accomplished is the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10). The scriptural meaning of the word sanctification however is “prepared and set apart for holy uses”. We are saved, therefore, for a purpose, and it is this which forms the subject of our consideration. It is often referred to as progressive sanctification.

It is important to recognize that the holy character referred to in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 is the result of this progressive sanctification, not that imputed to us when we believed in Christ. The latter set us apart in divine purpose with an object in view. Our objective is that the holy character of the individual is built up little by little as a result of obedience to the Word of God. This is God’s will for the believer and His purpose in calling him by the gospel. He is to follow the example of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. From the time of creation when God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (Genesis 2:3), the unfolding of this fundamental divine principle can be seen. It is demonstrated by the call of Abraham to a separated life (Genesis 12), the calling and separating of a nation for God’s own possession (Exodus 19), right through until the time when the Father sanctified the Son and sent Him into the world (John 10:36).

The Lord Jesus said, "I sanctify Myself" (John 17:19), and this culminated in the greatest sanctifying act of all when of deliberate choice He went to Golgotha to die. "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:12-13). How then can this purpose be achieved? First of all, it is through the word of God. The Lord's prayer in John 17 contains the words "sanctify them in the truth, Thy word is truth". It is only as we are obedient and follow God's word that we can know the true blessedness of such an experience. The Holy Spirit is the Agent through whom the work of sanctification is accomplished. The apostle Paul knew the powerful experience of this work as demonstrated in Romans 15:13 and 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8. The Spirit's indwelling power, presence and divine unction will enable us increasingly to "follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

It is the will of God that our individual lives as believers should be free from moral defilement. His desire is to sanctify us so that as whole individuals we may be preserved entire without blame in spirit, soul and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Through the sacrifice of Christ and the shedding of His precious blood, the members of our own body, which were once committed to the service of sin and uncleanness, are now to be devoted to the service of righteousness as they are set apart to do His will. "God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:7). It is a responsibility laid upon us all to quench and quell the fleshly lusts that war against the soul. Being sanctified has the effect of helping to form our whole moral standing before the Lord. Living in a world of declining moral standards and values, how important it is that we should answer to this call!

The solemn warning which Paul gives to the Thessalonians should be even more serious for us today when chastity, clean living and upright

moral standards are the subject of questioning, mockery and even rejection. Enshrined in the truth of baptism is the need to appreciate the change that has taken place in our lives, that we no longer present our members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present ourselves unto God as alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Romans 6:12-14).

The consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests helps us to understand what is involved in this aspect of sanctification. There was the initial separation to divine service, but the continuing need for day-to-day sanctification still had to be met. The ear, the hand, the foot and the eyes are set apart for God, to do His will and to walk in His ways, listening to His word and walking in the path He has marked out for us, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. How vital, therefore, that day by day we exhibit in our persons and lives the purity and holiness of character for which God has separated us to be to His glory and as a witness and testimony to those around us.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

As well as being set apart for holy living we are to be sanctified in truth. The Lord in His prayer before going to Calvary expressed the strong desire and burden of His heart that all those who were to be called saints might be one. Not only one in one Body, which is a glorious concept, but one in a positive visible unity that would be a witness in the world that those who saw it might believe and know that the Father has sent the Son (John 17:21-23). His will is that we should be united in service and testimony with others who share a common desire to be obedient to His

will and subject to His Word and authority. The call of God comes to us to separate ecclesiastically.

The one who realizes he is in the place of unrighteousness and separates himself or out-purges from those who are walking contrary to the teaching of Scripture, is called “a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the Master’s use, prepared unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21). The Lord Jesus Christ is in the outside place and He asks us to come out to Him. It is only by obedience to His word that we can know experimentally the fulness of being sanctified for His service.

In Leviticus 11:44, the Lord said to Israel, “I am the LORD your God: sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am holy”. His desire and purpose have not changed for us, for these words are repeated “it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16). God’s purpose is that we should be a people together, a holy nation, separated to Him for His service both Godward in the matter of worship and manward in the matter of testimony in the Gospel. Have we responded to the call of God to separate, to withdraw from that which is contrary to revealed truth and to follow after righteousness and be found amongst His people in churches of God?

Our relationship with Christ in the Church His Body brings an eternal state of perfect sanctification (Ephesians 5:25-27). Our relationship as a united people for God in this day and generation is conditional upon our obedience to His word and our behaviour in holding fast to the revealed truth of God: “... how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). To be a saint is not achieved by acts of exceptional holiness but simply as is described by the apostle in 2 Thessalonians 1:10 - “them that believed”.

But this is only the beginning. The saint is to follow sanctification. He must be obedient to the claims of God upon him both as an individual

believer and in answering the call of God to separate in divine service with the people of God. “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Corinthians 6:16). God grant us the desire to take heed to the exhortation of Peter which so beautifully epitomises our consideration: “Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord” (1 Peter 3:15).

CHAPTER TEN: ELECTION – BEING CHOSEN

AMONG THINGS WHICH “eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man” is the wonder of God’s choice of the believer in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3,4). “Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election” wrote Paul to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:4). How did these recent believers in Christ know truth so profound? “God revealed it through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10 RV margin). Where believing hearts are open to receive divine revelation, the Holy Spirit still gives assurance from Scripture that God foreknew and foreordained each one to the glorious election of grace. In this is seen brilliant expression of sovereign divine mercy during this present dispensation of the grace of God (Romans 8:29, 11:5, Ephesians 3:2).

It is on God’s electing purpose in this present age of grace that we focus attention, nevertheless noting that this harmonizes with divine methods of working in other periods. For God exercises His right of choice for this purpose or that. As, for instance, His choice of Abram from an idolatrous family (Joshua 24:2, Isaiah. 51:1,2); of Israel from among all other nations (Deuteronomy 7:7,8); of His elect during the end-time following the rapture of the Church (Matthew 24:22,24,31); or of certain angels (1 Timothy 5:21).

Encouragement to Gospel Witness

In our New Testament it is always to the believer that the truth of election is presented, for assurance, encouragement and joy. Yet it is a truth closely relevant to the gospel and its ministry. Not that the gospel preach-

er would normally include it in his presentation of Christ to the unregenerate. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto Him; and he cannot know them". But an understanding of God's electing grace will immensely help those witnessing in the gospel, who will see their role in relation to the mighty sovereignty of the eternal God. It is the divine plan that the message of grace should be proclaimed by frail mortals who have themselves known God's saving mercy (Romans 10:14,15, 2 Corinthians 4:7).

Believers should be impelled by the realization that until Jesus comes there are souls whom God will save. In this spirit Paul served: "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). This was illustrated when in Antioch (Pisidia) Paul and Barnabas encountered blasphemous contradiction of the gospel. They "spake out boldly" in response. Gentile hearers were glad, and "glorified the word of God". Then Luke adds: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:44-49).

So the truth that God has His elect awaiting reception of the message becomes a mainspring incentive to the instructed believer. God has ordained that the testimony of believers to the truth of the gospel (publicly or in personal witness) is the link between His electing purpose and the salvation of those chosen. It is true that some are saved without the immediate witness of another; but in some way God will have brought to each the knowledge of His salvation through human transmission of the gospel, whether oral or written.

Appreciation of the truth of election also makes those witnessing very much aware of their own limitations. Mere human persuasion is of no avail. Birth from above of each chosen individual is not of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13). So witness to Christ will 'be made in dependence upon the working of God's Spirit. When this becomes evident

in a soul's responsive repentance and sense of need of Christ, trust in the assuring promises of the gospel will be encouraged.

The Mystery of Divine Choice

There are of course fathomless depths about God's election of some to eternal life, yet the universal proclamation of the gospel to everyone who believes in the Saviour. These two things appear irreconcilable to human analysis. Yet both are plainly stated in our New Testament and acceptance of God's revelation in both respects is called for. The mind of the enquiring believer "ponders the impenetrable mystery of the relation of the Infinite Will to human wills; he remembers how, in a way whose full reasons are unknowable, (but they are good, for they are in God) the Infinite Will has to do with our willing, genuine and responsible though our willing is. And before that opaque veil he rests. He knows that only righteousness and love are behind it; but he knows that it is a veil, and that in front of it man's thoughts must cease and be silent" (Moule on Romans).

It will be appreciated that the believer's election is not simply a matter of God having foreordained those whom He foresaw would believe the gospel. This is illustrated in Romans 9 by reference to the choice of Jacob, the younger, to serve Esau, the elder brother, "neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand" (vv. 11,12). God's choice was made in His foreknowledge of Jacob's deceitfulness as well as Esau's profanity; neither merited special favour.

"The reason of the choice lay in the depths of God, that World 'dark with excess of bright'. All is well there, but not the less all is unknown" (Moule). Similarly in Romans 11 Paul describes those of Israel who believe the gospel as a "remnant according to the election of grace". Explanation follows: "But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace" (see verses 5,6). Had God's choice been governed

by whether a sinner would believe the gospel it would not have been made in sovereign freedom. So while each believer does make a responsible personal decision in acceptance of Christ, he is nevertheless saved altogether on the ground of God's grace: it was by divine choice. "Where fallen man chooses God, it is thanks to God who has chosen fallen man".

"Is there unrighteousness with God?"

Nor must we harbour the thought that God would arbitrarily condemn to eternal doom any of His creatures because they are not among His elect. All who ultimately experience "the second death" in "the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14,15) will have only themselves to blame for rejection of spiritual light made available to them. God's offer of eternal life to all who believe is genuine (John 3:16), and His warnings of eternal judgement unmistakable (Matthew 25:46, John 5:29). Those hearing the gospel are responsible to decide for life or for death (2 Corinthians 2:15,16). This obtains despite the fact of God's saving purpose towards His elect. There was similar concurrence of divine purpose and human responsibility when Israel clamoured for Christ's crucifixion and Pilate yielded to their coercion.

For the Lord was "delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God", yet slain by the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:23), whom God charged with guilt (Acts 7:52). Herod and Pontius Pilate were personally accountable for their mockery and injustice, even though fulfilling what God's "counsel foreordained to come to pass" (Acts 4:27,28). In all this the believer rests on the absolute righteousness and goodness of God. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). Faith accepts in equal balance all that Scripture states about human responsibility for sin and unbelief, as well as the truth of God's electing grace.

God's Elect Justified and Glorified

The challenging question of Romans 8:33 spotlights a vital aspect of the truth of election: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” For it necessarily follows that if a believer has been foreknown, foreordained, called and justified by God (see, Romans 8:30) no one can lay anything to his charge. “It is God that justifies”. Indeed the believer is seen by God as already “glorified”. In God’s sovereign purpose and choice His salvation from eternal wrath is divinely guaranteed. For God’s elect there can be “no condemnation” and no separation from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:34-39).

How vastly this glorious assurance surpasses any merely human concepts! Humanly designed religions uniformly link ultimate acceptance by God with a person’s supposed merit in this life. The true gospel of Christ uniquely reverses man’s natural reasonings and reveals the justification and security of every believer on the ground of Christ’s atoning work “in whom also ye were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11).

Elect, Holy and Beloved

Both in scriptural and modern times men have been quick to reason that if God’s elect are assured eternal salvation they will abuse their security, feeling at liberty to sin because they can never come into condemnation. “Why not (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose condemnation is just?” (Romans 3:8). In contrast to such cynical suggestions, the appeal of Colossians 3:12-14 finds glad response from the hearts of God’s elect: “Put on therefore, as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering ... and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness”. Paul’s appeal was made on the ground that they were God’s elect, holy and beloved. The very fact that they had been so graciously chosen by God for such high

and eternal blessing would stir their desire to please and glorify Him. It remains true in Christian experience that where believers are delighting in the assurance of their election in Christ, this becomes a strong motivation to act in character with their holy calling.

“Chosen not for good in me,

Wakened up from wrath to flee,

Hidden in the Saviour’s side

By the Spirit sanctified.

Teach me, Lord, on earth to show

By my love how much I owe”.

Argument or Worship?

The key to Christian enjoyment of having been elected in Christ before the foundation of the world lies in acceptance by faith of all aspects of truth revealed in Scripture. “Scripture isolates for treatment truths which converge in experience”. It is not for us to attempt the “rational” harmonizing of truths which appear to our minds at variance. God’s ways are “past tracing out” by limited human thought, for at present we know only “in part”, seeing in a mirror or in a riddle” (1 Corinthians 13:12 RV margin). If everything in Scripture could be comprehended by human reason divine thought would appear to be reduced to the limits of the natural mind. That much is revealed which transcends our reason goes to confirm the Bible as being the Word of God.

Among these truths is our election according to divine foreknowledge. This truth is not intended to provide an arena for intellectual argument, but a hallowed place of vantage for adoration and worship. After disclosing something of the mystery and glory of God’s electing purpose and grace, Paul seemed to bow in this spirit before the Eternal as he wrote:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:33-36).

CHAPTER ELEVEN: GLORIFICATION – BEING PERFECTED

The Gospel of the Glory

IN PAUL'S FIRST LETTER to Timothy he describes the gospel as "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1 Timothy 1:11). The glory of God is the subject and the objective of all gospel preaching, and the sublime content of the message is entrusted to fallible men, chosen and enlightened by God to proclaim it on earth. The title "blessed God" describes the attitude and disposition of the Almighty. The lives of men are often filled with discontent and frustration. Sin has brought forth its harvest of bitterness and sorrow in all earthly experience but it is not so in the presence of God. The Supreme Being is happy and blessed. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

The appreciation of the glory of God brings happiness of a surpassing order. Jude speaks of the exceeding joy that will be the portion of those who in the coming day will be set before the presence of His glory (Jude 24). These ideas find expression in the old hymn;

"There is a happy land,

Far, far away,

Where saints in glory stand,

Bright, bright as day"

in which the writer has sought to portray the blessedness of that better country where the Lord has promised to prepare a place for all who are

His. Now the gospel is also described as the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4). The Son of God is the effulgence or outshining of the glory of God as well as the very image of His substance (Hebrews 1:3). The glory of Christ is the glory of Deity and in His blessed Person is displayed the full brilliance of the character and attributes of God. The supreme benefit in our earthly experience is the shining in our hearts of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Of the men who enjoyed the priceless privilege of being often in the company of Christ in the days of His flesh, one testified that “we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father” (John 1:14). John includes this testimony in the introduction to the Gospel record which bears his name. The gospel of God is the story of the greatest manifestation of divine glory.

The Humiliated

We now consider those to whom this magnificent message is sent. The gospel is for sinners who fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Of themselves, men have no appreciation of the glory of God and no understanding of His ways. “Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known” (Romans 3:16,17). The human condition has become debased by sin so that the words and deeds of men do not reflect the divinely conferred glory that the Psalmist described, “Thou ... crownest him with glory and honour” (Psalm 8:5).

Sin has also made its mark on the bodies of men. Our bodies are subject to disease and our faculties deteriorate with advancing age. Many lives are filled with pain and the deprivation that illness brings. All are subject to death, and after death there follows the decay and decomposition of the body as it returns to dust. It is little wonder that Paul described our bodies as “the body of our humiliation” (Philippians 3:21). God made man in His own image, and it is humiliation indeed that such a privileged creature should bear in his person the ravages of disease and the in-

firmity that accompanies old age. When the Lord Jesus was here in the days of His flesh, His heart must have been deeply grieved to see the devastation that sin had brought to mankind.

He, as Creator, had given to man the blessing of full exercise of all the wonderful bodily function divinely imparted when the first man was formed from the dust of the ground and received the breath of life. When Christ came into the world as Man, He encountered from day to day men with sightless eyes or speechless tongues, or maimed limbs or with bodies consumed with leprosy. He must have shared in the acute sorrow of bereavement in His own family when Joseph the head of the household was taken. At the creation, the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7) but during His time on earth the Son of God heard from close at hand the groaning of the whole creation in pain (Romans 8:22).

The Humiliator

This devastation is the result of the activity of the great Adversary of God and men. Satan is the enemy who stole into the fair garden that God planted and sowed the seeds of disobedience and unbelief in the minds of our first parents. The man and the woman were given free will, the opportunity to exercise choice. Deceived by the enemy, they chose, and their choice brought humiliation and they and their posterity have suffered appallingly. Consequent upon that early enemy victory, the bodies of men whom death has claimed have suffered decay and disintegration. The process of corruption in the dead bodies has destroyed all physical resemblance to the man that God made. In every case a noble and perfect work of God has been reduced to dust. Can this be final? Can the process of humiliation be reversed?

Victory

What we now have to say concerns those who “obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Timothy 2:10). That salvation is accomplished by the suffering and death of the Saviour on the cross. There the Lord of Glory knew deep humiliation. “He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). Suspended on the tree on that terrible day was the Giver and Sustainer of all life. He it was who in the beginning breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). He Himself became Man, and at Calvary He yielded up His own life that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14). What a complete victory was the victory of Calvary! a victory that was triumphantly confirmed and gloriously proclaimed by His resurrection. His victory is complete and it is final.

The Glory That Shall Be

All who have believed in Christ will have full share in that mighty victory. For them is the teaching of Romans chapter 8. They are to wait with patience for the coming day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). That is the day when they will know the complete enjoyment of all that has been purchased for them by the death of Christ. It is the day of “the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). This is a happy contemplation for all believers but perhaps particularly precious to those who have endured much bodily affliction. For such afflicted ones is the sweet assurance that the Saviour has purchased eternal release and restoration. This is the application of the death of Christ to our bodily condition.

When the Saviour comes from heaven, He will fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory (Philippians 3:21). The words Paul uses here imply both a change of form and of nature. All the effects of sin, both moral and physical, will be for ever removed. Then will be seen in every one of the redeemed the

true likeness of Himself. This transformation is achieved “according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself” (Philippians 3:21). It is therefore an overwhelming demonstration of the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will recover in full the bodies that death has taken and will translate them to a state of glory that exceeds all human aspiration (1 Corinthians 2:9). Then will the corruptible put on incorruption and the mortal put on immortality. What is sown in dishonour and weakness will be raised in glory and power.

In conclusion, we observe that the glory with which the saint is glorified is the glory of Christ and God. When Moses came out from the presence of God his face sent forth beams of light, but the radiance could not be sustained away from the divine presence. In the new heaven and new earth everyone and everything will be illuminated by the glory of God and the Lamb (Revelation 21:23). There can be no other source of light.

“The Lamb is All the Glory of Immanuel’s Land”

Long ago, when Moses asked God, “Shew me, I pray Thee, Thy Glory,” the Lord in response made to pass before him all His goodness and proclaimed His grace and His mercy (Exodus 33:18,19). The glory of God is manifested in these divine attributes. What greater outpouring of the goodness, grace and mercy of God could there be than that which is seen in the gospel of His glory? Happy are those who have believed it and blessed are those who preach it.

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE GOSPEL – ITS MINISTRY TODAY

ON THE WALL OF THE visitors' gallery at the U.S. Air Force academy in Colorado Springs is an excerpt from a poem entitled "The coming American" by Samuel Walter Foss.

"Bring me men to match my mountains;

Bring me men to match my plains -

Men with empires in their purpose,

And new eras in their brains.

Bring me men to match my prairies,

Men to match my inland seas,

Men whose thought shall pave a highway

Up to ampler destinies.

Pioneers to clear Thought's marshlands,

And to cleanse old Error's fen;

Bring me men to match my mountains

Bring me men!"

A former chief of staff chose the first three words of the poem as a slogan and wrote them in large letters above the battle ramp arch. Under them walk each day some 4,000 cadets in training for the service of their coun-

try, eloquent reminder that the poet's words have not been without their appeal.

God is looking for men, too. He always has been. But sometimes the appeal from heaven's throne finds little response in human hearts. "I have no man like-minded" wrote Paul of Timothy, "for they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel" (Philippians 2:20-22).

As we come to the final chapter, we do well to reflect upon the importance of men if the message is to be carried out as God intends it should be. God has placed the treasure of the gospel in the earthen vessel and in every age therefore He has been looking for men who, like Gideon's three hundred pitchers, are prepared to be broken themselves that "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" may shine out through them. The apostle Paul was always on the lookout for such men, and glad to link with him in service any who were willing to yield themselves to the task.

As an aged veteran, Paul the apostle, knowing that the time of his departure had come, wrote to encourage the young man Timothy, and the second epistle to Timothy is full of instruction for young men in whose hearts burns the message of the gospel. "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel" (2 Timothy 2:8). It was like a battle cry, breathing strength and encouragement into the heart of this good soldier of Christ Jesus. The One he served and of whom he preached was risen from the dead and alive in the power of an indissoluble life. And He was of the seed of David, too, and therefore destined to sit upon David's throne when He comes to take His power and reign. What could be more calculated to encourage any young preacher than the knowledge that despite the powers of evil which are opposed and the indifference of human hearts, he served in a cause which

could never fail, for Christ must reign “till He hath put all His enemies under His feet”?

Dr. John Stott poses the question “What is an evangelical?” and in his answer he emphasizes the fact that the two hallmarks of an evangelical’s faith are the supreme authority of the Scriptures and the centrality of the gospel. With his conclusion we wholly agree, but we would remind our readers that the gospel which Paul described as “my gospel”, presented the Lord Jesus not only as Saviour, dying to bear away our sins, but also as Lord, coming to reign, and now living to claim the obedience of believing hearts. The apostolic preachers never forgot that all authority in heaven and on earth belonged to the glorious Leader who had sent them forth. His command was to make disciples of all the nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and then to teach them all things whatsoever He had commanded them. To that charge they were faithful.

“God hath made him both Lord and Christ” preached Peter to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. “He is Lord of all” was his message in the home of Cornelius to the first group of Gentiles to be reached with the Word. And in both cases those who responded were baptized in water in acknowledgement of the fact that Christ was Lord of their lives. Afterwards it is specifically recorded of the Jewish converts that they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

This was the gospel they preached in the first century and it holds good for today. The Great Commission of Matthew 28 has never been repealed. Those who would be true to the Lord Jesus must hold to it. This may not be popular among all who claim to be evangelical in their faith, but popularity is not the criterion by which truth is judged. In the churches of God, which are responsible for the monthly publication of this magazine, we believe that an acknowledgement of the supreme au-

thority of the Scriptures involves that we stand for all that the Scriptures teach. Clearly, God “willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). His desire for all men is that they should not only be saved and joined to Christ as members of His Body, but also gathered among a people who are described as being for His Name (Acts 15:14). For both these purposes Christ gave His life, as Ephesians 5:25 and Titus 2:14 make clear.

The book of the Acts is our textbook if we would learn from the methods of the early disciples. It is an interesting study to note how many times “the word of God” is mentioned, or simply “the Word”. They testified to it (Acts 8:25), preached it (8:4), proclaimed it (13:5), taught it (18:11), and reasoned it (17:2). They worked to convince the minds as well as to persuade the hearts of all who heard, and always with the same goal in view, that men and women, young and old, might become obedient to the word of the Lord.

We live in changing and challenging days, days of technological progress, and this very progress offers new opportunities in the effective communication and presentation of our message. But let us ever remember that our responsibility is to present the word of the Lord. His word alone is living and active, and through it the Holy Spirit works in human hearts. “Preach the word” is the solemn charge which comes down to us today, and there is no substitute for it. God is looking for men who will with all diligence present themselves as workmen who will handle aright the word of truth; men who will be the Lord’s messengers in the Lord’s message; men who love the secret place, and therein, upon their knees, receive the message from the Lord, and then speak it forth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The work will be demanding and calls for the best we have to give. The message we are called to preach is nothing less than “the gospel of God concerning His Son” and the very dignity of it demands that we

yield ourselves wholly and without reserve. The call comes from heaven's throne, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Over the centuries it has lost nothing of its urgency or of its appeal. Men who have seen the King, the Lord of hosts, are the sort of men required; men who are in touch with heaven's throne, whose lips and lives have been touched with the live coal from off the altar; men who will not fear to speak the word that God gives, whatever the cost; and men who will never turn back till the task is done. "Bring me men" is the earnest call. Will you be one of them?

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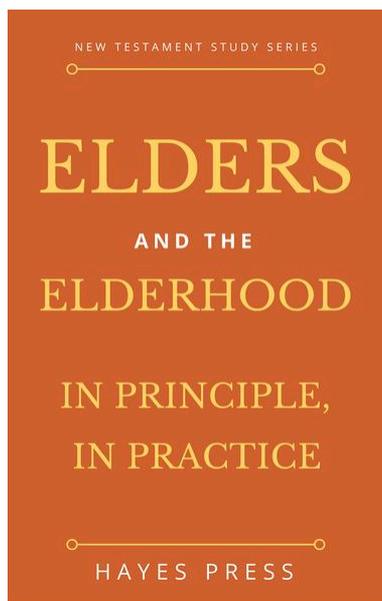
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