

GREAT DOCTRINES

RELATING TO

SALVATION

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PREFACE

The messages appearing herein were prepared in the conviction that many of God's dear blood-bought children need to know much more than they do about the truths connected with our salvation. This wonderful salvation, "the salvation of God" (Acts 28:28), has varied aspects, and may be viewed from many angles. The more prominent doctrines connected with our salvation are discussed in the chapters of this volume.

These studies, which first appeared serially in OUR HOPE, are simple and non-technical treatments of the various subjects written for the average Christian. It is the hope and prayer of the author that they shall be used of the Lord to strengthen some of His own in the faith, and to cause that those who read them shall "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

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What relationship has repentance to faith? Must a man repent before he can be saved?

GREAT DOCTRINES RELATING TO SALVATION

I—REPENTANCE

ONE OF the great and important Bible doctrines is that of repentance. Yet it is to be feared that much of the teaching on this subject, as it relates to salvation, falls into one of two extremes. Either the necessity for repentance is altogether ignored, or it is made to be a separate act from believing and the sinner is led to think that he must do two different things: repent and believe. We trust that the consideration of the subject in this article will clarify its meaning, so that we may see the teaching not only for what it means in itself but also in relation to the other great doctrines about salvation.

The salvation which God has provided for believing sinners, through the death and resurrection of His beloved Son, is of such tremendous scope that God has given us many different views of it in His Word. These come to us in the form of the great doctrines relating to salvation, of which repentance is one. The New Testament words which are translated “repent,” “repented,” “repenteth,” and “repentance” mean *to have another mind, to think differently, to care afterwards*. Thus such words denote a *reversal of decision*. In the Old Testament the words are, in most cases, translated from a Hebrew word which means *to ease or to comfort*. In the Old Testament references to repentance, however, it will be observed that it is actually a change of mind which *eases or comforts* the one who repents, so that the word means much the same in the Old Testament as in the New.

Let us notice, without comment, some of the most familiar references to repentance. The message of John the Baptist to Israel was: “Repent ye, for the kingdom heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:2). On the day of Pentecost Peter told the Jews assembled in Jerusalem: “Repent, be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Paul wrote thus in his letter to the Romans: “Or despisest thou the riches of His goods and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom 2:4). He told the Ephesian elders that he had testified “both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

The Lord Jesus spoke from the glory, and said: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent (Rev 3:19).

It is thus evident that repentance has to do with all three classes of mankind mentioned in I Corinthians 10: 32: “The Jews. . . the Gentiles.. . the Church of God.”

There are many different things which men mistakenly call repentance, which are not repentance at all.

Sorrow itself is not repentance, though repentance may be accompanied by sorrow. Even weeping about sin is not in itself repentance. Many have sorrowed and wept at sin in their lives, not because they have seen the awfulness of it and have desired to have it right before God, rather because they have suffered a ruined reputation, or some physical infirmity, or because some cherished ambition has been thwarted.

Neither does the making of resolutions necessarily imply a repentant heart. It may simply be the desire for approval of men, or to have a feeling of self-sufficiency.

And certainly the doing of penance, so-called, can be simply an outward thing, to salve the conscience or to appear righteous.

None of these things, in itself, constitutes repentance

Real repentance is a “change of mind” that reaches the heart. It is *to think differently* about God and about one’s self. We see a beautiful illustration of repentance in the parable spoken by our Lord Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 21:28-30: ”But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went” (vss. 28, 29). The action of this son proved that he had had a change of mind. It is ever so with true repentance, which can only be wrought by the Holy Spirit.

Does God ever repent? Certain Scriptures tell us that He does, for example, Exodus 32:9-14, when the Israelites had made and worshiped the golden calf: “And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff necked people: now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people?... Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; Thy servants, to whom Thou swearest by Thine own self... And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.”

In reading such passages, we must remember that the Lord uses accommodative language so that we may be able to understand it. As it looks to us, God repents. Looking at it from His side, He does not change. “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18). “God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall

He not make it good?” (Num 23:19).

Let us notice repentance in regards to Israel. They were chosen by Jehovah to be His people. To them “pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises (Rom 9:4). Yet even before they entered the land of promise, they began to turn away from the Lord. Over and over, throughout their Old Testament history, He called upon them to repent. Through Ezekiel He said: “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin” (18:30). But the nation as a whole did not repent, and when the promised Messiah-King appeared 1900 years ago, His message to them was: “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17). John the Baptist, Christ’s forerunner, told the leaders to “bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matt 3:8).

The Jews did not repent, however. Instead, they “crucified the Lord of glory” (I Cor 2:8). So, on the day of Pentecost, Peter again called upon them *to have another mind*. “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Though three thousand of them did this, there was no national repentance, nor has there been until this day. Nevertheless, in the day of our Lord’s return, He promises that “they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced” (Zech 12:10) and will then *have another mind* about themselves and Him.

God’s Word has much to say to believers about repentance. The saints at Ephesus had “left [their] first love” (Rev 2:4), as so many since then have done. The Lord Jesus speaks thus to them: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (vs. 5). To them He had to say: “You do not love Me as you did at first” (Williams translation). They needed *to think differently* about this, and doubtless there are many Christians today who need to do the same thing. For a believer to fail to judge himself and repent, there must of necessity be chastening from our faithful and loving Father. “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent” (Rev 3:3). To us He gives warning: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev 3:19).

It is through the Word of God that we see the need of repentance in our lives. In fact, true repentance is *to think differently* about God and sin, because the Word of God thinks differently from the human heart which “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9).

Observe how the Word of God produced repentance in the hearts of the saints of Corinth. In his first letter to them, Paul rebuked them sharply for allowing unjudged sin in their church fellowship (I Cor 5). In his second epistle he wrote: “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold

this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter” (II Cor 7:8-11). Here we have a picture of the Word working in hearts, and lives being changed as the result. This is true repentance for the Christian, and it should be a continual thing in our lives.

Now, what part does repentance have in salvation itself? The Apostle Paul testified of the need of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21), and that Jew and Gentile alike “should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20). We read that “the goodness of God leadeth...to repentance” (Rom 2:4) and that the Lord “is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Pet 3:9).

On the other hand, we have other salvation verses in which repentance is not mentioned: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31); “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9);” For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Indeed, the Gospel of John speaks about 100 times of believing on Christ for salvation whereas the word “repentance” is not found in the book.

We must therefore conclude, in the light of such passages as those quoted above, that repentance and faith are not two separate acts required of the sinner in order to be saved but that repentance is included in and is a part of saving faith. Only those who have seen their lost condition and their need of the Savior will come to Him. The very fact that a person who is blinded by Satan (II Cor 4:4) and dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1) realizes that he needs the Savior, is evidence that true repentance has come. Such a convicted sinner *has another mind* about himself and God. He *thinks differently* about sin. There is a reversal decision about these things. So, though the sinner is not required to do a certain amount of repenting first and then certain amount of believing, as two separate and distinct acts, repentance is nevertheless always included in saving faith.

Let us also notice that conviction is not repentance. It is possible for one to be convicted of sin, even to the point of trembling (as in the case of Felix [Acts 24:25]), without repentance and faith. Real repentance, like real faith, will be evidenced by heartfelt actions, the bringing forth “fruits meet for repentance” (Matt 3:8).

Repentance then is a *reversal of decision* which Israel must yet have before she is saved nationally. It should be a continual attitude in the believer’s heart. And it is included in that faith which saves the sinner.

One can be converted without being saved, but one cannot be saved without being converted.

II—CONVERSION

The word “*conversion*” has, in common usage, come to be almost synonymous with “salvation.” This is not true, however, in its Biblical use. “Conversion” simply means *to turn*, in a wide variety of ways. It can be merely a physical turning of the body, or it can be a turning of the heart to the Lord. Therefore the word “convert” is sometimes translated simply as “turn.” And here is a truth not commonly realized in connection with the word. One can convert or turn away from the Lord, as well as to Him.

Notice the use of the word in the following passages. In each case, the italicized words are the translation of the Greek words *epistrepho* or *epistrophe*, which simply mean *to revert* or *reversion*.

“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should *be converted*, and I should heal them” (Matt 13:15).

“But Jesus *turned* Him *about*, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole” (Matt 9:22).

“And her spirit *came again*, and she arose straightway: and He commanded to give her meat” (Lk 8:55).

“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day *turn again* to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Lk 17:4).

“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us *go again* and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do” (Acts 15:36).

“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you,

and how ye *turned* to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (I Thess 1:9).

“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now *returned* unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (I Pet 2:25).

We have already mentioned that the word “convert” can mean *to turn* from God as well as turn to Him, and we see this illustrated by the use of the word in Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, and Peter’s Second Epistle:

“But now, after ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how *turn* ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage “ (Gal 4:9).

“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to *turn* from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, “The dog is *turned* to his own vomit again and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire”(II Pet 2:21, 22).

Thus we can see that conversion speaks of any kind of turning and does not necessarily imply turning to the Lord for salvation. One may be converted to certain beliefs which he did not formerly hold. One may be converted to religion, to church membership, or to reformation without turning to the Lord Jesus Christ at all. Such conversions would not constitute salvation, of course, for no one can be saved apart from the grace of God in Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Nevertheless, when the Scripture writers speak of the conversion of sinners, their writings do imply salvation, speaking of a whole-hearted turning to God through Christ. In Peter’s sermon in Solomon’s porch of the temple, he told the Jews: “But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. ... Repent ye therefore, and be *converted*, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:14-19).

True conversion, then, is the turning to God which brings salvation, resulting in the forgiveness of sins. “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one *convert* him; let him know, that he which *converteth* the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jas 5:19, 20).

The Lord Jesus, when He was here, desired so much (as He had done for centuries before) that Israel might turn to Him with their hearts and that so He might heal their terrible malady of sin, but they would not. When His disciples asked Him why He spoke to the people in parables, He answered: “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is

fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should *be converted*, and I should heal them" (Matt 13:13-15).

When Peter healed palsied Aeneas at Lydda, "all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and *turned* [converted] to the Lord" (Acts 9:35). We read that when some of the early disciples, "men of Cyprus and Cyrene . . . were come to Antioch" (Acts 11:20), they preached the Lord Jesus, "the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and *turned* [converted] unto the Lord" (vs. 21), and here again we see that true conversion is evidenced by true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

Again, when Paul healed the impotent man at Lystra, the people said: "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (Acts 14:11). Then "the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people" (vs. 13). It was then that Paul and Barnabas ran in among the people, and said: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should *turn* [convert] from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them;" (vs. 15). This was the very thing which the Thessalonians did; they "*turned* [converted] to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (I Thess 1:9, 10).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians of the blindness which upon is Israel's heart, that "their minds were blinded: for even until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall *turn* [be converted] to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (II Cor. 3:14-16). And while the apostle is speaking here of the Jews, he goes on to tell us in the next chapter that all the unsaved have a like blindness, "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4). In each case, spiritual blindness is lifted only by genuine conversion, "when it [the heart] shall turn to the Lord."

In connection with salvation, let us notice what Paul testified to King Agrippa - that the Lord Jesus had appeared to him on the Damascus Road, telling Paul: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and those things in which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to *turn* [convert] them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me. Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and *turn* [be converted]

unto God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26: 16-20).

Such are the accompaniments of genuine conversion. The eyes of the heart, once blinded, now see spiritual truth. Instead of darkness within, there is light; and whereas Satan held us in his power, now we are free to serve our Redeemer-Lord. Our sins are forgiven, never to be remembered any more; we are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17), and “we are sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10). Those who have heeded the tender and compassionate call of the Savior and have turned to Him, have been “blessed... with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). No wonder, then, that when Paul and Barnabas, on their way to Jerusalem for the first church council, “passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the *conversion* of the Gentiles ... they caused great joy unto all the brethren” (Acts 15:3).

Conversion has an application to the Christian too. In our lives there is often the need of turning back to God, just as there was need of Peter’s return to fellowship after he denied the Lord Jesus. “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren” (Lk 22:31, 32). It is only the believer who is being continually converted, who is continually confessing and turning from his sins, that has any testimony to the unsaved. David, after confessing his sin with Bathsheba, prayed: “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be *converted* unto Thee” (Psa 51:12, 13).

The human heart is proud and rebellious, seeking its own way and ready to trample the rights of others. Worst of all, it is defiant toward God. Therefore there must be a turning toward God before He can save, great as His love for the sinner is. Nor must we who by grace know the Lord forget that we need to turn toward Him, moment by moment, in true humility of mind and heart. Let us recall the time when our Lord’s disciples came unto Him, saying: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye *be converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

There are two acts of regeneration: for the present, man's spiritual regeneration; in the future, creation's regeneration.

III - REGENERATION

The word "regeneration" itself means *again-birth, again-creation*. Thus it means *recreation, and making new*. It occurs only twice in God's Word, in Matthew 19:28 where our Lord spoke to His disciples about the condition which will prevail upon earth after His return in glory: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the *regeneration* when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' and in Titus 3:5, which tells us that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of *regeneration*, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." But though the word occurs only twice, the doctrine of regeneration is set before us in many other passages, some of which we shall notice in our present study.

When our Lord spoke in Matthew 19:28 of a regeneration He stated that this regeneration would be at the time "when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory." This looks forward to the time of His return to this earth, the time "when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, [for] then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory" (Matt 25:31). Throughout the Word we read of that coming time of glory for this earth, when a new order of earthly conditions will prevail, when "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isa 35:1); when "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isa 11:6); for "then shall the earth yield her increase" (Psa 67:6). "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isa 33:24).

The facts that the desert is now barren; that animals kill and devour each other; that the earth does not yield its fruit in fullness, but thorns and briars instead; and that sickness is a universal thing are all due to God's curse upon sin. When our first parents were placed in the Garden of Eden by the Lord God, they were given one simple prohibition: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:16, 17). They chose to believe Satan's lie and to disbelieve God's truth, and so "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned" (Rom 5:12).

After this sin in the Garden of Eden, the Lord God spoke thus unto Adam: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I

commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:17-19).

None of Adam’s descendants have known anything but a cursed earth, with its resultant thorns and thistles; its deserts and barren areas; its storms and earthquakes and hurricanes; its sickness and death; with all the sorrow and tears that accompany such things. But it will not always be thus. There will be a regeneration of this social order as we now know it, and of the earth itself. “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath rejected the same in hope, because the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:19-21).

This will be the time of regeneration of which our Lord spoke to His disciples: the time when earth’s curse is removed; when Israel and the nations will know the Lord and “they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa 35:10). It will truly be a *making new* of the world order, a regeneration in every sense of the word, “the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory.”

Let us now notice the other reference to regeneration, which has to do with our being *made new* individually, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Cor 5:17).

Just as the regeneration of the earth will be altogether the work of God, so is our personal regeneration. “But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of *regeneration*, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Tit 3:4-7).

Man, too, is under the curse, as is creation itself. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned... Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Rom 5:12, 18). “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13), so if any one is to stand before a holy God, it must be as a new creation, by the means of a new birth. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal 6:15).

The unregenerate cannot please, honor, or even know God. “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor 2:14). We see, then, the necessity of regeneration, *again-*

birth, or again-creation.

Notice the familiar words which the Lord spoke to Nicodemus, a moral and religious leader of that day: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of 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 again” (John 3:3-7).

Regeneration, then, is by the new birth. It comes to us when we are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (I Pet 1:23). And we are born again by simple trust in the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior, by our reception of Him into our hearts. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13).

“The washing of regeneration *and* renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit 3:5) cannot be separated. The Son of God “loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Rev 1:5). With that washing comes the “renewing of the Holy Ghost,” for, as already mentioned, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Cor 5:17). Because we are new creations in Him, “we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). The true believer belongs to the Lord, and “His divine power hath given unto us all that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (II Pet 1:3, 4).

The unregenerate are in darkness; the regenerate are in the light. The unregenerate abide in death; the regenerate have eternal life. The unregenerate stand condemned before a holy God; the regenerate stand justified before that God. The unregenerate are “alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works” (Col. 1:21); but we who have been regenerated “are His workmanship, created in Christ unto good works, which God hath before ordained that should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). So the “renewing of the Holy Ghost” which accompanies the “washing of regeneration” ought to be a continual thing in our lives. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: *but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*, that ye may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:1, 2).

Needless to say, this “renewing of the Holy Ghost,” this “renewing of your mind,” comes by a process. Just as the physical body is renewed by what is eaten, so the spiritual life must be properly fed if it is to be kept in a state of constant renewal. This comes by

feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ as He is set before us in the written Word “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (II Cor 3:18). God’s Word to us is: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:22-24).

Regeneration, then, is the creative working of the Holy Spirit by which we, through the new birth, are taken out of Adam and his fallen and cursed race, placed “in Christ,” and “blessed . . . with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (Eph 1:3). Instead of being under the curse, we are now under grace, “which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Tit 3:6). To His name be the praise and glory.

Redemption is in three tenses—past, present, future. Whatever its tense, it has been procured by God’s grace through the precious blood of His Son.

IV. REDEMPTION

The Word of God has much to say about redemption as it relates to salvation. In every case, it is God who does the redeeming, for it is written of men that, though “they... trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches: none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him” (Psa 49:6,7).

In the New Testament, the words “redeem,” “redemption,” etc., are translated from several different words meaning *to go to market, to purchase, to ransom, to buy up, to rescue, to loosen*. Thus, in summarizing the doctrine of redemption, we may say that it means *to buy back*.

Once the whole human race belonged to God, in Adam its federal head. But by his sin in the Garden of Eden, Adam took the whole race away from God. “Wherefore, by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned... Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Rom 5:12, 18). So it was that all mankind was “sold under sin” (Rom 7:14), away from God and righteousness. In order to redeem us, to buy us back to Himself, it was necessary for God to deal with the sin question.

This is exactly what God did when He gave His Son to die on the cross for our sins, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (I Pet 3:18). There at Calvary the sin problem, which separated God and man, was settled effectually and eternally. “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor 5:21).

The Lord Jesus Christ, then, is the Redeemer. He has *redeemed* us, *ransomed* us, *bought* us back for God and unto God. “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24). “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28). “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (I Cor 1:30).

The purchase price of our redemption, the ransom price by which we have been bought back to God, is the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, His life laid down in substitution for us. We have indeed been “bought with a price” (I Cor 6:20). “By His own blood He entered in once unto the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb 9:12). In Him “we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according

to the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7). Peter reminds believers “that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Pet 1:18,19).

The redemption of Old Testament days was only a typical redemption. The animal sacrifices offered then could not in themselves buy back to God; they could only point to that which was coming in the plan of God, the cross, when “the precious blood of Christ” would redeem in reality. “But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building [creation]; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once unto the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us... And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:11, 12, 15).

The law was given to Israel (and only to Israel) as a schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ (Gal 3:24). The law cursed and, by its revelation of sin, put man at a guilty distance from God. But Paul, a believing Jew, writes: “Christ hath redeemed us [believing Jews] from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham [salvation by faith] might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we [all believers, Jew and Gentile alike] might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:13, 14).

And the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer, bears witness to the fact that we have been redeemed, that we have been bought back to God, and that we are His own children because of this. “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we [Jewish believers] might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye [Gentile believers] are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:5, 6).

There is, for the believer, a threefold redemption - past, present, and future; and it has all been procured by the grace of God and the blood of Christ.

We *have been* redeemed from “the wages of sin [which] is death” (Rom 6:23) by the substitutionary death of our Saviour, and bought back to God by His precious blood: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7). Our sins have been righteously and eternally put away, and God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13, 14).

We who are saved will never have to face the righteous judgment of God upon our sins, for we have been delivered from this by the payment of a price. We are redeemed! “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His

righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:24-26). “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Cor 6:19, 20).

But redemption not only bought us out from under sin’s awful penalty, it also bought us from under its power. “Our Saviour Jesus Christ...gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit 2:13, 14). The same precious blood that secured our forgiveness also broke sin’s power, that we might be redeemed “from all iniquity.” Elsewhere we read that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8:2-4).

Every person is born into this world with a corrupt, sinful nature. After we are saved, we still have this nature together with the new nature which we receive from God. This old nature, sometimes called the “flesh,” must be constantly kept by the believer in the place of subjection, the place of death. We are told: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:12-14).

How can we refuse sin’s dominion and live unto God? Simply because the blood of Christ has bought us from under sin’s power. “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation [manner of life] received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (I Pet 1:18-20). “Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men” (I Cor 7:23). So, presently, we *are being* redeemed from the power of sin in our lives.

We *shall be* redeemed in our bodies when the Lord Jesus comes for us, and we shall then be taken out of the very presence of sin. “Ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). When we believed, we were “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:13-14), and we are exhorted to “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”

(Eph 4:30). What a blessed expectation is “the day of redemption,” when our groanings will be over, and “we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2)!

Israel was redeemed out of Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex 12), yet it took the power of God to divide the Red Sea and deliver the Israelites from their enemies and oppressors (Ex 14). So redemption is both by blood and by power. We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, “for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” (I Cor 5:7). Yet it constantly takes God’s power to deliver us from our enemies and oppressors, Satan and his hosts; therefore we need always to “walk in the Spirit.” When we are with the Lord in glory, our eternal theme of praise will be the redemption which He has wrought for us. “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9).

His word to His own is: “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine” (Isa 43:1).

There are five means of justification: before & by His grace, in Christ's blood, by His resurrection and through faith; and before men—by works.

V. JUSTIFICATION

The Scriptures have much to say about God's justification of those who believe on Christ as their Saviour. Let us notice some of the familiar passages which deal with this subject, one of the great doctrines relating to salvation: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24); "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39); "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom 4:25; 5:1, 9); "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified... Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth (Rom 8:30, 33); "That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs..." (Tit 3:7).

To "justify" means *to render and regard as righteous*, and this is just what takes place when God justifies a person. He pronounces the believing sinner righteous and, ever after, treats him as such. It has been said that to be justified means to be "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned. This is correct, but justification means more than this. It not only includes pardon from our sins, but it gives us a perfect and eternal standing before God. Whereas Adam, before he sinned, was *innocent*, we who are justified are *righteous*.

Righteousness, in fact, is the very thought of justification. Both words come from the same root, and to be justified simply means *to be accounted righteous*.

All men by nature have need of justification, "for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccl 7:20). "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom 3:10). Nor can man justify himself. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His [God's] sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal 2:16).

No, man cannot justify himself, nor can God justify men at the expense and sacrifice of His own righteousness. How thankful we can be that He is not only "a just God," whose

righteousness must be maintained and cannot be lowered, He is also “a Savior” (Isa 45:21)! It is because of this that He can justify guilty sinners, such as all of us are by nature and practice. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him [Christ] the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). Before God could pronounce sinners righteous, the sin question had to be settled; and it was settled at Calvary. “For He [God] hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor 5:21). “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:24-26).

Therefore, because God, who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity” (Hab 1:13), has maintained His righteousness absolutely by laying all sin on His Son at the cross, He is now free to give His very own righteousness to those who accept His Son. A holy God can now pronounce guilty sinners righteous. “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom 4:5).

Justification, then, gives us a perfect and unchangeable standing before God. The justified sinner stands before God *in Christ* “who of God is made unto us... righteousness: (I Cor 1:30).

God’s Word presents five aspects of justification. First, as already mentioned, we are justified *by grace*: “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24). Justification, like all the other and precious things connected with our salvation, is by grace and is, therefore, given without works or merit of any kind. “Being justified freely [giftwise] by His grace.”

Originating in God’s grace, our justification was procured *by the shed blood* of the Lord Jesus Christ “whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:25,26).

Paul preached to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia about the Lord Jesus, that “when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre” (Acts 13:29). He had laid down His life for us; His blood had been shed, “and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses” (vs. 39).

Our justification is guaranteed *by our Saviour’s resurrection* “who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25). The Gospel message itself, by which men are saved (Rom 1:16), not only tells us “how that Christ died for our

sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried,” but also “that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor 15:3, 4).

His resurrection from the dead shows us that His atoning work on the cross was acceptable to God, and it also assures us that our standing is in the resurrected and glorified Christ, who sits at the Father’s right hand. “God... raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God” (I Pet 1:21).

This marvelous justification, originating in God’s grace, procured by the death of the Lord Jesus, and guaranteed by His resurrection, becomes ours *by faith* in Him and His finished work. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). How simple, and how much like our God who, having declared that “there is none righteous, no, not one,” and that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight,” tells us further that “now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom 3:10, 20-22). So, “to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom 4:5).

Lastly, our justification is manifested *by works*. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jas 2:21-24).

When James writes thus of justification by works, he is not speaking of justification before God, which is by faith alone, but of justification before men. He is speaking of that aspect of justification which can be seen. “*Seest* thou how faith wrought with his works?” he says of Abraham. “Ye *see* then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” It is by good works that we manifest to men the fact that we are the Lord’s. They may disregard our testimony by word but they cannot help but see our testimony by life.

In summary, justification (which is altogether the work of God) gives us a *perfect standing*: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor 5:21), “who of God is made unto us... righteousness” (I Cor 1:30). We who have believed stand before God in Christ, “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6). “As He is, so are we in this world” (I John 4:17).

Justification also provides a *perfect peace* between God and the believer. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). It gives us, too, a *perfect access* into God’s presence: “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace where we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2); and a *perfect security* and a *perfect protection* from all charges that could be

brought against us: “Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified... Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (Rom 8:30, 33).

Justification is a judicial thing. The sinner comes into God’s courtroom with all the guilt of inherent and practiced sin upon him. By virtue of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God pronounces him righteous and will henceforth treat him as such, as a member of the family of God. As we contemplate such grace, we can but cry out in adoration and praise: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

There are two kinds of divine forgiveness - judicial and parental. In the former, God acts as Judge; in the latter, as Father.

VI. FORGIVENESS

The word “forgiveness” not only carries in it the thought of *pardon* but also of *deliverance, freedom, liberty from bondage*. There is in it, furthermore, the idea of *sending off, or sending away*. When a sinner is forgiven by God, his sins and the righteous judgment due upon those sins, are sent away forever. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” (Psa 103:12). We see this pictured when the Old Testament priests, on the Day of Atonement, illustrated typically this removal of sin and sin’s penalty. After the slaying of the goat for a sin-offering, and the sprinkling of the blood upon the mercy seat, then “Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness” (Lev 16:21, 22).

Just as this scapegoat typically removed, “sent away,” the sins of the Israelites, so did our Lord send away sins forever, when He “His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree” (I Pet 2:24). He is “the Lamb of God, Who *taketh away* the sin of the world” (John 1:29). “Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to *put away* sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb 9:26).

Who needs forgiveness? Who needs to have his sins “sent away”? Let God’s own Word answer this for us: “For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:22, 23). “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl 7:20). “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa 64:6).

Thus it can be said to the whole human race that “your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you” (Isa 59:2), for He is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13). Not only have we sinned personally but we were born into a lost, condemned race, carried down into death and judgment by Adam, its federal head. “By one man’s offence death reigned by one...By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation...By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom 5:17-19).

Therefore, if any member of the human race ever has a standing before God, his sins must be forgiven. Nor does God forgive as man forgives. When a man forgives another man who has offended him, he simply passes over the offense and the penalty which is due for that offense. He *excuses* his fellow man. But God cannot excuse sin, no matter how great His love for the sinner is. His inflexible and unchangeable Word is: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek 18:4). “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). So, when God forgives, He forgives not because He excuses offense but because His penalty against it has been executed. And well do we know how it has been executed. God’s judgment against sin, against all sin, fell upon His beloved Son. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (I Pet 3:18). “Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor 5:21, ASV). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6).

His life was laid down, His blood was shed, *for us*. He died in our place. Just before He went to the cross, as He instituted the Lord’s Supper, we read that “as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission [forgiveness] of sins” (Matt 26:26-28). “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb 9:22) because, we repeat, the penalty of a holy God against sin must be executed.

How then may a sinner be forgiven? How is forgiveness procured? It does not become ours by ordinances. We are not forgiven our sins either by being baptized or partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Neither does church membership have anything at all to do with forgiveness. No kind of good works can cause our sins to be forgiven. God alone can forgive sins. “Who can forgive sins but God only?” (Mk 2:7) And He can forgive them only because He, in love, mercy, and grace, has executed His judgment against them in the person of Christ, “in whom we have redemption through His blood, *the forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7).

Therefore the sole condition of forgiveness is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore our sins. “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission [forgiveness] of sins” (Acts 10:43). “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38, 39). “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses” (Dan 9:9), and He freely forgives all who trust in the finished work of His Son.

“I write unto you, little children,” says the Apostle John, “because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake” (I John 2:12). To the soul who has realized, by the Holy Spirit’s power, something of the awfulness of sin and the holiness of God, there is nothing sweeter than to hear the Lord say by His Word: “Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven

thee” (Matt 9:2). “And you, being dead in your sin and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses (Col 2:13).

Because our Lord did a complete work on the cross, we have a complete forgiveness. God has “forgiven you *all* trespasses.” “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission [forgiveness] of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 10:12-18). A perfect sacrifice secured a perfect and eternal forgiveness so that God now remembers no more the sins of those who have trusted in His Christ.

In considering the doctrine of forgiveness, we must distinguish between *judicial forgiveness*, in which God forgives a sinner; and *family forgiveness*, in which He forgives a saint.

In the judicial sense, God sits as Judge and freely and eternally forgives all the sins, past, present, and future, of the sinner who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. Never again will He mark down sin against us. “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom 4: 7, 8).

Nevertheless, we must face the fact that we sin after are saved. To be sure, this is not of necessity; for God has made perfect provision for us that we might overcome Satan, the world, and indwelling sin. But sad to say, we fail to use this perfect provision at all times. We take our eyes off the Lord who is our Overcomer, and we sin. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.... If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us” (I John 1:8,10).

When we, as believers, sin, it does not cancel our judicial forgiveness, which is perfect and eternal. It does break our fellowship with the Father and, thus, we lose our joy, our power, and our testimony, but not our salvation. And our loving Father has made perfect provision for our restoration. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:1, 2).

Because Christ on the cross satisfied God about the sin question, and because Christ is there in the Father’s presence as our Advocate, our standing before God never changes, even when we sin, because our standing is *in Christ*. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9). When we see our sins as God sees them (and this comes by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, who is in us to glorify Christ), and acknowledge them so, God forgives them in faithfulness to Christ, who bore them. Moreover, God is just in doing so, for the sin

question was righteously settled on the cross. “For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee” (Psa 86:5).

Because our great Saviour has made a great sacrifice we have a great forgiveness. “The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression” (Num 14:18). Let us never cease to praise Him “who forgiveth all thine iniquities (Psa 103:3). To the believing sinner He says: “Thy sins are forgiven... Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” (Lk 7:48, 50). And the testimony of a restored saint is: “I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord: and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psa 32:5).

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph 4:32); “forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col 3:13).

*It is possible to know beyond a shadow of doubt that you are saved
and will be in heaven some day.*

VII. ASSURANCE

Can a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ know with complete confidence that his salvation is perfect and eternal? Can he be sure that his sins are gone, that his name is written in heaven in the Lamb's book of life, that nothing can ever sever his relationship with God as Father, and that he is sure of glory? If it is possible to know these things without doubt, how may we know them and be sure of them?

God's Word teaches that it is not only possible to know these things, but also that God desires His children to know them and to rejoice in their certainty. The Word teaches us, moreover, that to know these things will make our Christian experience more joyful and more effectual; and it also teaches us that failure to know and believe these things dishonors God.

Paul writes thus to the Thessalonian believers, whom he had led to the Lord: "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost *and in much assurance*" (I Thess 1:5). He prays for the Colossians "that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of *the full assurance of understanding*, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Col 2:2); and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes: "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to *the full assurance of hope* unto the end" (Heb 6:11), and, "Let us draw near with a true heart in *full assurance of faith*, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:22).

What is assurance? It is *to know that we are saved and safe eternally*. It is not to *hope* that we are saved; it is not to *pray* that we shall at last be saved; it is to *know* that we are here and now saved by God's grace, apart from any supposed merit on our side, or any present or future faithfulness on our part. It is to be able to say heartily with Paul: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (II Tim 1:12). "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).

It is to be feared, however, that a large number of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour do not have this assurance. Many, for example, believe that the Lord's keeping power depends upon their own faithfulness to the Lord. Such a view makes salvation to be the result of human merit rather than God's grace, and plainly contradicts such statements of Scripture as Ephesians 2:8, 9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

Others feel that to be confident and sure that one is saved eternally, whatever may come, is to be presumptuous. The fact is, however, that for a true believer not to know that his salvation is eternal and perfect is to dishonor God, and also to make Him a liar by failing to believe the witness which He has given concerning His Son and His work on the cross. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; *that ye may know that ye have eternal life*, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 5:10-13).

How may we know that we have eternal life? Upon *what* is such assurance based? It is *not* by any merely human feeling or emotion that we may have. It does not come by any visions, either real or imagined. Nor is it by some particular fantastic experience. It is simply by believing God's Word. It is to believe "the record that God gave of His Son." That record is, "how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried that He rose again the third day according to the Scripture (I Cor 15:3, 4). This is the Gospel, the message which came to the Thessalonians "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (I Thess 1:5).

Assurance comes, we repeat, simply by taking God at His Word. He has promised that those who trust His Son are saved for time and eternity. We read: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This verse assures me (for I am included in that blessed "whosoever") that if I believed in God's Son, whom He gave to die for my sins, I shall "not perish." I shall never again be exposed to that danger of eternal separation from God but I "have everlasting life," which means that God will keep me for time and eternity. God's Word, then, is the one and only basis of assurance and confidence. It is true that "the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom 8:16), and it is through the Word that the Spirit bears this witness.

When we received Christ as our Saviour, it was "the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit 1:1, 2). Since God has promised "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and since God "cannot lie," assurance to our hearts and honor to God alike come simply from believing His Word. Such faith delights

the Father, as did the faith of Abraham who “was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform” (Rom 4:20, 21).

Notice these encouraging and assuring promises of the Word, upon which we may safely and confidently base our assurance and by which we may know that we are saved by simple faith in God’s dear Son: “He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18); “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). The Lord Jesus said: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life”, (John 6:47). He also said: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24); and, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand” (John 10:28, 29).

To be sure, there are certain evidences of salvation, which will be manifested in our lives. For example, “we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (I John 3:14). On the other hand, we know these evidences because they are given us in the Word of God, so that, basically, assurance is based entirely upon the Scriptures, and their veracity. The *Pilgrim Bible* says (page 1599, footnote 9): “ASSURANCE. This word speaks of the Christian’s joyous faith because of his fearless trust in God and His sure Word. . . Assurance is our understanding that our souls are freed from the power of evil and from the judgment upon evil through Christ’s finished work. It is not *self*-confidence; it is confidence *in Christ*.”

What then causes the lack of assurance on the part of many from of God’s children? There are two primary reasons, we believe. First, *ignorance of God’s Word*. Since, as we have seen, assurance comes from a knowledge of and trust in the truths revealed about Christ in the Word, not to know the Word means not to have assurance. There are doubtless those who have seen themselves as sinners, and have trusted Christ as Saviour; but they have not been fed upon the Word after being saved. Therefore they lack that glad and joyous assurance which God wants us to have, and which honors Christ.

Secondly, *unjudged and unconfessed sin* in a Christian’s life will dim his assurance. “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (II Pet. 1:5-9). “But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him” (I John 2:5). “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established” (Isa 7:9).

We may have assurance, not only of eternal life itself but that the Lord is with us at all times, regardless of our feelings and circumstances, “for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:5, 6).

We have assurance also that all that concerns us is His concern and that He, by His omnipotent power, is working all for His glory and our blessing: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren....What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:28, 29, 31).

When we come to God in prayer, through our Lord Christ, we may come in assurance. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him” (I John 5:14, 15).

Lastly, we have the assurance of reward for our labors for the Lord, many of which are unappreciated and even reproached now. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor 15:58).

So, we have assurance by simple belief in the Gospel (I Thess 1:5); our hearts are comforted as we enter into “all riches of the full assurance of understanding” (Col 2:2); this assurance, instead of making us careless and neglectful, produces diligence in us (Heb 6:11); and we may, with confidence, bring all our problems and needs to Him “in full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22).

“What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Rom 8:35-39).

God stands ready to make a thorough change in the hearts of all who will trust Him.

VIII. RECONCILIATION

The word “reconcile” means *to change thoroughly from*. It has primary reference to the thorough change which is wrought in the sinner when he believes the Gospel and is thereby saved. Whereas *repentance* presents the change of mind which the sinner has about himself and about God when the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, and *conversion* pictures the change of direction which comes when the believing sinner turns toward God, *reconciliation* shows us the change which is wrought in the heart, by which the heart which feared now has peace, and the heart which was bent on sinning now loves and desires to do the will of God.

God’s Word speaks of reconciliation in the following passages: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [reconciliation] (Rom 5:10, 11). “For if the casting away of them [the Jews] be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Rom 11:15). “Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife: (I Cor 7:10-11). “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (II Cor 5:18-20). “And that He might reconcile both [Jew and Gentile] unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph 2:16). “And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled” (Col 1:20, 21).

It is to be observed that the Bible never speaks of God Himself being reconciled. No change need to be wrought in His heart insofar as His love to sinners is concerned. While His heart is necessarily filled with wrath against all sin, it is also filled with mercy, compassion, and love for the sinner. “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). The death and resurrection of Christ at the same time *reconciled* sinners and *propitiated* God, Christ Himself being

both the place of propitiation and the propitiatory sacrifice by which a holy God righteously settled the sin question forever.

Reconciliation means, as we have already noticed, a *thorough change*, but this change of heart did not come, or does not come, because man desires and seeks it but, rather, because God Himself took the initiative in our reconciliation. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (II Cor 5:19).

Reconciliation has been effected through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, shed upon Calvary’s cross. “And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him [Christ] to reconcile all things unto Himself [God, the Father]; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col 1:20). “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom 5:10).

The knowledge that God has reconciled us to Himself brings great assurance and joy to believers in Christ, for it proves that one of God’s purposes in salvation, yes, the primary purpose, is not simply that we be kept from hell but that our heart-attitude toward God Himself should be thoroughly changed, from aversion and fear to trust and love. It is this trust and love that makes our fellowship with the Lord precious. The very fact that God would, by the death of His Son, reconcile us unto Himself, shows His love for us and also fills our hearts with love for Him; “For we love Him, because He first loved us” (I John 4:19). “And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Rom 5:11, ASV).

We have quoted the thirteen Biblical references to reconciliation. Let us now look at them in their contexts. Three of these do not have to do with individual salvation. The first (I Cor 7:11) has reference to a Christian woman who has separated herself from her lawful husband. It says, in verses 10 and 11: “Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.” The meaning of the passage is clear and gives us a good illustration of what reconciliation is. The Christian woman contemplated here had left her husband and, in returning to him, would give evidence that a *thorough change* from her former attitude had taken place in her heart.

The other two passages on reconciliation which do not have to do with personal salvation relate to God’s dispensational dealings with Israel. In the first of these we read: “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Rom 11:15) The whole chapter pertains to Israel’s present blindness and rejection by God, and the future version of the nation. We Gentiles, “the wild olive tree” (vs 17), have had the Gospel preached to us because Israel rejected it and was therefore herself rejected by God. So it is by Israel’s national “Casting away” (which is neither full nor permanent [vs 25] that the Gentile world has been reconciled. And, if such blessing has come to the world from Israel’s rejection, how much greater blessing will come by her “receiving...life from the dead”? Nationally, Israel is now dead in sins,

as is also every individual sinner, Jew or Gentile. But when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth in power and glory, she will be born again nationally, and will thus have life from the dead.

The other dispensational passage is found in Ephesians and is along the same line, showing us that the cross broke down the great partition, the law, which separated Jews and Gentiles in the past age, when God dealt directly only with the Jews, saying to them: "O children of Israel, . . . you only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:1,2). "For He is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph 2nd 14-16).

Looking now at the reconciliation references which speak of our personal salvation, we see in them the *thorough change* which God has wrought in our hearts by His grace. In view of what His Son did on the cross, God's words to us are: "Be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor 5:20). What a wonderful invitation this is! It is given to us because of the glorious fact that, on the cross, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (II Cor 5:19). Instead of imputing our trespasses to us, God put them on Christ; "for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor 5:21). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to His own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6). Thus God can now look upon the world differently, "not imputing their trespasses unto them." If He did impute the world's trespasses unto them, sudden judgment would have to fall; but in view of the cross God can withhold judgment and be "longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet 3:9). Needless to say, judgment will not always be withheld. God's longsuffering will come to an end, and just judgment for every sin will come upon every Christ-rejector, in a never-ending eternity in the lake of fire.

There was a time when all of us were enemies of God. The Lord Jesus said: "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (Matt 12:30). But now a thorough change from that attitude has been wrought in the heart of the believer in Christ, and instead of enmity there is love and fellowship and trust. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom 5:10).

"And not only so, but we also joy in God through Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received atonement [reconciliation]" (Rom 5:11). In our unsaved days there was surely no joy in the Lord. There was rather only the supposed joy coming from "the pleasures of sin" which are only "for a season" (Heb 11:25), whereas God's joys are deep and eternal. "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa 16:11). We now rejoice in One whose presence we once dreaded and hated. What a change, indeed!

Before we were reconciled to God, we lived for and sought to please self. All centered around the gratification of the flesh, and it was not at all a question of righteousness or sin. Now, “all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation” (II Cor 5:18). The Christian has a perfect standing before God, in which “all things are of God.” He, “to the praise of the glory of His grace... hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:5). But there is not only this *thorough change* in our standing before God, there is also a *thorough change* in our motive for living, for we have been made “partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). Now it is our joy and delight to please the Lord instead of pleasing self, for “He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (II Cor 5:15).

A further truth is given us in Colossians 1, the truth that through the blood of His cross the Lord Jesus Christ made peace between a holy God and sinful men; for “you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.” The purpose of this reconciliation is to bring us unto God, “by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (vs. 20). “And you ... hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight” (vss. 21, 22). God, because of His love for us, wrought for us and in us the *thorough change* that brought us to Himself and into that loving fellowship which His heart desires.

In the last two references to reconciliation (see also Matt 5:24, where a different though similar word occurs; and Heb 2:17, where the word “reconciliation” should be propitiation”), observe the responsibility which is ours. We who are reconciled have had “given to us the ministry of reconciliation” (II Cor 5:18) and God “hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (vs. 19). It is our privilege and duty to tell others of what God has done, both that He “hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ” (vs. 18) and “that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (vs. 19). God stands ready to make a *thorough change* in any heart that will trust Him, through His Son. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (vs. 20).

“It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

IX. PROPITIATION

As reconciliation points to the effect of Christ’s work on the cross *manward*, so propitiation points to its effect *Godward*. By the cross, man was reconciled and God was propitiated. God did not need, however, to be propitiated in the sense that we use the word today. In common usage, propitiation means *to appease*, or *to cause to become favorably inclined*. God was favorably inclined toward mankind before propitiation was effected by Christ on the cross. It was, in fact, God’s love toward man that brought about propitiation. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:10).

No, God did not have to be appeased. Nevertheless, before His mercy could flow out toward us, the sin question had to be settled. He is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13), and “the wages sin is death” (Rom 6:23), eternal death. In the face of this, and because “all have sinned, and come short of the glory God” (Rom 3:23), God’s mercy and grace could not flow out until His righteousness had been exonerated and maintained. This is just what God did at the cross, when He brought us to Himself “through the redemption that is Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:24-26).

The word “propitiation” itself means *that which propitiates*, or *an atoning sacrifice*. It also means *place of propitiation*. Our Lord Jesus Christ is both the propitiation and the place of propitiation. By His death on the cross God was satisfied about the sin question; for He “hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). Now, because “Jesus Christ the righteous... is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:2), God can “be propitious” to all who believe.

Some form of the word “propitiation” occurs seven times in the New Testament, although it is not always so translated in the Authorized Version. These references are as follows: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [*place of propitiation*] through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom 3:25); “And He is the propitiation [*that which propitiates*] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:2); “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son

to be the propitiation [*that which propitiates*] for our sins” (I John 4:10); “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful [*be propitious*] to me a sinner” (Lk 18:13); “Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation [*propitiation*] for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17); “For I will be merciful [*propitious*] to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:12); “And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat [*place of propitiation*]; of which we cannot now speak particularly” (Heb 9:5).

We repeat, propitiation means *to make atonement for*, or *make satisfaction for*; and that which propitiates, or that which *expiates*. Thus it means *to make satisfaction for*, and that is exactly what our Lord did on the cross; He satisfied God’s justice and righteousness, that His mercy might flow out. Let us never think that God hated the human race and that this hatred had to be appeased before God would save any. Such a thought is foreign to the Word of God. God’s great and perfect heart of love has always been favorably inclined toward man, but He is also wholly righteous and, before that love could be satisfied, His righteousness must be satisfied and maintained. Propitiation then means that God’s righteousness has been satisfied by the atoning work of Christ, so that He can now be merciful to the believing sinner.

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was made about the third century, B. C., “mercy-seat” is translated by the word “propitiation,” and thus we have “mercy-seat” as the “place of propitiation” in Hebrews 9:5. Looking back to Israel’s annual day of atonement in the tabernacle, we note that the mercy-seat was a place of mercy and propitiation because it was sprinkled with the typical sacrificial blood. “And he [the high priest] shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times...And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation” (Lev 16:14, 33). God could be propitious to Israel for another year because the atoning blood, which pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ, had satisfied His justice. It was there at the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, and only there, that a holy God could meet with a sinful people. “And there I will meet with thee,” said the Lord, “and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat” (Ex 25:22).

In Luke 18:13, where there is written the record of the publican offering his prayer to God, we see a blessed illustration of what propitiation means. He prayed thus, as he “would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast,” and said: “God be Thou propitiated to me the sinner” (ASV, margin). He was saying, in effect “Do not look at me in my sinfulness, but look rather upon the propitiatory sacrifice.” God did look upon the atoning sacrifice. He was propitious to the publican, and “this man went down to his house justified” (vs. 14). With us today, propitiation is not typical as it was with the publican. It has now been accomplished, for “He is the propitiation for our sins”

(I John 2:2). All who look to Him and trust in His shed blood are saved for time and eternity. Excepting Luke 18:13, mentioned above, all the references to propitiation concern our Lord Jesus Christ, who is both “the place of propitiation,” and “that which propitiates.” He “bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (I Pet 2:24). He is the place of propitiation. And He is the One who propitiates, for God “sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:10).

Looking again at the references to propitiation, we observe in all of them an allusion to the effect of Christ’s death Godward. God could not, by means of the Old Testament sacrificial offerings, be satisfied about the questions of sin and righteousness, “for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4). So God sent His Son, who was “set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom 3:25). But Christ on the cross not only satisfied God about sins of past ages, but about our sins too, and His righteousness was vindicated in it all. “For the showing, I say, of His righteousness at this present season: that He might Himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus” (vs. 26, ASV).

What about our sins as Christians? How can God forgive them when we repent and confess them? Simply because Christ on the cross satisfied God’s righteousness, so that now, in faithfulness to Christ, the Father can forgive the sins of His people. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:1, 2). Therefore “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).

I John 4:10 points out the fact that God’s love caused Him to send His own Son to satisfy His holiness and righteousness, so that, the sin question being settled Godward, He might give eternal life to those who believe. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (vss. 9, 10).

In order for our Lord to be the propitiation for our sins, it was necessary for Him to become Man. “The Word was made flesh” (John 1:14). “Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17, ASV). First, as this compassionate and ever-faithful High Priest, He “offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb 9:14). Thus “He is the propitiation for our sins (I John 2:2) and is now in heaven as our “merciful and faithful High Priest,” ministering to our every need, “for in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18).

Hebrews 8 shows us the contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. While the old was a shadow of the new, the typical sacrifices of the old covenant could never satisfy God about the sin question. But the New Covenant, based on Christ's shed blood (see Matt 26:28), completely satisfied God's judgment upon sin, so that He can now say of believers in Christ: "For I will be merciful [*be propitious*] to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb 8:12). The Old Covenant had "the ark of the covenant... and over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat [*place of propitiation*]" (Heb 9:5). The New Covenant is different and incomparably better. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come...by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (vss. 11, 12).

Before the cross, it was perfectly proper for the publican to pray: "God, be Thou propitious to me the sinner" (Lk 18:13, ASV, margin). Now the one atoning sacrifice has been made and is effectual forever. "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2). God offers that propitiation yes, He offers His only begotten Son to all who will believe. God is satisfied with and rests in what His Son accomplished by His shed blood and His resurrection. Reader friend, are you resting in Him "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood"?

There is a difference between the expressions “children of God” and “sons of God.”

X. ADOPTION

Adoption in the general usage of the word, means that one who is not a member of a family by birth or relationship, is given, by adoption, a legal standing in that family, and is thus counted as a family member. In the Bible the word means a different thing. It means *son-placing*, and shows us the truth that all who are born anew into the family of God become at the same time “the sons of God,” with the privileges and responsibilities which go with that position.

The word “adoption” occurs in the following passages: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises” (Rom 9:4). “To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal 4:5). “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph 1:5).

We have already mentioned that adoption means *son-placing*. As far as *relationship* is concerned, we become God’s children by the new birth. As to our *position* in His family, we become sons by adoption. Two different words are used to distinguish between our relationship as children and our position as sons. The Greek noun *teknon* means a *born-one*, and has reference to our coming into God’s family by the new birth; while the word *huios* means *son*, and refers to our standing and position before God. Thus *teknon* is properly translated child (pl. “children”), and *huios* is properly rendered “son” (pl. “sons”), though this distinction is not always maintained in our Authorized Version. For example, the word *tekna* is used in John 1:12, but it is translated “sons”; whereas in Hebrews 12:5 the noun *hujois* is translated “children.”

When one receives the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, he is at that moment both born into the family of God and adopted into the family of God. The two things take place simultaneously, at the very moment of believing. By birth, we become God’s children; by adoption, we become His full-grown sons. While it is true that we need to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (II Pet 3:18), we are nevertheless regarded and treated as full-grown sons from the very moment that we

receive Christ and are thus adopted into God's family. From that moment on, we have the privileges and responsibilities that go with our position as sons.

Notice the following references to our adoption: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children [sons] of Abraham" (Gal 3:6, 7). Here we see that adoption comes just as the new birth comes, by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. "For ye are all the children [sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26).

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal 4:4-7). We see here the truth that our present position of sons in God's family is different from the case of believing Jews in Old Testament days who, as far as their position was concerned, were servants and not sons.

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day [the day of the Lord] should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children [sons] of light, and the children [sons] of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (I Thess 5:4-6). Position carries privilege, but it always carries responsibility also. As sons of God we are enjoined to "watch and be sober" in our Christian lives, especially in view of the Lord's coming.

In order to teach us to "watch and be sober," to be diligent in our Christian lives, our faithful Father chastens His sons and daughters. "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children [sons], My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Heb 12:5-8).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, by His death and resurrection, has given all believers a perfect position before God, the standing as sons, "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children [sons] by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:4-6). All this is by His grace, and for His glory. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are

sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:9-11).

It is by adoption, then, that we have our position before God. And it is because of our adoption that the Holy Spirit has been given us; “for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15); “and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6). The Holy Spirit of adoption, who dwells in the hearts of all the Lord’s own, witnesses to our new birth and our resulting relationship to the Father as His children: “The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16). He also bears witness to our heirship: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” (vs. 17).

The Spirit of adoption also witnesses to our nearness to the Father. We “have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6). The word “Abba” is a word of tender affection for “Father,” so used by our Lord Himself in Mark 14:36. The latest born child of God, who so short a time ago feared God, may now take upon his lips this blessed word which assures him that he is now a son in the family. It is both remarkable and touching to notice how the newly-saved Christian immediately recognizes that God is his Father, and delights so to address Him in perfect liberty.

For the Spirit of adoption is the Spirit of liberty. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15), “and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (II Cor 3:17).

Though God has given us the son-place and we are now adopted into His family, we do not as yet have all the benefits of this adoption. We are “waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). This will take place, of course, when the Lord Jesus comes for His own “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil 3:20, 21). “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2). Every believer has been marked out for this glory, this final aspect of adoption. God has “predestinated us unto the adoption of children [sons] by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure His will” (Eph 1:5). “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29).

As has already been stated, we become children of God by spiritual birth, and sons of God by spiritual adoption. We are children in our relationship and sons in our position. When a father and son are partners in business, the firm is not known as “Brown and

Child,” but as “Brown and Son,” for the word “son” carries in it the thought of responsibility and privilege.

That all believers are sons of God is seen in the fact that all Scriptures having to do with the Christian life are addressed to all. There are no distinctions. All true believers have the same privileges, the same position, and the same responsibilities. What God says to one of us, He says to all.

In summary, adoption gives us (1) *position*. We are full grown sons of God, with (2) the *privilege* of being His representatives in this world. What responsibility this carries with it, as we “serve the living and true God; and...wait for His Son from heaven” (I Thess 1:9, 10)! And when He comes, we shall have (3) final *perfection*, for seeing Him we shall be made like Him, “and so shall we ever be with Lord” (I Thess 4:17).

What is Biblical sanctification? Does it have to do with sinless perfection in this life?

XI. SANCTIFICATION

The doctrine of sanctification is one of the great themes of Scripture and, perhaps, one of the most misunderstood of all the doctrines relating to our salvation. This should not be the case and, we believe, will not be the case when the doctrine is seen in its full truth.

The words “sanctify,” “saint,” “holy,” “consecrate,” and “dedicate,” with their related words, “sanctified” “sanctification,” “holiness,” “consecrated,” “consecration,” “dedicated,” “dedication,” etc., have the same root meaning, which is *to set apart*. *The Pilgrim Bible* says (p. 1200, footnote 8): “HOLY. Set apart for God, or sanctified, is what this word means.”

The Biblical use of the word “sanctify” is well illustrated by Exodus 13:1, 2, where we read that “the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is Mine.” God’s instruction here is that the firstborn, who were delivered from judgment by the blood of the Passover lamb, were to be set apart unto Him. This, then, is the meaning of the words “sanctification” and “holiness” throughout the Word of God.

It will be well for us to notice some of the things which sanctification does not mean. It does not mean, as is so often taught, *sinless perfection*. In His high-priestly prayer the Lord Jesus said of Himself: “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). If sanctification means sinless perfection, then we would have to conclude, in view of the above verse, that there was a time when the Lord Jesus Christ was not sinlessly perfect, a thought that is abhorrent to any true believer. For we know that our Lord is the perfect Son of God, “who did no sin” (I Pet 2:22), “who knew no sin (II Cor 5:21), “and in Him is no sin” (I John 3:5).

Moreover, we are told: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Pet 3:15). If sanctification means sinless perfection, then believers are told to make the Lord God sinlessly perfect. Such a thought is almost blasphemous! But when we see that sanctification means *to set apart*, then we can see that in John 17:19 the Lord Jesus was stating to the Father that He was setting Himself apart to a ministry of intercession for His own, the ministry which He entered upon when He returned to heaven, and which He is carrying on for us at this very moment. We can also

easily understand Peter's statement that we are to "sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts," which means simply that we are to set Him apart to the place of lordship in our lives.

Neither does sanctification mean *moral improvement* or *betterment*; for our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who is altogether righteous, who was and is morally perfect, said: "Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest: because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:36).

Sanctification, or holiness, does not even necessarily mean *salvation*; for Paul wrote thus to the Corinthians: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (I Cor 7:14). This indicates that those who are in the families of believers in Christ are set apart in a special way, for God has a more than ordinary interest in them simply because they are connected with His own dear children.

There is, in fact, a sanctification which precedes salvation, when the Holy Spirit, by His convicting power, sets us apart from the mass of mankind in enabling us to see our lost condition, so that we come to trust in the Saviour. This pre-salvation sanctification is seen in two passages. In one of them it precedes the "belief of the truth"; whereas in the other it precedes the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The first is II Thessalonians 2:13: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The second is I Peter 1:2, where Christians are told that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

Is every true believer in Christ sanctified, or are there some who, though saved, have never been sanctified? The Word of God answers this question: "Paul...unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours"(I Cor 1:1, 2). Here we have the assurance that "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" are "sanctified in Christ Jesus." This clearly speaks of all believers, "for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:13).

Let us notice that we are not sanctified because of anything we are, or anything we have done, but because we are "in Christ Jesus." At the very moment of our accepting Christ as Saviour, God sanctifies us, sets us apart eternally as His own. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor 1:30). So when Jude writes his Epistle to believers, he addresses them as "them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" (vs. 1), and in Hebrews 3:1 we are called "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

We have already stated that we were sanctified when we were saved. Let us notice another passage to this effect: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Cor 6:9-11). At the very moment when we were washed from our sins and justified before God, we were also sanctified.

There is for every believer a *past* sanctification, a *present* sanctification, and a *future* sanctification. Our past sanctification is that we were eternally set apart unto God when we believed, by the work of Christ on the cross. “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:10, 14). Because we are sanctified, God addresses us as “holy brethren,” as we have already observed, and says: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering” (Col 3:12).

Our present sanctification should be constant and ever-increasing, and God’s Word calls us to such daily sanctification and holiness of life, “for this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (I Thess 4:3). “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (I Pet 1:15, 16). This phase of our sanctification is effected by the Word of God, as we shall notice in the concluding part of this article.

Our future sanctification will be complete conformity to the image of Christ, set apart even unto His own likeness, and will be the result of His coming for His own. “Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27). Paul looked forward to this future sanctification when he prayed: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess 5:23).

Thus we may say that our sanctification as believers is (1) *positional*, for the finished work of Christ on the cross has enabled God to give us a perfect position before Himself; it is (2) *progressive*, as we “desire the sincere milk of the Word,” we “grow thereby” (I Pet 2:2); and it is to be (3) *perfected*, when we see the Lord Jesus, and share His likeness.

Our positional sanctification comes by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour; our perfected sanctification will come at His return. How does our everyday practical, progressive sanctification come? It comes, first of all, by our yielding of ourselves to the Lord. It is thus that we are enabled to live holy lives. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be

ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:1, 2). “I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom 6:19-22).

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (I Thess 4:3). If we would live lives set apart unto God, we must live in the light of God’s Word which is His means of effecting our daily sanctification. The Lord Jesus prayed thus to the Father about us: “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17), and the Lord’s present purpose for the Church is “that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word” (Eph 5:26). Thus it is our responsibility to appropriate this Word unto ourselves in daily life.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Cor 7:1). “The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psa 119:130). May we have ears to hear the message of God’s Word, and, hearing it, be enabled to say with the psalmist: “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments” (Psa 119:59, 60).

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (I John 3:2, 3).

*There is something to which the Christian is to give diligence:
To make his calling and election sure.*

XII. ELECTION

In approaching the subject of election we must be able to accept by faith that which we cannot fully understand. We must not speculate about that upon which God has been silent. It is well to remember that “the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things revealed belong unto us” (Deut 29:29).

The Bible clearly teaches that “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...hath chosen us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph 1:3, 4). This is the work of God, and it is not explained by simply saying that God foreknew who would believe, and chose these; “for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth” (Rom 9:11).

We have heard more than one person try to explain election by saying, in effect: “God votes for you, and the devil votes against you, and your own vote determines the election.” This is a very superficial view of the Biblical teaching of election; for election is altogether the work of God, and neither the devil nor man has anything to do with it.

We must remember that the doctrine of election is for saints and not for sinners. God’s message to sinners is the Gospel, “how that Christ died for our sins according to Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor 15:3, 4). This “Gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17).

We, in our limited and finite understanding, cannot reconcile the doctrine of God’s electing grace with the doctrine man’s responsibility and free choice. We are not to try to reconcile them; both are true and, from God’s viewpoint there is no conflict between them. Neither will there be with us if we simply remember that the saint is to be comforted and encouraged by the fact that he is one of God’s elect; and that the sinner is to be given the Gospel, how that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Many of our readers have doubtless heard the illustration of Christ as the door of salvation (cf. John 10:9). ‘The unsaved person, outside the door, sees written above it the words: “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” He enters in response to this gracious invitation and is saved. Inside he sees, written above the door, the words: “He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.” These words could not be seen from the outside; one must be in Christ before they are applicable.

Election is not the same thing as foreknowledge, nor the same as predestination, though these three doctrines have many similarities. As will be seen in later studies of this series, D. V., foreknowledge means that God was acquainted with and knew us as His own before time began, whereas predestination speaks of the predetermined destiny of the saints of God. On the other hand, election speaks of the fact that God has chosen or selected certain to compose the elect groups: Israel and the Church; and has also chosen certain individuals for a special work or service. This group election, that of Israel or of the Church, may be called “corporate election,” while the individual election to service may be called “personal election.”

Here are a few of the main references to Israel’s corporate election: “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut 7:6-8). “For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure” (Psa 135:4). “For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me” (Isa 45:4).

Certain of these references look upon Israel in the future, at the time of our Lord’s return to this earth: “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt 24:24). “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt 24:30, 31).

Israel alone is God’s elect nation. To them He says: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). As indicated above in the passage from Deuteronomy, they were not chosen because of anything in themselves but according to God’s purpose and grace.

It is the same with God’s New Testament people, the Church, which is the body and bride of Christ. He has “saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (II Tim 1:9).

Observe, then, some of the references having to do with our corporate election: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph 1:3, 4). “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (I Pet 1:2). “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God” (I Thess 1:4).

In studying the various Scripture passages on election, it is well to observe that the references that have to do with salvation and glory, are references to corporate election, or group election; whereas the election of individuals has to do with service. In the first case, notice II Thessalonians 2:13, 14: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God

for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” While the election passages having to do with salvation are allusions to corporate election, we recognize, of course, that we must be chosen individually in order to be a part of the corporate body, the Church.

We have stated that the references to individual or personal election have to do with service and not with salvation. The case of Paul is an illustration, when the Lord spoke about him to Ananias: “Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). However, it is not to be thought that every reference to election for service is related to an individual. There is also corporate or group election to service, as when our Lord said to His disciples: “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you” (John 15:16).

When we believe the Gospel and are thus saved, we prove ourselves to be the elect of God. It was their belief of the Gospel that caused Paul to recognize the election of the Thessalonians: “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake” (I Thess 1:3, 4).

We stated in the beginning of this article that our finite minds cannot fully understand the fact that God has chosen us who are saved to be His own, and yet has a whosoever-will Gospel which He graciously and freely offers to all the unsaved. In II Thessalonians 2:13, already quoted, these dual truths are put together, the truths of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Though we are “chosen...in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4), that election becomes effectual to us by our “belief of the truth.” This is why Paul was so willing to suffer in getting out the Gospel, and could say: “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (II Tim 2:10).

If any reader should not be certain of his or her salvation, give heed to the words of the Spirit penned by the Apostle Peter: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall” (II Pet 1:10). “These things” have reference to Peter’s words in the preceding verses of this chapter, first of all to the obtaining of “like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (vs. 1). It is this personal faith in Christ as Saviour that saves, that makes our calling and election sure. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Let us thank God anew for the Gospel, the good news of salvation which we can freely offer to any unsaved person with the full assurance “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15).

Let us who are saved also be comforted and encouraged because we are the elect of God, for “who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is

he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:33, 34).

The fact that we are the chosen of God ought to be a powerful incentive to godly living on our part. We are sinners, but God, in mercy and grace, chose us as His own. What humbling of heart this ought to bring, what yieldedness of life to Him! “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Pet 2:9-11). “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col 3:12,13).

Not only did God foreknow us as His children but as we shall be in glory.

XIII. FOREKNOWLEDGE

The Biblical doctrines of foreknowledge, election, and predestination have a close relationship to each other. We can readily see this when we observe three passages, the first of which links foreknowledge and predestination; the second, election and predestination; and the third, election and foreknowledge.

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29).

According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph 1:4, 5).

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied (I Pet 1:2).

In spite of these similarities, however, each of the three doctrines is distinct from the others and presents a unique aspect of our salvation.

In dealing now with the doctrine of foreknowledge, we must remember “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” (Rom 11:33). There are doubtless things which we would like to know about foreknowledge that are not explained in God’s Word. Let us be very careful to heed attentively what Scripture says, and to honor its silences. This will keep us from vain speculations which are not profitable.

The Bible gives seven direct references to foreknowledge:

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and *foreknowledge* of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).

Who *knew me from the beginning* [*foreknew me*], if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee (Acts 26:5).

For whom He did *foreknow*, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29).

God hath not cast away His people which He *foreknew* (Rom 11:2).

Elect according to the *foreknowledge* of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (I Pet 1:2).

Who verily was *foreordained* [*foreknown*] before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (I Pet 1:20).

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye *know* these things *before* [*foreknow* these things], beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness (II Pet 3:17).

Foreknowledge itself simply means to *know beforehand*, or *to have previous knowledge*. This can be seen from the use of the word in Acts 26:5. Paul is giving his defense before King Agrippa, and he says: “My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning [*foreknew* me], if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee” (vss. 4, 5). Paul testified that the Jews who were his accusers had known him beforehand, in the days of his youth, and that they possessed this previous knowledge about his life.

When we read about God’s foreknowledge and its connection with our salvation, it does not simply mean that God foreknew who would believe the Gospel and thus chose them. It means rather that God knew us, that He was personally acquainted with us as His own before we existed or time began. To be sure, God foreknew who would believe, for He is God, “declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done” (Isa 46:10). But believers were foreknown to Him as belonging to Him by redemption, “for whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29).

Let us notice the first mention of foreknowledge in the Bible. Very often the first mention of a subject gives the key to its meaning throughout all the Word. Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost to the Jews who had been brought together by the unusual happenings which accompanied the descent of the Holy Spirit: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it” (Acts 2:22-24).

Here Peter relates foreknowledge to God's "determinate counsel." This means His *determined*, or *appointed*, or *decreed*, or *specified counsel*. His counsel means His *volition*, or *purpose*. Thus God decreed that for the carrying out of His purpose toward man, His Son should be delivered up for us, for He "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Rom 8:32). Thus our Lord Jesus Christ was foreknown as God's Lamb from eternity past, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8).

We get practically the same message, and also the same meaning of foreknowledge, in I Peter 1:20 which, with its context, reads: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained [foreknown] before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, who raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (vss. 18-21). The Lord Jesus Christ was known to God the Father as the Saviour even before the foundation of the world.

This brings us to the consideration of foreknowledge as it has to do with us and our salvation. Peter writes that believers are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (I Pet 1:2). We were chosen of God, then, because He foreknew us as His own. God's Word does not tell us why God foreknew us as His own, and thus chose us. It surely was not because of any goodness or loveliness in us, for there is none. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: . . . there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom 3:10, 12), and "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jer 17:9).

God foreknew Israel as a nation also and, because He did, He will yet bring them to Himself. In anticipation of that, His watchcare has been theirs through the centuries of their dispersion and sufferings, for "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew" (Rom 11:2). And just as God chose them in His love and grace, so did He choose us in this present age, and there is no other way to explain why He foreknew us as His own. He spoke thus to Israel: "The Lord did not set His love upon you nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut 7:7, 8). God foreknew Israel simply because He loved her, and it is the same in our case.

Let us not fail, however, to notice another truth in I Peter 1:2. We were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," but there is another side to this truth. "Through sanctification of the Spirit," by His convicting work in our hearts, we were brought "unto obedience" to the Gospel message, which resulted in our cleansing and salvation by "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ": the application of His shed blood

to our hearts. Therefore, as we mentioned in connection with the previous study on election, we must always remember that the fact of foreknowledge, in which we Christians rejoice, does not alter the fact that God has a “whosoever will” Gospel for every unsaved person. The Lord Jesus said: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink” (John 7:37). How blessed that we can with confidence tell any lost sinner that our Lord Jesus Christ “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25)!

God not only foreknew us as His own, He foreknew us as we will finally be in glory. His purpose is to make us like unto His own dear Son, and “we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2). “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom 8:28-30).

As we rejoice in the fact that we are God’s foreknown ones, let us heed the warning found in connection with the word in II Peter 3:17: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before [foreknow these things,] beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever” (vss. 17, 18).

God’s Word has given us many warnings about the dangers of false teaching, about which Peter writes in his second Epistle. To follow false teaching about the Person and work of Christ will rob us of our joy, our testimony and our reward at the judgment seat of Christ. We foreknow this, for God has plainly warned us. Let us therefore heed this prescribed remedy which is, by obedience to the Word, constantly to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Nowhere does the Bible teach that God has predestinated some to be saved and some to be lost.

XIV. PREDESTINATION

Perhaps no teaching of Scripture has suffered more at the hands of men than has the doctrine of predestination. It has been made to mean many things that are foreign to the teaching of God's Word. As we have already remarked in our studies of election and foreknowledge, we must not go beyond that which God has revealed to us, and we must respect the silence of Scripture as well as that which it declares.

Predestination is mentioned only six times in the Bible, and two of these references are translated by other words in our Authorized (King James) Version. The occurrences of the words are as follows:

For whom He did foreknow, He also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29).

Moreover whom He did *predestinate*, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified (Rom 8:30).

Having *predestinated* us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph 1:5).

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being *predestinated* according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11).

For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel *determined* [*predestinated*] before to be done (Acts 4:28).

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God *ordained* [*predestinated*] before the world unto our glory (I Cor 2:7).

The word "predestination" means *to mark out beforehand, to decree beforehand, or to specify beforehand*. Thus it has the thought of marking out the destiny. This marking out of the destiny beforehand is exactly the thought that the English word "predestinate" suggests.

It will be observed that none of the above references has to do with the unsaved. One of them (Acts 4:28) refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, whereas the others speak of believers, the saved. Predestination is never mentioned in connection with the unsaved. Nowhere does the Bible teach that God has predestinated some to be saved and some to be lost, some to go to heaven and some to go to hell.

The doctrine of predestination has to do with the bringing to pass of certain things which God has before determined for His own, namely: our being conformed to the image of His Son; our sharing of His (Christ's) glory; our manifestation as the sons of God; and our entrance into the inheritance which Christ has purchased for us.

Therefore the doctrine of predestination does not lessen man's responsibility toward God. Neither does it in any wise detract from the fact that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Nor does it affect God's gracious invitation: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17).

An excellent illustration of what predestination means is found in Acts 4:28. The apostles had been imprisoned because "they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (vs. 2). After the Jewish council had threatened them, they were released:

And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel *determined* [*predestinated*] before to be done (Acts 4:23-28).

God had marked out beforehand the means by which His dear Son would go to the cross, and the fact that "both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together," was simply that they might do "whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel predestinated before to be done." They were but instruments in bringing to pass that which God had decreed and specified beforehand for His Son as the Sin-Bearer. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8), "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (I Pet 1:20, 21).

It is interesting to observe that just as the believer is foreknown, elected, and predestinated, so the Lord Jesus Christ, in His redemptive work, was foreknown (I Pet 1:20), elected (Matt 12:18), and predestinated (Acts 4:28).

The Scripture reveals that God has marked out beforehand certain things for those who have believed in His Son. As believers, we are predestinated to these things. They constitute “the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God predestinated before the world unto our glory” (I Cor 2:7). Before the foundation of the world, God decreed for our glory that believers of this present age would have certain things destined for us, simply because we are in Christ, who is “the wisdom of God” (I Cor 1:24).

“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). Here, incidentally, is revealed the very close link between foreknowledge and predestination. God foreknew us as His own children and, therefore, “He also did predestinate us to be conformed to the image of His Son.” This is God’s eternal purpose for every believer; and though we will not be fully conformed to the image of God’s Son until He comes for us, even now our loving Father uses all the varied circumstances and trials of our lives to bring us more and more into conformity with His Son. For, as the preceding verse (Rom 8:28) assures us, “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

God’s delight is in His Son, and He desires to see Him in us. One day this glorious purpose will be fulfilled, at the time when our Lord Jesus Christ, who is “bringing many sons unto glory” (Heb. 2:10), will come for His own. “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil 3:20, 21). We shall have immortal bodies of flesh and bones like unto our Lord’s own resurrection body, and not subject to pain, sickness, death, or any earthly limitation of time or space. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (I Cor 15:49). “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2).

“Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom 8:30). Those whom God foreknew as His own and who, therefore, had a destiny of glory marked out for them, were by the Gospel called unto Him and justified, pronounced righteous in Christ. All who have been thus justified have this destiny of glory assured them by God Himself, for “whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Certain glory is predestinated for all the saved, and nothing can change this decree of our God. “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (vs.31, 32).

So certain is glory for the believer that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, speaking of the glory which the Father gave Him because He “endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb 12:2), said: “And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One” (John 17:22).

Regarding the next reference to predestination (Eph 1:5) observe the close connection between election and predestination. “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (vs.4-6). This Scripture, like the others already considered, points to the destiny which God has marked out beforehand for those who have trusted Christ. Already, here and now, we are “holy and without blame before Him,” and the reason for this is that “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved,” our Lord and Saviour, of whom the Father declared: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17). We are therefore “predestinated...unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself.”

As believers in Christ we are already adopted into God’s family with all the privileges and responsibilities belonging to this exalted position. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). But though this be true, we have not yet received all that belongs with our adoption. Adoption alludes to the son-place or the place as sons, and in our case it means our sharing the glory of God’s Son. So, “even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). It is for this that God has predestinated us.

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph 1:11). Here is revealed again the destiny of glory which God has marked out for Christians. God has appointed His Son, as the Son of man, the Heir of all things (Heb 1:2). And we shall inherit with Him: “The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs--- heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ--- if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom 8:16, 17).

“The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (I Pet 1:3-5).

God then has predestinated that every born-again one shall be conformed to the image of His own dear Son; that we shall be brought into the glory of His Son; and that we shall share all our Lord’s inheritance with Him. “Oh how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for those that fear Thee; which Thou

hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!” (Psa 31:19).

*Men have always been redeemed by faith in the Gospel,
in Old Testament times as well as now.*

XV. THE GOSPEL

No study of the great doctrines relating to salvation would be complete without a consideration of the Gospel itself, which is distinctly called “the Gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13). Belief of the Gospel message is absolutely essential to salvation, for “the Gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

The word “gospel” itself means *good news* or *glad tidings*, and carries in it the thought of the proclamation of this good news. Thus the root meaning of the word is closely akin to our word “evangelize,” so that we sometimes speak of the Gospel as “the Evangel.”

The Word of God is filled with good news for those who hear and heed it, but the Gospel is God’s good news concerning the way of salvation. The Gospel message is explained to us in I Corinthians 15, where Paul writes: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (vss. 1, 3, 4). The Gospel message, then, declares the vicarious death of Christ and His bodily resurrection: the fact that He “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25). Therefore if we from the heart “believe that Jesus died and rose again” (I Thess 4:14), we are saved.

The Gospel tells us that “Christ died.” We are not saved by the righteous and perfect life He lived upon earth and our imitation of that life; we are saved rather by His death. “We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom 5:10), for “Christ died for our sins.” Thus we have interwoven into the Gospel message the fact that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23), and that God “hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6).

I Corinthians 15:3 says that “Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures.*” In prophecy and type the Old Testament Scriptures set forth the truth of the Gospel message, both that “Christ died for our sins” and that “He rose again the third day.” Isaiah wrote prophetically of Him, that God would “make His soul an offering for sin,” and, in the same verse, declared: “He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand” (Isa 53:10). This fact necessitates His resurrection.

In the instructions given to the priest for the cleansing of the leper, “two birds alive and clean” were to be taken, “and the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water: as for the living bird, he shall take it, . . . and shall dip . . . the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water... and shall let the living bird loose into the open field” (Lev 14:4-7).

Here was a picture of the Gospel message of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the fact that we have been redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God” (I Pet 1:19-21).

“Christ died for our sins,” says the Gospel message, and “He was buried.” His death was no farce; it was real. “And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulcher. But God raised Him from the dead” (Acts 13:29, 30). “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24). “He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

The only way by which anyone can be saved is by the Gospel, “the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16). Faith in this good news about God’s Son is the only condition, for we are assured here that salvation comes “to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentile].” The message must be believed and, thus, received. The writer of Hebrews speaks of Israel in the wilderness, and says: “For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb 4:2).

The Hebrews passage reveals that men have always been saved by faith in the Gospel message concerning the death and resurrection of God’s Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that our Lord’s death and resurrection were not accomplished facts in the days when Israel was in the wilderness, or in the days of Abraham. Nevertheless they were sure facts in the mind and plan of God and, therefore, men could be saved by the Gospel as they looked forward to that coming One. “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [Gentiles] through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Gal 3:6-8).

In contrast to those who are not profited because they do not believe the Gospel, we see the blessedness of those who believe illustrated by the Thessalonians, to whom Paul wrote: “For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” (I Thess 1:5). When we believe the Gospel, we are saved by God’s power. The Holy Spirit comes at once into our hearts to dwell forever,

and assures us of our salvation, for “the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16).

Parenthetically, let us notice that there are also other forms of the Gospel which have been or will be preached in other ages. “The Gospel of the kingdom” is mentioned repeatedly in the record of our Lord’s ministry upon earth. He “went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people” (Matt 4:23). This “Gospel of the kingdom,” preached by our Lord and His disciples, and by His forerunner John the Baptist, was the good news that God was ready to set up upon earth the long promised and long awaited Messianic kingdom, and the message itself was: “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17). The message was rejected by the Jews but will again be preached in the coming tribulation period, after the Church has been translated. Our Lord spoke of this coming announcement by the saved Jewish remnant of that day, when He said: “And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt 24:14).

We read also of “the everlasting Gospel” (Rev 14:6) which will be given by angelic proclamation just before our Lord’s return to this earth in judgment. It is our purpose now, however, to consider the Gospel which is preached in this age, by which we are saved and which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” This is “the Gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), for it tells of God’s grace in giving His dear Son to die for us, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (I Pet 3:18).

These glad tidings of salvation through the death and resurrection of our Saviour are variously spoken of as “the Gospel of God” (Rom 1:1); “the Gospel of His Son” (Rom 1:9); “the Gospel of Christ” (Rom 1:16), and “the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess 1:8).

It is also called “the Gospel of peace” because, when it is believed, it brings peace between a holy God and sinful man. As we believers clothe ourselves with the armor of God in order to stand against Satan and his wiles, we are to have our “feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15). We are to stand ready always to go to others with the good news of the Gospel, and this readiness is a part of our armor against Satan. “For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things” (Rom 10:13-15).

The good news of salvation is also spoken of as “the glorious Gospel,” or, “the Gospel of the glory” (ASV). “But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (II Cor 4:3,

4). Again, Paul says that his doctrine is “according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (I Tim 1:11).

It is “the Gospel of the glory” because it speaks of our Lord’s glory and also because all who believe it are sure of glory. “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess 2:13, 14).

This passage from II Corinthians shows how Satan blinds people to the truth of the Gospel. He seeks to corrupt men’s minds “from the simplicity that is in Christ” (II Cor 11:3), and to veil the fact that salvation is wholly dependent upon acceptance of the Gospel message, “how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” All who believe this are saved eternally. All who refuse to believe it will come into judgment “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power” (II Thess 1:7-9).

Let us, then, hold fast “the truth of the Gospel” (Gal 2:5) and, with Paul, be “set for the defence of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:17), standing fast “in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel” (Phil 1:27). Thus will our manner of life be “as it becometh the Gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27). Satan’s hatred is directed toward the Gospel, and those who faithfully proclaim it will be persecuted; but God’s grace will enable us uncomplainingly to be partakers “of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God” (II Tim 1:8).

“The bonds of the Gospel” (Philemon 18) bind us to all who are in Christ and ought to fill our hearts with love toward them, as we together wait for “the hope of the Gospel” (Col 1:23), which is the “hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2,) when we shall see our Lord and be like Him.

The Bible knows nothing of a salvation that is only temporary.

XVI. SALVATION

In the previous chapters we have considered *fifteen* of the great scriptural doctrines relating to our salvation. We have seen that “repentance” means a change of mind, and has reference to that change of mind both about himself and God which the sinner has when he comes in faith to God through Christ. “Conversion” means a turning about, which we do when we are saved. “Regeneration” (“making new”) speaks of the fact that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (II Cor 5:17). And “redemption” means that God has bought us back to Himself by the precious blood of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

By the act of “justification,” God has pronounced every believing sinner righteous, for in “forgiveness” He has removed our sins from us, “as far as the east is from the west” (Psa 103:12).

We have “assurance” of these things by the simple fact that “he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (I John 5:12). By “reconciliation” through the cross of Christ, we have had a thorough change wrought in our hearts toward God, from enmity to trust, from hatred to love. Christ Himself is the “propitiation” for our sins, having satisfied God’s righteousness by His shed blood.

By “adoption,” God has given the place of full sonship, with its privileges and responsibilities, to every believer. In “sanctification” He has set us apart eternally to Himself. We learn from “election” that “He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4); whereas “foreknowledge” assures us that God knew us as His own from all eternity. And in “predestination” He has marked out that every believer will share the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, “that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29).

All these priceless and precious things are ours simply by belief in the “Gospel,” “how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor 15:3, 4).

Following these fifteen subjects that relate to salvation in Christ, we come to a consideration of “salvation” itself.

Just what do we mean when we say that a person is saved? What is included in salvation? What did the Lord Jesus mean when He said: “I am the door; by Me if any man enter in,

he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9)? What did Peter mean, when he said of the Lord Jesus: “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)? And what did Paul mean, when he wrote: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom 10:9, 10)?

Salvation is the great inclusive word expressing God’s gift of eternal life to believing sinners. The Gospel itself is said to be “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentile]” (Rom 1:16).

The word “salvation” carries in it the thought of rescue, or deliverance; safety; and soundness. The saved person has been rescued from sin and its penalty, which is death; he is kept and protected by God and is made every whit whole.

God offers only one way of salvation, and that is through the death and resurrection of His Son, personally believed in and received. Paul wrote: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (I Tim 1:15). Our Lord Himself said: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10). “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Thus salvation is altogether by God’s grace, for He gave His only begotten Son to die for us, that we might be saved. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God--- not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8, 9). “God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (II Tim 1:8, 9). “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Tit 2:11).

Ephesians 2:8, cited above, clearly tells us, along with many other scriptures, that salvation comes to us simply by believing. “For by grace are ye saved through faith.” It is not faith plus baptism. It is not faith plus church membership. It is not faith plus restitution. It is not even faith plus tears. It is only simple faith in God’s dear Son, Who loved us and gave Himself for us. “What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:30, 31). Peter says that, though we do not see our Lord Jesus Christ, “yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of our souls” (I Pet 1:8, 9).

God’s salvation is eternal. The Bible knows nothing of a salvation that is only temporary, which may be possessed and then lost or forfeited. We read of our Savior, that “though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of *eternal* salvation unto all them that obey Him”

(Heb 5:8, 9). Paul writes to Timothy about his sufferings for the sake of the Gospel, and says: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes; that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with *eternal* glory" (II Tim 2:10). The Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11), said: "And I give unto them *eternal* life; and they shall *never* perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them Me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (John 10:28-30).

The salvation that God offers is complete and perfect. There is no such thing as being partially saved. Nor is it possible for one person to be more saved than another. He who has been saved fifty minutes is as completely and eternally saved as the person who has been saved fifty years. To *every* believing sinner the Lord Jesus says: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Lk 7:50), and while "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; unto us who are saved it is the power of God" (I Cor 1:18).

"The salvation of God" (Acts 28:28), given by grace to all who believe --- "for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:13) --- is in three phases: past, present, and future. We have been saved, we are being saved, and we shall be saved. We have been saved from sin's penalty, we are being saved from sin's power, and we shall be saved from sin's very presence.

Looking at the past aspect of our salvation, let us notice that we are said to be already saved, in possession of an eternal salvation. God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Tim 1:9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit 3:5-7). "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord, JEHOVAH, is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation" (Isa 12:2).

We who have been saved also have a present salvation - from the snares of Satan, the allurements of the world, and the lusts of the flesh. Our Saviour lives in resurrection glory above, to give us this present salvation by His Spirit who dwells in us. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom 5:10).

This day-by-day salvation from sin becomes ours as we look to the Lord Jesus and trust Him, "for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). As we trust Him in simple faith, He works in us and for us. Thus we are told: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 2:12, 13).

There is a future salvation for believers, too, and the Word of God has much to say about this “hope of salvation” (I Thess 5:8). We are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (I Pet 1:5-7).

This future salvation, then, will be ours “at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” For one thing, our bodies will then be saved. Now, “even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:23-25). The Lord’s coming will also save His own from the time of wrath that is to come upon this earth, the Tribulation. “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom 5:8, 9). “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess 5:9).

In the light and expectation of the Lord’s imminent coming, we should live “godly in Christ Jesus” (II Tim 3:12). “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:11-14).

All believers share “the common salvation” (Jude 3) purchased for us by the blood of Christ and given to us by God’s grace. There is no other way to be saved, and “how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation” (Heb 2:3)? Reader, if you are not saved, do not neglect! To do so is to your eternal loss. Come to Him who said: “I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).

If there is salvation there must be a Saviour, and God’s dear Son is that One. He has saved us from our sins: Who hath saved us . . . by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ” (II Tim 1:9,10). He saves us daily from the pitfalls of the way: “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling . . . the only wise God our Savior” (Jude 24, 25). And He will perfect and complete our salvation when He comes, “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil 3:20, 21).

“Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9).