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Deacons and Servants

Joel Portman

Service is a very important principle in the Scriptures. It is given to believers as

1. A Result of Redemption
2. A Responsibility toward the Master
3. A Great Privilege to enjoy

Linked with service in an assembly is the word "deacon" that we find in various forms in the epistles. It is worth our effort to try to understand its meaning as well as possible.

Normal, General Meaning of "Deacon"

"Deacon" is transliterated from Strongs #1249 which is *diakonos*. It is usually translated as Minister, or servant. It expresses the servant in his capacity to accomplish a work, to meet the requirements of one he is serving and a work he is doing. It looks at the servant in relation to his work, his fitness for that work, rather than any idea of compulsion or even voluntarism, or bondage as "doulos" would signify.

Its exact rendering signifies "a runner, servant, messenger, assistant." It indicates one who is competent and capable, trustworthy and who can represent and carry out the interests of his superior faithfully in a proper manner. It often has the idea of responsible representation, more than simple menial service.

Occurrences in the New Testament

Gospels: It usually refers to servants: Spoken of the disciples toward each other by the Lord (Matthew 20: 26, John 12:26), common servants in the household (John 2:5,9) and servants of the King (Matthew 22:13).

Acts: Generally assumed to apply to the Seven in Acts 6 but never directly used as title of

them, They are only called "the Seven." (21:8). However, Acts 6:2, "serve tables" is the verb form of the noun and their work is generally connected with deacon work in this instance.

In the Epistles: Used of

Government Officials functioning to carry out the law of the land (Romans 13:4) as servants of God ultimately (v. 6), as they carry out that responsibility. They are seen in their capacity to accomplish that work which God has determined is necessary for the maintenance of order in society and execution of judgment on evil doers.

Christ in relation to His work to accomplish God's will (Romans 15:8) He is spoken of as a minister of the circumcision, never a slave (doulos) to men but serving His God as a doulos to accomplish a work for the benefit of Israel particularly and to fulfill God's purposes toward them and all men.

Apostles and other servants who were actively involved in service for the Lord and His people, whether in ministry or in the gospel. This includes Phoebe (Romans 16:1), a servant of the assembly in Cenchrea, Paul and those with him (1 Corinthians 3:5, Ephesians 3:7, 1 Timothy 4:6 (Timothy)).

Aspects to Notice re. Diakonos

The Gospels consider them possessing qualifications to handle Spiritual truths. I.e. the pictures presented illustrate to us what should be true of everyone seeking to serve the Lord in any capacity. The word doesn't seem to emphasize physical aspects of work as would be pictured in the parables presented or in the application to the disciples, but rather spiritual.

In Acts 6, the original aspect emphasizes a form of material service. However, it was more than men doing a simple work.

Consider the very great implications of the work they were being called to do. A serious problem had arisen among believers that called for great wisdom and care to make sure that it would not result in lasting consequences that would produce division among the saints at this early stage of the church.

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The work involved responsibly representing the entire company in the distribution of funds involved in the care of the widows who were destitute, and thus it would have personal, emotional and spiritual implications.

Notice the extremely high qualifications that the apostles expected to find in these men:

1. Good testimony (honest report), the same as in 1 Timothy 3:8 re. deacons. They must not have anything about their lives that would cause any charge against them or reproach re. the work they would be doing. It is a word related to witness or capability to be a martyr for the truth, giving faithful testimony without compromise. Same as 16:2, re. Timothy and 22:12 re. Ananias from all the Jews.

2. Full of the Holy Spirit or subject to and being controlled by the Spirit. Not carnal men or fleshly men, but those whose lives displayed spiritual power. It wasn't displayed by spiritual gift but by an entirely different thing altogether. Not by ability to perform miraculous works but by showing evidence of a life that exhibited spiritual qualities showing that one is subject to spiritual control, displaying fruit that would give evidence to it.

3. Characterized by Wisdom. Possessing excellence in attitude and action. This included knowledge and godliness, striving after the highest by the best means. It expresses a proper outlook on life that applies spiritual, eternal principles to decisions, priorities, ambitions and expectations. It is the characteristic of taking account of knowledge and observations and resolving conflicts and difficulties in a spiritual context with the proper application of truth to every aspect.

Notice the further expression of their work. It was a work that went beyond the function of supplying physical necessities to that which fulfilled spiritual responsibilities in testimony, and it was primarily exemplified in Stephen and Philip.

We learn from this that deacon work is more than simple physical assistance in a local assembly, more than the "menial" tasks such as cleaning the hall or arranging the chairs. It is a work that involves representation of the assembly, responsibility in serious matters, the expression and fulfilling of which requires spiritual qualities.

If this were not so, then it would be necessary to require that anyone who does anything of any nature in an assembly must possess spiritual qualities that are called for in the New Testament regarding deacons. Either that or one must lower the standard to enable those not so qualified to serve.

Its Usage in The Epistles

The verb form (#1247) is used in several ways that would involve physical ministry as well as spiritual.

Romans 15:25. Paul going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints (material help)

2 Corinthians 8:19 etc., collection of the gift for the assistance of the Jewish saints.

2 Timothy 1:18 Onesiphorus and his service to Paul when he was in prison in Rome.

Philemon 18 regarding Onesimus who might have served Paul when in prison.

The Noun, (#1249) diakonos, is used

For Satan's servants carrying out his bidding (2 Corinthians 11:15)

For Governing agents (Romans 13)

For Christ toward Israel (Romans 15:8)

For the Apostles and others with them who were serving the Lord in a spiritual capacity. (as noted above)

Conclusion:

Primary emphasis in the epistles is on those who fulfill a spiritual work that represents Christ in ministry of the Word to sinners as well as to saints. This is entirely true in passages that speak of a deacon in service toward a local assembly. There never seems to be any aspect of this truth that involves what we might think of as deacon or service work in the more menial aspects of it.

However, one cannot totally rule out the other physical aspects of material service to the saints. It does seem that in relation to assembly function, this is not the primary teaching and if it is in any case, it is in a capacity that involves responsibility and representation of the assembly as a whole, i.e., handling of assembly finances, writing assembly letters, or serving in a capacity that represents the assembly in its collective aspect.

Qualifications in 1 Timothy 3

Note first of all that the deacons in this passage are directly linked with the overseers or elderhood. In this sense, it might be noted that they likely are those who labor with the elders in the responsible care of the assembly. Elders carry out spiritual pastoring and shepherding care while deacons represent spiritual ministry or service to the saints. So these are the individuals who function in their own spiritual capacity as the active arm of church government and ministry to uphold and enable the saints in their collective functions for the Lord.

The qualifications are very high, almost the same in certain areas as that of elders.

"LIKEWISE.." or "in like manner" indicates that these are similar to the elder in the high standards that are expected. With these high standards, there would be corresponding care needed to identify them.

NINE QUALIFICATIONS Listed

1. Grave, inspiring awe, respect, means venerable and recognized for qualities. In Philippians 4:8 it is translated "Honest." He has a serious bearing that causes his ministry to have weight among those who hear him. More than an "outward appearance" or something put on, it is the character of the man, being seen in his life before others.

2. Not Double-tongued but consistent in speech. Only here in New Testament. It implies not speaking to cater to individuals, saying one thing to one person, another to others. Righteous in speech, dependable.

3. Not given to much wine, or temperate, having physical desires under control. In the environment where wine was a normal drink, and usually diluted, he was not known to linger over or be one to drink much. Examples in Scripture show the dangers in judgment that resulted. It could also indicate in a broader sense, that he is not a man given to appetite or self-indulgence in his life.

4. Not greedy of money This is a quality of an Elder also; not ambitious for monetary gain, or occupied with materialism and all that is associated with it. He doesn't have a covetous spirit, regardless of whether he has money or not. Not a "Money Lover."

5. Clear in Doctrine with a Consistent life that supports genuine convictions. Needs to have a life that supports that truth, showing that he is genuine, holding fast the truth he preaches or teaches. His conscience is pure, undefiled by knowledge that he is not practicing what he preaches.

Steadfast adherence to truth of God's Word. If teaching, his teaching must be consistent with truth of God and be dependable. In this regard, he must have studied and learned truth, able to handle it properly and with some understanding so it might be profitable to his hearers.

6. Proven or tested by various functions of lesser importance, shown to be faithful by previous conditions of life.

7. Found Blameless or without ground for any charge against them by others. Inconsistencies of any importance in his life would hinder effectiveness of ministry and dependability of practical functions to the assembly.

Does not Mean that he is PERFECT! However, it does mean more than just being cleared of charges; it is that no charge has been made against him that is valid.

8. Husbands of one wife or, as elders, devoted and involved with only one woman in his life. Not a philanderer or flirtatious person but faithful to only one woman who is his wife. Not necessary that he be married, though language of vs. 11 seems to indicate he is.

9. Ruling house and family well as an evidence of his ability to exemplify Christian standards and lead properly in his own family, maintaining order so that his own testimony is evident.

Vs. 11 intervenes and has different interpretations. Some think it refers to women deacons, but that is relatively hard to support from the substance of the text as well as from the pattern of the early church. **Phoebe** might be mentioned in this regard, but exactly what her function was in the assembly and what type of work she maintained is hard to say. She may be seen as a servant of the assembly in the more general sense as is already observed.

Certainly, if sisters teach in the Sunday School, then they should also meet the requirements of a deacon.

Spiritual qualifications and the position of the passage along with its wording seems to indicate clearly that Paul is referring to the wives of deacons. If this is true, and I believe it is primarily the intent of the passage, then it indicates that such men must have a wife who reflects his own spiritual qualities and is a suitable companion to help him in his work. This would be particularly true if, (and likely is), they would assist their husbands in any ministry involving sisters of the assembly.

But it also indicates that the respect and weight that a deacon's ministry would have is linked with the demeanor and spiritual quality of his own wife. A lack of this would be a hindrance to his ability to function properly and effectively for the work of the Lord in the local assembly.

Work of a Deacon

In 1 Timothy 3:8, "the deacons" is literally, "those who serve." They would correspond to the Levites who assisted the priests in their service in the holy place and in teaching the law to the people. This service has various capacities, but must be seen as any sphere of particular service toward the entire assembly that carries with it any responsibility or representative capacity.

It would involve (among others):

- 1.** Handling assembly funds for the assembly.
- 2.** Writing letters on behalf of assembly. This is not necessarily the work of elders.
- 3.** Serving the saints in their needs as they might represent the assembly in its service toward the needy.
- 4.** Ministry of the Word to teach the saints.
- 5.** Teaching Sunday School as this represents a function of the assembly to teach the young.
- 6.** Preaching the gospel might also come under this list, though this is not necessarily an assembly function, but falls more within the area of evangelistic qualifications.
- 7.** Public service for the assembly such as handing out books, greeting people at the door, functioning so as to represent the assembly in its service.

One conclusion seems to be that there are areas of assembly service that don't fall under the definition of "deacon work." They are

areas of work and involvement that can include every believer in fellowship in the assembly so that there is a sphere of service for all to do.

Not all qualify for what might be truly called Deacon work. Each one of the Lord's people should be exercised to function in whatever capacity they are qualified for and recognized in. We often want some "higher level" of service but are not willing to assist the Lord's people in what might not call for as much recognition.

Concerning Issues

It's possible that by opening up areas of what is truly deacon work to those who are not qualified spiritually and scripturally lowers the requirements for such work. When such work involving a requirement for spiritual qualifications is done by those who are not exercised to maintain and display qualifications of the Scripture, that work doesn't have the effect and result that it should have, and is "cheapened" in that degree.

This is not intended to discourage saints from such service but rather to challenge us to uphold and strengthen the standard for it. We can fail to be exercised in this way, so that the result is a continual decline that accommodates itself to changes to the point of accepting as normal what is really abnormal! The result is a further decline that inevitably results in ruin of a local assembly.

Calling simple service of doing physical tasks about the hall "Deacon work" takes away from what that work should require. If this is deacon work, then only deacons who fulfill the qualifications should do it. However, we have seen that there is work of a physical nature that can be done by every believer and in which we should all be involved.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to stir up our hearts, especially those of younger believers, to recognize the high standards God expects for spiritual service, so that we might seek to develop and to display qualities that will make our service effective to the saints and for the Lord, and which will preserve the character of the assembly.

Not all will agree with what has been

written here, but it is presented for our consideration and to seek to enhance our study of this important work in an assembly.

We must remember what has been taught us in the past: The platform of the assembly, or any other responsible teaching function, is not open to every person. Neither is it restricted to only a small class of individuals. It is the responsibility of elders to maintain the standards for such spiritual service by their example and teaching so that the character and quality of the assembly might be strengthened and preserved in a degenerating world.

The Father's Love

W. J. Hawking

("The Son of His Love")

Undoubtedly the love of the Father is the most exalted theme in the revelation of Christianity. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons [children] of God" 1 John 3:1. The love of the Father specially irradiates the family circle of grace. The love of God is for the whole world in its illimitable measure, and is proclaimed to all men for the ears of faith. "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). And nothing can separate those who believe from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39). But the Father's love!

What Manner of Love?

What sort of love, then, is it that the Father has given us, and that we are exhorted to behold? Is it a love which was awakened and even caused by our dire need? We are too apt to assume hastily and somewhat selfishly that the Father's love derives its special character from the fact that we, the sinful and unworthy subjects of divine grace, are, because of its abounding energy, enabled to stand before Him in the relationship of beloved children. And if this is our only viewpoint of His love, we may learn perhaps a little of its depths, but we shall miss its invisible heights altogether, as well as its boundless length and breadth. No, love

receives its prime quality from the Lover rather than from the loved one. And our highest joy, therefore, is not that we are the objects of divine love, though we should never forget the love that made us and calls us the children of God. We who know Him that is from the beginning rejoice, not only in the love that is of God, but in the God Who is love (1 John 4:7-8), in Him Who loves as only the God Who is love can love. Moreover, in a deeper intimacy still, we bless the Father, not merely, nor even chiefly, because we are loved of Him, but because the Father Himself loves us, and because He loves us as only the Father Who is God can love. The Father's love!

Incomprehensible Love

Here it would be fitting to pause in adoring contemplation of the Father Whose love has been revealed to us. And we may also ask ourselves whether we really understand "what manner" of love the Father's is. We speak to one another of His love, we sing of that love, we rejoice in that love, but what do we know of the extent and manner of that love? We believe sometimes that the tiny vessels of our poor hearts are filled to overflowing with that love; but can we take the measure of its "ocean fullness" from our own conception or experience of it?

It is useless, of course, to attempt to measure the love of God by man's cubits and ephahs, and yet how can we worship the Father in spirit and truth unless we know "what manner" of love He has bestowed upon us? Its staggering immensity may fill us with amazement, as the disciples were amazed when they beheld the behaviour of the Lord in the tempest, saying, "What manner of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him?" Matthew 8:27. The mighty power of the Lord bewildered them, but astonishment is not the worship in spirit and in truth which the Father seeks from His worshippers.

The Father's love learned in the Son

But we who are begotten of God ought not to be bewildered by the love of the Father. Its greatness may be, and is, utterly beyond our comprehension, but its beauty and its sweetness are not beyond our contemplation and

delight, for we behold the blessedness of the Father's name revealed in the soft radiance of the Son. Whoever has seen the Son has seen the Father. Jesus said to Philip, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" (John 14:10.) In the Son therefore we know the Father, and in the Son we learn the Father's love, which otherwise would baffle our understanding and overwhelm our hearts.

We ought not to lose sight altogether of the fact that the love of God the Father is in itself, abstractedly, an incomprehensible subject to us. This humbles us. We cannot describe His love to others nor communicate to them its sweetness. We cannot understand it even for ourselves. At the same time the knowledge of the Father is characteristic of the youngest in the family of God: "I write to you, little children [babes], because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). The newly-begotten are here said to be in a place of realized relationship to God the Father. The babes even know that One is their Father, even God, and also that they are dependent upon Him for divine nature and its nurture, for love and for counsel. How could they know the Father's love apart from the Son?

God Unseen, the Father Declared

We are now considering especially the love of the Father, made known to us in the New Testament. God is the general name of the Deity, reflecting His absolute nature as the self-subsisting One, beyond creature knowledge. But the name, Father, implies the name, Son, also, the two being correlated terms. Moreover, the name, Son, implies, among other things, the most familiar acquaintance with the affections of the Father. Hence we read, "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared [Him]" (John 18:1-40). The Father, therefore, is now made known.

In this instructive passage both names, God and Father, occur. On the one hand, the inscrutability of God in His essential Being is first stated; "dwelling in unapproachable light; Whom no man has seen, nor is able to see," as it is expressed in another place (1 Timothy 6:15-16). On the other hand, the same text shows that what the creature could not by any means discover has been made known by the

Son, Who alone knew Him, being the Only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. Marvelous revelation this! for it includes not only God's hand in its omnipotent power, not only God's mind in omniscient wisdom and knowledge, but also, and chiefly in this passage, God's heart in its infinite and eternal love as the Father.

"Yet deeper, if a calmer, joy
The Father's love shall raise,
And every heart find sweet employ
In His eternal praise.

Nor is its sweetness, now unknown,
Well proved in what is done;
Our Father's love with joy we own,
Revealed in Christ the Son."

The Secret of the Father's Love

Thus, the secrets of the Father's bosom are now made known, the love of the Father being declared by and in the Son.

". . . The Son Who knows —
He only — all His love;
. . .
Dwells in His bosom; knoweth all
That in that bosom lies;
And came to earth to make it known
That we might share His joys."

Who indeed, save the Son of God, could know the heart of God? Who, save the Only-begotten Son, could interpret to man the profound emotions of the Godhead? There is an unfathomable depth of riches in the wisdom and knowledge of God; His judgments are unsearchable; His ways are untraceable (Romans 11:33). But how much more intimately associated with the mysteries of the Godhead is the love of the Father! for God Himself is love (1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16) as truly and absolutely as God is light (1 John 1:5).

Competency to undertake the revelation of this love of the Father is found alone in Him Who is described in the brief phraseology of John 1:18 as "the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father." Love is essentially comprehended in the relationships of Father and Son. "The Father loves the Son, and has

given all things [to be] in His hand" (John 3:35). "That the world may know that I [the Son] love the Father, and as the Father has commanded Me, thus I do" (John 14:31). There was, therefore, according to the testimony of the Son Himself on earth, mutual love between the Father and the Son. Nor was this love a new experience to the Son, for He also declared, "Thou [the Father] lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24), thereby revealing Himself as the Eternal Son of the Father's love.

Election

By *Dr. H. A. Cameron*
Romans 9, 1 Peter 1, Jude 4.

In dealing with the doctrine of election we approach a study that is both difficult and dangerous. Observe that I say study; the doctrine itself is of God and must necessarily be profitable, but it is one of the deep things of God and hence the difficulty in its study, and, handled as it has been by some without the due consideration of counterbalancing truths, the examination has proved to be one fraught with danger. We stand as it were at the portal of the counsel-chambers of God, and are privileged to hear a little of the Divine purposes, enough to awaken deep interest, but enough also to convince us that our finite minds cannot grasp the infinite upon which the doctrine launches us. We must ever remember that election has to do with God's own rule as to His own procedure, His Divine will and work; and our attitude is absolutely receptive, neither altering, nor adding to nor taking from His words upon the matter.

The truth of election is "children's bread" and as such it is nothing to be refused but rather to be received with thanksgiving. But it is in one sense, "bread to be eaten in secret" and how pleasant it is while thus partaken of. When, however, instead of nourishing the soul it is made a means by which to choke ourselves or others, there is something wrong with our handling of it, and the one who dispenses it in such fashion is not giving the household its food in due season.

"General" Booth, on one occasion, made

a remark which is appropriate here; said he: "When I eat fish I am extremely careful not to get the bones stuck in my throat. First of all I separate the meat from the bones and having put these entirely aside, I proceed to eat the meat. Then when I have finished that, I return to the bones and pick them. So I do with difficulties in the Bible. I first take good care that they do not choke me, but after I have absorbed what is undoubtedly the meat of the matter, the simple and plain nourishment connected with the doctrine, I take my time in picking the bones of contention."

That the doctrine of election is one of the difficult problems in the Scriptures, is quite in keeping with the fact that it is related to the eternal counsels of God and must necessarily be far above our comprehension because of our human limitations. Nevertheless we bow to the truth of it, and with all saints say "Amen" to everything pertaining thereto which God has graciously revealed.

That God, in a mode consistent with His attributes of justice, grace, holiness and mercy, eternally elected, foreknew, foreordained, predestinated, the things which to us become known and seen as events in time, is a truth which should commend itself to every man's conscience. For, to be God, He must necessarily be both Omnipotent and Omniscient. Herein therefore lies no difficulty. It is only when, to our limited understanding, that doctrine seems to impinge upon a truth equally and as clearly revealed, namely man's free agency, that the difficulty arises. That both are scriptural truths is undeniable, that they are mutually opposed seems to us just as undeniable. There is but one way open to us, and that is to make the second proposition a part of the first; only thus can we satisfactorily grasp for practical purposes the truth of both. The Confession of Faith declares that "God hath foreordained whatsoever cometh to pass:" therefore if man has a free will (and the Scriptures everywhere teach it) then it follows that God hath foreordained the freedom of man's will. Without attempting therefore to explain or reconcile what seems to us contradictory, we bow to both as truths revealed in the Word of God.

It has been asked, "Where do you stand theologically? Are you Calvinists or Arminians?"

Our answer must be "Yes, No, Both, Neither." For example we denounce the doctrine of reprobation (that God hath foreordained certain men to eternal perdition) as enunciated by hyper-Calvinists, and repudiate it as a horrible untruth. But while we thus part with Calvinism there is much in that system which we endorse. On the other hand we agree with Arminians in the proclamation of free grace but renounce their "falling away" doctrine, for we hold tenaciously, with the Calvinists, to the scriptural teaching of the final perseverance of the saints, the elect of God, the eternal security of the believer.

Many years ago there was in the city of Detroit a man named Cameron who styled himself "the Church tramp." He made it his business to visit representative denominations and listen to the various preachers with their varied presentation of the doctrines of Christianity, and from the material he thus gathered, this clerical critic (for he himself was a clergyman) wrote articles for the Detroit News, giving a summing up and review of what he had heard. In his wanderings he visited the Gospel Tent on Grand River Ave. during a series of meetings conducted by Mr. Muir and Dr. Martin. His criticism was very friendly, taking up the manner of the evangelists (he called Dr. Martin "John," and described Mr. Muir as "Peter") and the hearty singing of the hymns, but when he came to classify the preachers theologically he had some difficulty in placing them, finally deciding in his mind that they were "low Calvinists and high Arminians." Perhaps to those versed in theological discrimination that is about where we stand, but we prefer to describe ourselves by the divinely-called name of "Christians". We belong to neither school but seek to walk in the midst of the paths of judgment.

Now because some have forced the doctrine beyond the limits which God hath assigned it in the Scriptures, they have intruded into those things which they have not seen. It is disastrous to be wise above that which is written. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us." Questions such as these have engaged the attention of those who push the matter to extremes: "Did Christ die

only for the elect?" If so "Are we warranted in offering salvation to all?" Consequently we have the expressions coined by man, "limited atonement" and "limited offer of grace." We are therefore forced to consider (1) God's sovereignty in election to life; (2) The doctrine of reprobation as taught by hyper-Calvinists; (3) The extent of the atonement; (4) Those to whom the salvation of God may be presented for acceptance; (5) Man's free agency.

Thankfully we turn to one Scripture which answers satisfactorily all the questions that are raised, namely John 3:16. This declaration from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ presents God as the Author of Salvation, expressing His heart of love and grace to the unlovely, unlovable, and unloving sons of Adam's race. Herein is demonstrated His sovereignty. As a King proclaims an amnesty to the rebels in his realm, so this Monarch demonstrates His willingness to pardon in a manner worthy of His magnanimity. And upon a righteous basis doth He make this offer, for through the atonement accomplished by the Son of His love (an atonement co-extensive with the proffered mercy), His holiness is vindicated and His grace is unhindered. One barrier only remains,—the will of the creature—for salvation is conditioned upon man's acceptance or rejection. Of this salvation it has been succinctly stated "God thought it, Christ wrought it, the Spirit taught it, the Gospel brought it, faith caught it, and I've got it." Here all is simple everyday truth, and not one principle of the Word of God is violated.

God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

It is very evident that in the matter of salvation man is entirely eliminated. Ungodly, without strength, dead in trespasses and in sin, if succor comes it must be from an outside source. Hence the virtue in the name "Jesus"—Jehovah the Savior. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The purpose of God is to manifest His love and to dispense His mercy, and what evokes this love and mercy? Not man's will, not man's works, but God's own sovereign grace. He must be the initiator and executor of His own purposes of love. "God so

loved," "In this was manifested the love of God," "God commendeth His love towards us," "We have known and believed the love ... God is love." Thus it is written, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

Jacob and Esau. Romans 9:10-13.

Here is a concrete case. "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." A Christian went to Mr. Spurgeon once and said, "I have a difficulty." "What is it?" inquired Mr. Spurgeon. "I cannot understand," said he, "why God should say 'Esau have I hated'." "That is no difficulty to me," replied the preacher, "I can well understand why God should hate Esau. What I cannot understand is, how God could love Jacob". Let us remember that the Scripture in Romans 9 is a quotation from Malachi 1, and Malachi wrote that statement 1400 years after Esau had lived and died. It was not before Esau was born and had not yet done either good or evil but centuries after his evil life, that God said, "Esau have I hated". There was abundant reason why God should thus express His hatred, for He had honored Esau by making him the first born, the possessor of the birthright, and did not Esau, in spite of all, prove himself a profane person, despising the birthright and selling it for a morsel of food? It is true that in the purpose of God, according to election, God foreordained that the blessing to Israel and to all the nations of the earth should come through Isaac and Jacob, and not through Ishmael or Esau. That was His own sovereign act, and who shall dare say that without giving account of any of His matters, He did not wisely exercise His divine right in choosing one in preference to the other to be the channel of blessing? And that He should love Jacob of all men is surely an outstanding proof of His exceeding grace not only to the worm Jacob, but to any of Adam's race who question whether such may be the thought of His heart toward them.

Pharaoh. Romans 9:17.

If certain commentators be correct the Pharaoh of the Exodus was a man of lowly birth who by a revolution in the government became the monarch of the world-empire of that day. Thus

we see God's power in raising him up (verse 17), and if God's power is seen in promoting him, it is as clearly evident in demoting him as recorded in Exodus 1 to 12. In the case of Jacob God showed mercy; in the case of Pharaoh He manifested His power. "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18). But it might be asked, does not this hardening prove the obnoxious doctrine of reprobation? We can answer this best by inquiring, "How did God harden Pharaoh?" In every case by showing him kindness, forbearance, longsuffering, When Pharaoh said, "Who is Jehovah? I know not the Lord, neither will I let His people go," he was throwing down the gauntlet to the Almighty. Four times over in the controversy it is said that "Pharaoh hardened his heart." When was his heart soft? When God's hand lay heavy upon him in judgment. And when did he harden his heart? When that hand was lifted in grace. And a noteworthy point to observe is that the word "hardened" when it refers to God's action, means "strengthened:" God strengthened Pharaoh's heart. But the word "hardened" when it refers to Pharaoh's own act is "made hard." "Pharaoh made his heart hard." "When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart and hearkened not." Just as today, during the time of adversity men seek the Lord, and forsake Him in the day of prosperity, so with Pharaoh. The goodness of God should have led him to repentance, but instead of that, he turned the grace of God into a means for further defiance. Not reprobation from God therefore, but retribution for his obduracy was the occasion of Pharaoh's downfall.

Cain.

Abel's murderer is an outstanding example of God's sovereign offer of grace. The offering provided and pressed upon Cain for his acceptance, the mark set upon him to protect him from violence such as he had meted out to his brother, were proofs of God's mercy, but both were peremptorily rejected by Cain's own free deed, for he deliberately "went out from the presence of the Lord."

Balaam.

Messages from God, revelations of Israel's

glory, a vision of the coming of Christ, and a warning of his own doom at that coming—"beholding but not nigh," all these did not deter Balaam from his greedy pursuit of the wages of unrighteousness. Spite of God's forbearance, he taught the king of Moab how to seduce Israel, and he perished with a sword in his hand fighting against God's people.

Judas.

More remarkable still is the history of the traitor. Chosen to be an apostle, listening to the words and witnessing the works of Christ for over three years, appointed to be the purse-bearer for the twelve, and honored at the last Passover by having the sop presented to him (a mark of favor from the Master of the feast) yet, steeling his heart against kindnesses multiplied, he "fell by his own transgression." The Lord foreknew who should betray Him but the responsibility for the betrayal was Judas' own.

Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, Balaam, Judas, were all singled out by God to high honor; and God proffered them bona fide offers of pure grace, but each took his own way and perished with no other but himself to blame for the catastrophe. They are moreover specimens of God's dealings with the sons of men at large and refute the doctrine of reprobation.

Vessels of wrath fitted to destruction (Rom. 9:22).

But surely, it might be said, this expression teaches a foreordination to perdition. Nay, verily. While it is true God "prepared the vessels of mercy unto glory," the vessels of wrath fitted themselves to destruction, as may be clearly known by scrutinizing their individual careers.

Before of old ordained to condemnation. (Jude 4). Is not this a clear foreordination to eternal judgment? Again, emphatically, No. We are at a disadvantage here in that we are limited to a translation and that a faulty one in this case. The word in the original is pregrapho and could well be translated "foretold". That there should be such apostates was predicted, "marked out" or "delineated beforehand," is the idea and not predestination or reprobation.

(Continued)