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Spiritual Growth (continued)

Jim Walmsley

The difference between those that truly have been born again by the work of the Holy Spirit of God and those that are only nominal members of "a church," is as clearly marked as the difference between life and death. The new birth begins when one recognizes his sin and that he deserves eternal judgment; in other words, he confesses that he is completely lost. One that feels his sinful condition and recognizes that there is no religion in the world that has the capability to exonerate him from all guilt and give him eternal life finds it easy to believe in Christ for the salvation of his soul. *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,"* (John 3:36). *"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). *"Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth. . . the word of God which liveth and abideth forever"* (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

Having heard the gospel in a meeting, a young man believed on the Lord and began to attend the meetings in that place. He noticed that many explanations that he was hearing didn't correspond with the words of the portion being studied. He abandoned that place and began to attend another place with the same result. Many times he passed through the same experience, so that he was at the point of believing that it wasn't possible to meet a group of genuine believers in any place that interpreted the Bible sanely. He continued visiting whatever place that was presented as "evangelical," but always with the same result. In his going from one country to another, he was always seeking a place where the truth of the Word of God was taught. When he encountered a place that had a public notice of the days and times of their meetings, he decided to go to the Bible study. He went cautiously, stopping in the doorway to ask the man who greeted him concerning the beliefs and practices of that place. He was impressed that the man not only clarified everything frankly,

but he also gave him the references from the Bible that supported the doctrines and practices of that place. He began to attend regularly, thankful to God for his having come by means of a lengthy search to a place where the Word was interpreted properly.

In the "west," the part of the world called "Christian," there are endless religious groups that, for the sincere person, constitute a labyrinth without an exit. That case of the young man who dedicated a lot of time to seek the truth is not unusual, but not everyone has had the same opportunity to do the same as he. Many, conscious of the failures and errors of what they are seeing and hearing, decide not to identify themselves with any place. Others simply throw up their hands and shrug their shoulders to everything. Many ask, "In view of all this confusion, what should we do?"

From the beginning, when Satan managed to sow the lie in the mind of Eve, a fight between "good" and "evil" has followed. The progress of evil in comparison with good is well-illustrated in the following expression: evil can make three trips around the world while good is just putting on its shoes! This phenomenal progress is due to the fact that to human beings, evil has more interest than good. Of course, this situation isn't new in the world. *"Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"* And the varied responses were: some, John the Baptist, others Elias, and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. When the Lord asked, *"But whom do ye say that I am?"* Peter assertively responded, "Thou art the Christ (the Messiah) the Son of the living God." In other words, in the midst of the confusion there are have always been those with clarity regarding the truth, and this is still true today. Thanks to God! The truth never is destroyed and always has been available.

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What is the way that leads to the knowledge of the truth? The Lord Jesus Christ said, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"* (John 14:6). Every person who receives the Lord as his Savior, receives life and, in the same moment, receives the Holy Spirit, (Eph. 1:13-14), called "the Spirit of truth," (John 14:17). He that knows Christ knows very well that the way of salvation is not mixed with a lie or deceit. Wherever deceit and lies appear, the believer stands apart, knowing that this isn't God's way.

The Holy Spirit, far from just being "an influence" as some erroneously teach, is a divine Person and the true representative of Christ. Him being "the Spirit of truth," the world cannot receive Him because it *"seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him."* (John 14:17). But, the Lord said to His disciples, *"ye know Him,"* and *"He shall teach you all things."* (John 14:26). These few references are enough to demonstrate that, on God's part, there is abundant provision for the believer so that he will not be deceived by false doctrines. All this, of course, has to do with God and His provision for the believer.

But, what should a believer do in view of these portions of the Word? The Lord gave just one necessity for the interested person to know that his beliefs are the true apostolic doctrines. *"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God. . ."* (John 7:17). He didn't say, "he that wants to know the will of God," because it is not an intellectual proposition, nor practice. To do the will of God is to reject our own will, it is to have an experience such as in Gethsemane, when the believer totally rules out his own interests with the words, *"not my will, but thine, be done."* To do the will of God, to glorify Him, brings the knowledge of the truth.

It's clear to see that among so many salaried pastors that there are few who are interested in sacrificing their own things just to honor God alone! To leave ranks and titles, important positions and salaries, and to gather simply as a "brother" with many more, gathered to the name of the Lord, has been a stumbling stone to many.

Known simply by the biblical expression, "servants of the Lord," there are those who serve in humility, unknown, depending entirely on the Lord, without salary or gratuities. Going from neighborhood to neighborhood, from town to town, they carry the light of the truth of the gospel. Renouncing everything hidden and shameful, without cunning, they don't adulterate the message of the gospel, but on the contrary, manifesting the truths of the Bible they are recommended to every human conscience before God.

There is no lack of those who assert that between those "pastors" and these there isn't any difference. "It's the same

thing," they say, but those who perceive know better.

(translated from "La Sana Doctrina" May-June 2010)

"Tis joy enough, my All in All, low at Thy feet to lie; Thou wilt not let me lower fall, and none can higher fly."

H. Beecher Stowe

Jabez

William Rogers

The story in 1 Chron. 4: 9, 10 of Jabez and his prayer, is but one of a number of similar digressions which occur among the genealogies of this book, and by comparing it with some of the others we will the better understand it. For example, in the end of the same chapter there is the story of a successful war waged by certain Simeonites, and in chap. 5: 18-22 of another one fought by the tribes dwelling beyond Jordan. These campaigns were for the purpose of taking possession of the land which God had promised them, and were therefore according to His will. In chap. 5: 22 we read that *"the war was of God,"* and in verse 20 of the same passage it is said, *"They cried to God in the battle, and He was intreated of them, because they put their trust in Him."* Here, as in the case of Jabez, we have a prayer answered; and when we note that it was for a victory which meant the enlarging of the borders that these tribes occupied, we have a key to what Jabez sought when he asked that his "coast" or border might be enlarged. It was not that his little farm should be increased at the expense of those belonging to his brethren, or to his Israelite neighbours; but doubtless that he might be helped and enabled to dispossess the Canaanites from some more of the land to which they still clung, and which God meant His people Israel to have.

It was thus that Jabez was *"more honourable than his brethren"* (verse 9). They, very likely, settled down on what had been won for them by the valour of their predecessors, and thought that if they held it intact they were doing very well. But Jabez believed in making progress, and went in for it wholeheartedly.

The statement that he called on *"The God of Israel"* and the first clause of the prayer itself, *"Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed,"* both take us back in thought to the one from whom the name Israel was derived, and who, on the very occasion when he got that name, had cried, *"I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me"* (Gen. 32: 26-28). To that same one, at an earlier time, God had given a remarkable blessing, consisting mainly of two great promises. One of these was that the land would be given to him and to his

seed, and that they would spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; the other was that God Himself would be with him and keep him. Now it is an interesting fact that the prayer of Jabez contains two requests which are exactly parallel to these two parts of Jacob's blessing. He seems to have realized that, since God meant Israel to be a spreading people, there was a responsibility resting on him, Jabez, to do some of the spreading. Therefore he asks, "*Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast.*" And realizing further that "*the presence of the God of Jacob*" (Psa. 114: 7) with him could alone give him success, he adds, "*that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil.*" Thus he claims the fulfilment to himself personally, of both the promises of Gen. 28, showing himself to be a true son of Jacob, though strangely enough, his actual genealogy is entirely omitted from the passage.

But if Jabez looked for the fulfilment of the blessing of God which "*addeth no sorrow*" (Prov. 10: 22), he also dreaded His curse by which EVIL and SORROW are inseparably linked together. In Gen. 3 Adam and Eve experienced this to their cost. God's curse on them was, "*In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children,*" and, "*In sorrow shalt thou eat of it.*" The mother of Jabez had felt in her turn something of this sorrow, and the name Jabez which she had given him, and which was formed from a word kindred to those used in Gen. 3 for sorrow, was a constant reminder of the fact. So he ends his prayer with, "*that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not be to my sorrow*" (R. V.) Another in Psa. 139 had asked somewhat similarly, "*Try me, and see if there be any way that causeth sorrow in me.*"

Having come to understand with some measure of clearness the circumstances and meaning of the prayer of Jabez, we shall be better able to draw from this little paragraph, set like an oasis in a desert of hard names, what God would have us to learn. In the first place, we may be sure that He means His people today to be a spreading people, just as He did Israel, though not in the same sense. It is His will that those who have received life from heaven should use every opportunity to pass the message of life on to others, that they in turn may receive it too. It is also His will that His saints should be continually learning more and more of His purposes concerning them, that they should explore in its length and breadth the good land into which He has brought them. Are we doing these things, or have we sat down to enjoy that for which others have labored, feeling no responsibility ourselves at all? We need to beware of this, for when the Israelites ceased to spread, it was but a short time till the nations around them began to take away from them what they already had, and it may be that something of a similar kind is taking place among the people of God today. Are the truths which were learned and held fast in years gone by,

prized now as they used to be? Are our assemblies increasing in numbers and in spirituality as they once did? Are they not in at least some cases dwindling almost to the point of extinction? Yet it is in circumstances like these that a Jabez has the opportunity to prove himself "*more honourable than his brethren,*" by taking his stand upon the promises of God to His people, claiming their fulfillment to himself, and thus continuing to make progress where others go back. The hand of God will ever be with such, as it was with the Jabez of 1 Chron. 4.

We also need to be reminded that the link between evil-doing and sorrow has not been severed; though, to judge by their actions, some of the Lord's people seem to believe that it has. They persuade themselves that they will be able to do a wrong thing, or to take a wrong step, and yet escape the penalty. Like the man in Deut. 29, they say, "*I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart.*" But let us not forget that it is to New Testament saints it was written, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*"

If, on the other hand, we are anxious, like Jabez, to be kept from evil, that it may not cause us sorrow, there can be no safer path for us than that in which he sought to walk, the path of progress in God's ways and in His work. He who is at a standstill, or is idle, is an easy prey to Satan; but he that is busy enlarging his border, has no time to get into mischief.

(WIS 1920)

"The person who has a profound sense of the holiness of God will be slow to sin, and slower to say that he has no sin."

W. Lincoln

Paul, the Evangelist, pt. 3

Robert Surgenor

The Message of an Evangelist

In Paul's day, the passing out of printed literature was non-existent, but the Spirit provided ways for the gospel to effectively reach the four corners of the earth. The method is explained in 13 words. "*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*" (1 Cor. 1:21). Consider the word "foolishness." The word means "absurdity." The word "preaching" means, "*a proclamation, to herald as a public crier.*" In other words, when a man stands as a herald of God, he stands, with dignity and authority, and in no uncertain terms publicly declares the gospel of Christ. As the unbeliever hears, the whole declaration seems absurd. There is no foolishness to the preach-

ing, but the preaching seems foolish (absurd) in the mind of the hearer.

What then is needed to convince the hearer that what he is listening to is a life-giving message? The Spirit of God is needed! In the delivery of the message some preachers are “skyscraper preachers.” They have a lot of stories. Tell me, how many stories did Paul tell in his recorded gospel messages? Now please, don’t accuse me of finding fault. I am only trying to show you how Paul preached. I can understand employing a story here and there, but I do not see Paul using that method. Spurgeon remarked that a story was like a window that let in a little light. However, if that is the case, then some brethren have built a greenhouse in preaching. All stories, all windows. Usually when you hear a greenhouse-sermon, there is very little, if any, weight to it. It may amuse the hearer or appeal to the intellect, but there is nothing to grip the soul in convicting power.

Paul saw the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and power in his delivery of a gospel message. He stood before the people of Corinth *“in fear and much trembling.”* He was an intelligent man, and knew the Scriptures. What was his problem? The problem was that he knew that his intellectual ability was useless in winning souls to Christ. He saw the folly of using *“enticing words of man’s wisdom.”* This great man realized the absolute necessity of the power and demonstration of the Spirit in his declaration. (Read 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5.) Apart from that, his message would fall to the ground unheeded. If he resorted to intellectualism, false professors could be the result. Intellectual power is the mind of the preacher imparting facts to the mind of the hearer. Such activity can be termed “human reasoning.” No, no, that would never do. Paul said, *“Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in the power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance”* What was the result? *“Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”* (1 Thessalonians 1:5, 9). They had the fullest assurance that the gospel was true, and that remission of sins could be obtained through faith in Christ.

As far as I can see from the Scriptures, Paul never used theatrics, or made people laugh, or told stories apart from those related in the Scriptures. I term such activity “soul-ish,” or, “psychic” preaching. This influences the emotions of the hearer. Notice him before Felix. *“He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come”* (Acts 24:25). “Righteousness” indicates that he preached the doctrine concerning the way in which a man may attain a state approved of God. *“The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe”* (Romans 3:22). “Temperance,” was proclaimed, thus bringing before Felix his sinful way of life, his guilty

condition before God. “Judgment to come.” Paul gives the final blow, faithfully declaring to Felix and his godless wife, that the result of their condition before God would certainly bring upon them the judgment of God and the eternal consequences. In other words, Paul reasoned with them how a man could be saved, and made righteous. He also made known unto them their sinful condition, and the dire results.

In Acts 26:22, when Paul stood before Agrippa, he made known that through his preaching career he had obtained help of God. This is a divine necessity for effectiveness. He witnessed, he testified, *“saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.”* Where are his facts on current events? Where are his worldly sentimental stories? Where are his sob-stories? Where are his antics? They are absolutely nonexistent! Here we find the example of sound, scriptural, Spirit empowered preaching. Mr. preacher, here is your mentor. Observe this man of God, take in his methods and copy them into your program. It is easily noticed that the major theme in the early church preaching consisted of five major themes. (1) Sin. (2) Repentance. (3) The death of Christ. (4) The resurrection of Christ. (5) Faith in Christ for salvation.

Paul-like evangelists define sin, stating what it is. They thunder out the ultimate results of sin, which is confinement in hell and then the lake of fire. The declaration is sober, and solemn. There are no flowery expressions, or silly stories. Such men proceed then to deliver God’s command for men to repent. Notice Peter on the day of Pentecost when sinners asked him *“what shall we do?”* The answer came back in no uncertain terms, *“Repent.”* What is repentance? It is stopping and thinking again. It is having a change of mind. It is thinking of things as God sees them.

Notice also Peter in Acts 3:19. *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”* How necessary to preach repentance, for without repentance there can be no salvation imparted. The Lord plainly stated, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3).

Consider Paul at Athens. What does he preach? Notice. *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent”* (Acts 17:30). What did he show them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles? Simply this, *“that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance”* (Acts 26:20). I have sat in gospel meetings where repentance has never been mentioned? What is wrong? They are off base, the preacher has missed the mark. This is sad indeed. God *commands* it! We need to preach it, in no uncertain terms!

The Resurrection of Christ

It is very interesting to note that the resurrection of Christ is emphasized more often than the death of Christ in the early-church declaration of the gospel. You can have a death without a resurrection, but you cannot have a resurrection without a previous death. So when the resurrection was preached, it also included the death of Christ. Without the resurrection, Jesus would have been an impostor, thus the resurrection is emphasized to assure all that this Man Jesus was truly the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

The first message delivered by a New Testament church is recorded in Acts 2, and the spokesman is Peter. What a tremendous message! No notes, no stories, no antics, but just a plain scriptural message delivered in the power of the Holy Ghost. He lays the charge to his audience, *“Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”* (vs. 23). What a charge! He lays their sin right at their doorstep! There is no “political correctness” here! How more blunt could a preacher be? Was he worried about hurting their feelings? Not a bit of it! He was given a message from God and he was delivering it in the power of the Holy Spirit. He then proceeds, *“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). We find the same theme in Paul’s preaching. *“And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead”* (Acts 13:29 – 30).

Yes, *“with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus”* (Acts 4:33). Thus, the Lord Jesus was *“declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4).

After proclaiming sin, repentance, the death and resurrection of Christ, then, and not until then was the solution to the problem of man’s (sin) declared. That declaration was to place faith in Christ for salvation. That is the good news, that is the gospel! Paul testified *“both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Acts 20:21). Paul explains of *“the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference”* (Romans 3:22). He tells the jailor in Philippi, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31). That was a preparatory remark, for not until Paul went into his house and spoke unto him the word of the Lord did the man profess. When Paul preached at the riverside, the Lord opened the heart of

Lydia so that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul. The Holy Spirit caused her to understand the message, consequently she placed her faith in Christ and was saved. The word believe carries the thought of placing your trust in Christ. Receiving Him is used in John 1:12. Placing faith, trusting, receiving, believing, relying, and taking, all basically convey the same thought.

What about “believing”? Robert Sandeman sailed into Boston from Glasgow on October 18, 1764. He taught that mere intellectual knowledge was the essence of saving faith, that saving faith was “bare belief of the bare truth, that regeneration accompanied intellectual assent to the central truth of the Christian faith, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ and that He died and rose again for sinners.” Thus, Sandeman claimed that saving faith was reduced to intellectual assent to the gospel proclamation about Christ. This whole doctrine is also termed, “Believe-ism.”

To stand and proclaim to an audience, “Believe, only believe, believe, believe, believe,” is a most dangerous thing. The “Sandeman preacher” pleads with sinners, “Just exercise believing faith in Christ and you will be saved. Just believe, just believe.” So what does the sinner do? Why he says to himself, “That’s easy. Sure, I’ll believe the facts.” What has happened? Well, he has mentally assented to the facts and then thinks that he is saved. There has been no plowing up of the soul. There has been no conviction of one’s sins. There has been no tears of repentance, but he has come to the point where he agrees with the Bible and believes what the preacher has been saying. He now considers them facts not fables. But this mental and intellectual assent is certainly not salvation. All such “believers” become only educated sinners as to divine truths.

Remember what John wrote? *“Many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men”* (John 2:23 – 24). They had a natural recognition of facts, but Christ had no faith in their faith. Also notice Acts 8:13 – 23. A prominent man named Simon himself believed and was baptized. Evidently he not only fooled himself, but he fooled Philip the evangelist. But when the apostle Peter arrived on the scene, Simon’s profession fell apart, and Peter plainly told him, “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness.” Thus we see “believe-ism” in action, a most dangerous thing. I am afraid that there are many Sandemans today, people that have just acknowledged the facts, but there has been no Holy Spirit work in their souls.

For this reason, it is wrong to keep on exhorting sinners to “just believe.” Believe, believe, believe, ah, that’s it! But what is the end result? Usually a false professor is produced!

Another error in modern day evangelism is telling sinners that if they take Christ, all their problems will be solved. Their marriage will improve, and everything that they touch will “turn to gold.” What deception! In fact, it is quite the opposite, especially if the married partner remains unsaved. Immediately there is a division in the home. Christ warns of this. *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household”* (Matthew 10:34 – 36).

Paul exhorted believers *“to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22). Sinners must be warned of the consequences of salvation, but also told of the eternal benefits. The Lord Jesus was very plain on this method of presenting salvation. When great multitudes went with Him, He turned and said unto them; *“Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? ... So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:28, 33).

In Paul’s day, people who professed Christ as Lord were in danger of much persecution. The Jewish brethren experienced the spoiling of their goods by the Roman government. They took it joyfully (Hebrews 10:34). Christians were burned alive. Some were thrown to wild beasts. Jewish Christians were excommunicated from their families. Do you think that sinners knowing this were going to glibly profess Christ through an intellectual belief of the truth? Hardly! Shallow believers would be a scarcity. The only thing that would make a sinner receive Christ in those days was the convicting power of the Spirit. Being convicted of their sins and seeing that they were headed for eternal punishment, they were anxious to place their trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation, no matter what the earthly consequences might be.

So, the evangelist stands, a unique person. Sent forth by the Spirit. Guided in his movements by the Spirit. Empowered in his preaching by the Spirit, Solomon said that the preacher is to seek out acceptable words. Paul used a different approach to the Jews than he did to those Gentiles in Athens. He introduced the gospel to the Jews by tracing the history of their nation (Acts 13:14 – 26). To the philosophers of Athens he spoke to them of “THE UNKNOWN GOD.” A different approach altogether than that to the Jews. Paul was a wise man. The message always leads to Christ, but there are many avenues to take in getting to the

vital message, which is always the same – **“Christ crucified.”**

At the final end of this tremendous man’s ministry, he could, with confidence, say. *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4:7). In closing we pass on Paul’s desire for all of us. *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

(concluded)

Some years ago a man died in London who lived in a garret, and had not two shirts to wear; he died, and left more than a million pounds sterling! You say he was insane. So he was, poor man. The love of money had made him a miser and a madman. But what better are we, if, we, with all the resources of God, all the unsearchable riches of Christ, at our disposal and within the grasp of our faith, we fail to come to the Throne of Grace and make them ours.

Justification

Peter Simms

Rom. 3:24; 5:1; 5:9 Jam. 2:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:21

The scriptures view the natural man in Adam as guilty of criminal acts (Rom. 3:19), and as one who has lived his life outside the perimeter of the law of God (Rom. 1:18-32; Eccl. 7:20).

Justification signifies an acquittal, a release from every charge, along with a positive declaration by God the justifier (Rom. 3:26) that any such criminal, who believes in Jesus, is declared just (Rom. 5:1). The offender is no longer under any obligation to compensate God for the violation of His laws which he has broken. This is the glorious outcome of the great truth of redemption, **FREEDOM!** First in a negative sense *“There is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION to them that are in Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 8:1), secondly in a positive sense *“For He (God) has made Him (His Son) to be sin for us, He who knew no sin, that we might made THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD in Him”* (2 Cor. 5:21.)

What justification means to Paul: God’s act of forgiving the sins of guilty men, and imputing to them righteousness freely by his grace, through faith in Christ, and not of their own works (law-keeping), but through the justifying bloodshedding (Rom. 3:24) of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf.

Justification can be considered under the four following

headings:

1. Justification by grace: (Rom. 3:24) *“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”* It is something no one deserves, and can never be earned.

2. Justification by blood: (Rom. 5:9) *“much more then being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him”* For the wrath of God against the sinner has been diverted to the the Lord Jesus who bare our sins in his own body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24)

3. Justification by faith: (Rom.5:1) *“Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

4. Justification by works: (Jms.2:24) *“for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.”*

Justification Is By Faith Apart From Good Works Or Law-keeping

Can the unsaved man do good? Gen. 4:7 (Heb. yatab ‘yaw-tab’) *“If thou doest well”* (or to do good). cp. Matt. 19:16- 22 *“What good thing shall I do to obtain eternal life?”* Now if it is impossible for a sinner to do good, should the Lord Jesus have answered him as He did? Of course, He was responding to the inquiry on the ground that the man took before Him, and he was found lacking.

Rom. 2:14-15: If a person cannot respond to their conscience and do good how can God judge them for not obeying their conscience, and doing good?

Rom. 3:12 *“there is none that doeth (pre. act. part.) good”* To habitually do good and never sin is in fact an impossibility for the natural man. (Eccl. 7:20, Rom.3:23, 1 John 1:10)

Can the unsaved gain favor with God by doing good works? Isa. 64:6 states that good works when used to gain this end are counted by God as filthy rags, for they suggest that God's provision in His Son is not sufficient.

Jms. 2:10 states that to break one commandment is to break all. It is just as one link in the chain from which a chandelier hangs needs to break, to allow it to crash to its ruin on the floor. As an illustration, suppose that a five hundred pound nugget of gold in a suitcase is mine if I can carry it five miles without setting it down. An impossible task. So likewise, trying to keep the law to gain a place in heaven is also utterly impossible.

Are good works associated with salvation? Eph. 2:10 declares that we are saved unto good works, but never by them. Heb. 5:9 *“obey”* is a present active participle. A

person is saved by obeying the gospel. Jms. 2:14, 20-24, 26. Does God recognize the good works of the unsaved? We see in Acts 10:2, Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 3:5, Isa.64:6 that it is clear that sinners can produce righteous deeds, but those deeds are not sufficient to gain salvation, and he will be judged according to those deeds that prove his inability to measure up to God’s righteous standard, (Rev.20:12-13).

In regard to justification by works, the so-called contradiction between James and the Apostle Paul is only apparent. There is harmony in the different views of the subject. Paul has in mind Abraham’s attitude toward God, his acceptance of God’s word. This was a matter known only to God. The Roman Epistle is occupied with the effect of this God-ward attitude, not upon Abraham’s character or actions, but upon the contrast between faith and the lack of it, namely, unbelief, cp. Rom. 11:20. However James (2:21-26) is occupied with the contrast between faith that is real and faith that is false, a faith barren and dead, which is not faith at all. Again, the two writers have before them different epochs in Abraham’s life. With Paul, it’s the event recorded in Gen. 15; with James it’s Gen. 22. Contrast the words ‘believed’ in Gen. 15:6 and ‘obeyed’ in 22:18.

Ephraim’s Backsliding and Restoration

Sidney J. Saword, Venezuela, S. A.

In Hosea’s prophecy, which deals largely with the backsliding and restoration of God’s earthly people we see the name of Ephraim continually appearing in a representative way. Jehovah’s first solemn indictment is: *“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone”* (Chap. 4:17). How easily we, God’s children, can be turned aside from the path of wholehearted devotion to our Lord! We might pity the pagan and Roman Catholic multitudes for their wretched practices of bowing to dumb idols, but, at the same time, be ourselves guilty of permitting some subtle form of idolatry to come between our souls and God, thus robbing Him of His place and portion. Hence the need of the earnest admonition of the Apostle, framed in such endearing terms: *“Little children, keep yourselves from idols”* (1 Jn. 5:21).

The Lord, through His servant Hosea, then proceeds to charge Ephraim with other grievous sins, which would constitute a challenge to our own hearts at the present time. Chapter 5 goes thoroughly into God’s righteous complaint against His backsliding people, the culmination of which is the complete withdrawal of the Divine Presence from them: *“I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face”* (v. 15). Here we see what an awfully costly thing backsliding is. One forfeits the blessedness of communion with the Lord.

The most tragic part of Samson's downfall was that Delilah's surreptitious influence over him was so effective that his God-consciousness became paralyzed, and "*he wist not that the Lord was departed from him*" (Judges 16:20). But subsequent impotence and ignominious defeat immediately convinced him of this solemn fact. Fraternizing with the world, or indulgence of the flesh, will likewise so deaden our spiritual susceptibilities that we might also be deceiving ourselves into a pretended communion with God, and all the time be unconscious of His withdrawn presence from us! But Laodicean blindness and spiritual impotence will be the conclusive evidences of our true state with God's stamp of disapproval upon us.

Again we have the tragic history of King Saul, when his departure from God ended with God's departure from Him (1 Sam. 28:16). When he would have inquired of God as to the battle with the Philistines, "*the Lord answered him not.*" If we desire to maintain communication with "Headquarters," there must be continual self-judgment, confession and adjusting of our ways to the will of God. "*If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me*" (Psa. 66:18)

There is much more in Hosea regarding Ephraim which might well claim our prayerful attention, but which lack of space forbids dwelling upon at this time. We pass on to the conclusion of the prophecy, which constitutes an earnest appeal from Jehovah to His erring people: "*O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely*" (14:1, 4). Such is God's heart of love; He draws them with "*cords of a man, with bands of love*" (11:4). Are we conscious of having departed in heart and ways from Him? Let us heed His heart-moving appeal, by humble confession of sin and wholehearted return to a walk that is well-pleasing to Him.

Finally, what a mighty work of Grace will have taken place in the heart of Ephraim when he will be able to say: "*What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him: I am like a green fir tree!*" It is when our ears are once again occupied with listening to His voice, through His Word; and our spiritual vision, undimmed by any subversive object, is centered on Him with enraptured devotion, that there will be a return to first love, with its resultant joy to God's heart and blessing in our lives. Thus the hymn-writer has fittingly expressed the truth of the matter: —

Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him,
Is not thine a captured heart?
Chief among ten thousand own Him,
Joyful choose the better part.

What has stripped the seeming beauty,
From the idols of the earth?

Not a sense of right or duty,
But the sight of peerless worth.

Draw and win and fill completely,
Till the cup o'erflow the brim;
What have we to do with idols,
Who have companied with Him?

(WIS December 1939)

Isaiah's Portraits of Christ

by J. Flanigan

"The Warrior-King"

The contrast between Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 63 is like the contrast between Psalm 22 and Psalm 24, and like the contrast between John 19 and Revelation 19. It is the contrast between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

Isaiah 63 opens with a simple (but profound) question — "*Who is this?*" It is the question which they asked when our Lord was here. It is the question they will ask when He comes again. As He entered the City in lowly meekness, riding on a donkey, they asked, "*Who is this?*" (Matthew 21:10). When He returns to the City again, the question will be repeated, "*Who is this?*" (Psalm 24:8-10). It is the question of yesterday and the question of tomorrow. Here, in chapter 63, Isaiah foresees the day of Messiah's triumph and vindication, and cries, "*Who is this?*"

The Conqueror is returning from Edom and Bozrah. In other parallel passages it will be Megiddo and Olivet. But there is no discrepancy. From Edom in the south; from Megiddo in the relative north; through Olivet, near to the Jerusalem centre, Messiah will travel in triumph. This is in perfect agreement with Revelation 14:20 — "*blood to the horse bridles by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*" Sixteen hundred stadia! One hundred and sixty miles! The length of the Land from Dan to Beersheba! From Olivet to Megiddo and back through to Edom He will ride victoriously, and vanquish His enemies. In our present chapter He is returning from Edom.

"*Who is this . . . with dyed garments?*" We must not be influenced by a much-loved hymn (Redemption Songs 704): Its sentiments are touchingly beautiful and its language unsurpassed! But its interpretation of Isaiah 63 is a travesty. The blood that stains these garments is not the blood of the cross. This is the blood of Armageddon and Edom. It is not His own blood, but the blood of His enemies. The land has become a winepress. The judgement is a vintage. As grapes are trampled in a winepress so will our Lord tread down His

enemies when He returns in glory. As the garments of those who tread the grapes in the winepress are stained with the juice of the trodden grapes, so will His garments, (in figure), be stained with the blood of His crushed foes.

His apparel is glorious. All His garments smell of myrrh; always. What garments He has worn. Swaddling bands in His Infancy; a seamless robe during His ministry; a slave's apron on that last evening in the Upper Room; a scarlet robe of mockery on that last morning; linen grave clothes in the Tomb. Now, a vesture dipped in blood, bearing the glorious Name — “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Glorious in His apparel indeed.

He travels in the greatness of His strength. In what apparent weakness did they once see Him upon the cross. A Carpenter crucified! A Galilean nailed to a Tree! Since that day of dishonor the world has not seen Him. He has been hidden in the heavens. A King rejected. A Sovereign in exile. But now He returns in power. His rejection was callous and cruel. His triumph is righteous. This is vindication. He is *“mighty to save.”* He, to Whom they cried, *“Save Thyself and us.”* He, of Whom they said, *“He saved others, Himself He cannot save.”* He comes for the deliverance of His remnant people. He comes to emancipate the land and make it Immanuel's Land indeed (Isaiah 8.8).

Notice the “aloneness” of the Conqueror. *“I have trodden the winepress alone.”* How often He was “alone” when here on earth. He was “alone” in prayer (Matthew 14.23). He was “alone” in service (Mark 4.10). In the uniqueness of His Sonship too, He was “alone” (Luke 9.18,36). And He was “alone” in suffering (John 16.32). Here in Isaiah 63 He is “alone” again. Alone He treads the winepress. Alone He tramples His enemies in righteous anger. Alone He accomplishes the deliverance of His beleaguered people.

The day of vengeance has come. How graciously, at the commencement of His ministry, had our Lord closed the book in Nazareth, when reading from Isaiah 61. He had not then announced the day of vengeance. It was an acceptable year that He was introducing. It was a day of grace. Appropriately, He had closed the book. But in chapter 63 it is all different. It is the day of vengeance now.

The nations are presently being prepared for that day. Morally, Politically, Religiously, and Commercially, the world is being fashioned for the advent of a Man of Sin and for days of tribulation. We do not look for signs, but if signs there be, we may look at them. Morally, conditions are reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah. Politically, the shadows are large. The kingdoms of Europe with the movements in Israel and the Middle East all point to the end times. Religiously, the deep dark shadows are equally large. Ecumenism and the Charis-

matic confusion make it easy to believe that the day is not far distant. Commercially too, the amalgamations, the giant corporations, and the monopolies of the business world are suitable preparations for the Dictatorship which is to come. A man will accept from the Devil what Jesus refused (Matthew 4.8-9; Revelation 13.2b). The kingdoms of this world will be dominated by a Satanically inspired Superman. Many of Israel will bow the knee to him and receive his mark. Many of the faithful will be martyred. A remnant of Israel will be trapped, and look as though to be destroyed. But the Deliverer will come.

Armageddon appears to be the places where the armies will gather. The armies of the Beast and of the great Northern Confederacy; the Kings from the East and the King of the South, are all assembled. Suddenly, gloriously, the sign of the coming of the Son of Man appears. Those who are enemies of each other become allied with each other in common enmity against the Lamb. The Lord comes! He crushes them all. The Beast and the false Prophet are taken personally and cast alive into the Lake of Fire.

What triumph. What glory. What victory. Well might Isaiah cry, *“Who is this . . . with garments dyed . . . glorious in His apparel. . . traveling in the greatness of His strength . . . mighty to save!”*

(from “Assembly Testimony,” Jan-Feb 1989)

Young men, I want to save you all this sorrow, if I can. Hell itself is truth known too late. Be wise in time. What youth sows, old age must reap. Do not give the most precious season of your life to that which will not comfort you in the latter days of your life. Sow to yourselves rather in righteousness: break up your hard ground, don't sow among thorns.

J.C. Ryle

The Obituary of Moses

J. E. Todd

There is spiritual encouragement to be found in the obituary columns of Christian magazines. We read of long years of faithfulness to the Lord, of works carried out and accomplished in His name. The question arises, what will my life be worth when it is reviewed at its close?

The obituary of Moses (Deut. 34:1-12) provides a model of how a Christian's obituary should read. But the words cannot be written, if the deeds are not done !

Moses enjoyed the supreme blessing that is open to a

human being in this life. He not only saw the purposes of God unfolding, but he also played a practical role in those purposes. As Moses looked over the land of Canaan from the top of Mount Nebo (v. 1-4), he realized that God was about to fulfill His promise to Abraham, by giving this land to his descendants, the nation of Israel. Moses also had the supreme satisfaction of knowing that he had been a divine instrument in bringing the nation to the borders of that land. This blessing is open to every Christian. We are in the happy position of seeing God's purposes being fulfilled. Is ours the present joy of knowing that we are being actively used by God in this work by helping to spread the good news of eternal salvation?

But Moses was not perfect, *"Thou shalt not go over thither"* (v. 4). Because of his sin in the wilderness of Zin, Moses was disqualified from entering the promised land (Num. 20 :1-13). Moses could have been used by God to lead Israel into the land. But Moses' usefulness to God, great as it was, was curtailed by sin. We must ever watch that sin does not limit our usefulness in God's hands. Remember, it was not at the weakest point of his character that Moses failed, but at the strongest point. It was the Moses who "was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12 : 3), who lost his temper in the wilderness of Zin. Extreme provocation was no excuse!

"Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (v. 7).

Moses visibly enjoyed the blessings of God which he dispensed to others, for he had blessed the tribe of Asher thus, *"As thy days, so shall thy strength be"* (Deut. 33 : 25). In the New Testament the Christian is not promised good physical health into old age, but the scriptures do promise another kind of good health all the days of our lives. John wrote to Gaius, *"That thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth"* (3 John 2). It is the gospel which brings the glow of spiritual good health to the soul, including the joy of salvation (1 Pet.1:8-9), the peace of God (Phil. 4:7) and the hope of eternal life (1 John 5:11-12). As we Christians proclaim the gospel to a joyless, troubled and hopeless world, do we exhibit the blessings of which we speak? As the Asherites looked at Moses, so vigorous in his old age, the blessing he announced was credible. Does the world see in us, as Christians, the joy and the peace and the hope which are contained in the good news we proclaim? Or is there a credibility gap?

"The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days" (v. 8). Moses' loss was keenly felt. It was obvious to all that here was a man whose words and deeds had had a great practical effect for good on the lives of his fellow Israelites. They had not just lost Moses, they had also

lost his indispensable good works. Do we with helpful words and acts of service, have an impact for good upon the lives of our fellow Christians? Would our loss to our assembly be keenly felt? Would they weep?

The quality of Moses' leadership is shown in his provision of the next leader for Israel after his own decease, in the person of Joshua (v. 9). This reveals Moses' deep concern for the welfare of Israel, even when he was no longer with them. It is also the measure of his true greatness. For Moses did not want to be the 'great' leader of Israel out of lust for power, but because of his zeal for the honor of God and the welfare of his people. Why do we undertake Christian service, whether in a leadership capacity or not, is it to pander to our ego (the lust for power is the most subtle lust of the flesh) or is it out of genuine love for the Lord and his people?

Moses also rendered to God the service of a prophet (v. 10). His duty as a prophet was to pass on to the people of Israel the truth about God, for Moses knew God "face to face." But every believer has known God "face to face" with a much clearer vision than Moses ever knew! *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor. 4 : 6). In Christ we have come "face to face" with the glory of God's grace. Are we serving God as His prophets, by proclaiming the gospel of God's grace to a lost world?

Moses had the finest education from the universities of Egypt (Acts 7 : 22), he also commanded great authority granted to him by God, but wonderful as these things were, Moses knew they were no substitute for hard work. *"All the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do all the great and terrible deeds which Moses wrought"* (v. 11-12, R.S.V.). Moses used the power God gave him to the utmost limit, he used it in the performance of DEEDS. What do we DO? We can engage our minds with noble thoughts and schemes. But what do we DO? God has given powers to us, intelligence, time, health, energy, wealth and education. Are we using these powers to the full in pursuing the purposes of God? Moses was above all a man of ACTION, his most lasting memory was what he DID.

Perhaps our own obituary will never be published in a Christian magazine. But an account of our lives will be rendered in much greater detail at the judgement seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5 : 10, 1 Cor. 3 : 11-15, Rom. 14 : 10-12).

How will the account read?

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