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Editorial: I Thought; But God Says

Jim Brown

Two words are used in Romans 12:2; "conformed" and "transformed". The former is advised against, the latter, encouraged. Note also, in both cases, that the passive voice "be" suggests an external agent is necessary to help believers carry out these injunctions, requiring an allowance of, or yielding to those agents. One is negative, the other positive. In both cases, the Word of God, impressed upon us by the Spirit of God, is the external agent that will allow our wills to be altered, hence, aligned properly with God's will. The renewing of our minds is an ongoing daily exercise each of us should be found willing to be engaged in. Although the word "repentance" is not used in this verse, it is strongly indicated by the phrases, "be not conformed" and "be ye transformed".

The phrase "Thus saith the Lord" is found in the Old Testament over 400 times. It was necessary for prophets to distinguish the words of God from their own words to lend absolute power and authority to the message they gave. The Lord tells us in Isaiah 55:8-9 that His thoughts and His ways are not like ours, and not just slightly so, but by a massive margin! It is no mistake nor coincidence that He makes this statement immediately after a call to repentance in verse 7 ("let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts") that would lead to a positive outcome: pardon. Such a man needing pardon had conformed to all things natural, i.e., sin, and to the world's wrong attitude toward God. As long as that man clung to his own ways and thoughts, to the exclusion of God's, he would not receive pardon for sin. He would remain in bondage to the principles of arrogance stated in Proverbs 16:2 and in 21:2.

Two men in scripture, Captain Naaman, second-guessing God regarding how he would be cured of leprosy in 2 Kings 5:11, and Paul, reflecting upon unconverted days when he thought many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth in Acts 26:9, are seen to be entertaining wrong thoughts. Both men said, "I thought" and were

immediately on slippery footing. How about us? We might, at first blush, say they thought wrong because they were positionally wrong as to salvation when they thought them. Fair enough. They were not believers, so of course they thought wrong thoughts. But what about us? Is it possible we delight to hear gospel preaching that points out how some in the audience, not yet converted, are stumbling over the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ while we that are saved could be equally floundering as to devotion to Christ, to honoring God by living godly, separated lives, or to misunderstanding assembly principles and a host of other things that would hold us in much better stead if only we'd care enough to pursue and allow God's help? In full transparency, many of us must admit, that we may have thought one way on a certain doctrine or even a Romans 14 item regarding things that differ, only to discover that we'd missed the mark entirely and needed our minds renewed, adjusted, even upbraided to allow God to show us what was actually correct. An older brother once told me, "Be careful. A conviction *tightly* held is no guarantee it is *rightly* held". How about those wonderful Bereans in Acts 17:11? "They received the word with readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so." We can all do the same, allowing our minds to be renewed daily, but it involves work; careful, habitual hard work.

"I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:59). The same thought is implied in the words, "Search me, O God and know my heart; Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). What a great attitude! Anyone reading this, especially the writer, might join in with King David's thoughts and wish it was always our approach and our attitude toward the things of God and toward ourselves all day, every day. The revision of our thoughts is what causes us to grow up into Christ. There is joy in this for us as well as pleasure to the heart of God. Contrarily, the doubling down on our own wrong thoughts can only stagnate us spiritually, possibly embitter us if others don't agree with us, and yes, even shipwreck us. May God find each of us gladly letting a "thus saith the Lord" cancel out all our "I thoughts".

No believer will make progress in his spiritual life unless he deals day by day with the eternal God.

Donald Ross

Paul's Ambitions

"Philotimeomai"

G. C. Willis

(Hid Treasures Found in the Greek New Testament)

The apostle Paul speaks of three ambitions. Would that you and I knew more of each of them in our own daily lives!

In Romans 15:19-20, Paul writes, "From Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." First we should ask, "Where is Illyricum?" We read of it in no other place in the New Testament. We never hear of it in the apostle's missionary journeys in the Acts of the Apostles.. It is not a city, but a large area, a province, northwest of the province of Macedonia. It is almost equivalent to Dalmatia, where Titus went during Paul's last imprisonment (2

Timothy 4:10). You will find it on the map about opposite Rome, on the other side of the Adriatic. This gives some idea of the extent of Paul's labors.

But you will ask, "What has this to do with Paul's ambition?" Just this, the word translated "so have I strived" is *philotimoumenon* which literally means "loving honor", hence, "being ambitious". Paul said he was "being ambitious to preach the gospel of Christ, not where Christ was named." How few there are who have such an ambition! This ambition almost surely entails hardship and dangers: it means sharing some of the sufferings Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 11. Read them for yourself, and unless the love of Christ works in your heart mightily, it will take away the kind of ambition that Paul had. Excuses are easy to find. One might say, "We are not to go where we are deprived of the privilege of remembering the Lord with other saints." or, "We are called to preach separation, not the gospel". Or, "I think that I can be more use attending a conference than going to some place far away from meetings." And so the excuses go. But rarely do we hear of those who share Paul's ambition, and sadly little do most of us know of it.

The next ambition Paul describes is in 2 Corinthians 5:9: "We are ambitious, that, whether present (with the Lord) or absent (away from the Lord), we may be well-pleasing to Him." What more beautiful ambition for every true Christian—to be 'well-pleasing' to the Lord, no matter if it is in life or in death. Worldly ambition has wrought ruin with multitudes of the Lord's soldiers and servants. All around us we see beloved saints of God whose lives proclaim their ambition for riches or honor or ease or learning or fame. We see Demas who loved this present world and Diotrophes who loved the preeminence. And their descendants are with us today. But how rarely do we meet a man whose ambitions in life are to preach the gospel where Christ is not known, and whether in life, whether in death, to be well-pleasing to Him. Oh, that these two ambitions may be mine, and yours, my beloved reader; may our love be for the gospel, where Christ is not named and ever, and always, to be well-pleasing to Him.

The third ambition of which Paul speaks is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:10-11. The apostle beseeches his beloved Thessalonian brethren to "be ambitious to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands." I sadly fear that most of the Lord's people today love the honor of working with their heads in a clean and honorable position, rather than soiling their hands by using them in hard work. They forget that their Master worked with His own hands until He was about thirty years of age.. They forget that the One who exhorted them to this ambition could hold out His hands and say, "Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." These hands" were probably worn and calloused with making tents. And let us remember his words: "I beseech you to be imitators (mimics: mimetes,

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always in a good sense in the New Testament) of me" (1 Corinthians 4:16). And to the very saints whom he exhorted to be ambitious to be quiet, and to work with their own hands, in the very same epistles he wrote, "Ye became our imitators (mimics) and of the Lord." (1 Thesalonians 1:7, see also 2:14). And in the second epistle, ch 3:7-9, we read: "Ye know yourselves how ye ought to imitate (mimic) us... we...give ourselves as an example to you, in order to your imitating (mimicking) us." (JND trans).

May God help us to learn the lessons that Paul's ambitions would teach us:

Ambitious to preach the gospel where Christ is not named.

Ambitious, whether by life or death, to be well-pleasing to the Lord.

Ambitious to be quiet, to do our own business, to work with our own hands.

Faith is confidence in the character of God and hope is the sweet anticipation of desirable things promised but not yet realized.

Moses: Man of God, pt 3

Alan Davidson

Moses and the Blood of the Lamb

Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (Hebrews 11:28). It is not the focus of this book to detail the plagues in Egypt which fell only upon the Egyptians. The above quotation shows that this last plague (Exodus 12:13) also involved the congregation of Israel in their houses as they sheltered behind the blood sprinkled lintel. It was an early confirmation to Moses and to Israel that God had raised him up to be the deliverer of His people and the leader of the people of God out of Egypt.

God sent Moses saying, "thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel (this was not another solo mission by Moses), unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness" (Exodus 3:18).

Three reasons were stated:

1. "That they serve Me" – Service. We cannot serve God in Egypt (the world) by mingling, dressing down and becoming like worldlings.

2. "Hold a feast" – Fellowship. We cannot serve if we are not near to God. Communion with God requires a clean walk of separation.

3. "Do service" – Worship. There is no fragrance amid the stench of Egypt. The people of God in Egypt were too busy helping to build cities for Pharaoh.

Pharaoh said to serve God but stay in Egypt (Exodus 8:25). Stay and help. A social gospel that appeals to the worldling is not consistent with the reproach of Christ and the cross.

Pharaoh said to go and do sacrifice but do not go very far away, (Exodus 8:28). God said; "three days journey". The Gospel declares; Christ died ... was buried ... rose again the third day as also witnessed in baptism.

Pharaoh said to go and serve the LORD, only the men shall go but leave your little ones (Exodus 10:7). Some have gone out for God and gone back because of their wife and family. Moses first test had already been in the domestic sphere (Exodus 4:24-26).

Pharaoh said; "your flocks and your herds be stayed" (Exodus 10:24). We cannot serve God with one foot in the assembly on Lord's Day and trade like the unrighteous, Monday to Saturday. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

In fact, the Egyptians hated the flocks of Israel, they were envious of the increase of the people and they feared their might. After the plagues and death of the firstborn, Pharaoh and all his servants and all the Egyptians rose up on the night with a great cry saying; "Get you forth; ... go serve the LORD ... take your flocks and your herds ... and be gone" (Exodus 12:31-32). "The LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so they granted (responded to their request, not lent or borrowed as in the A.V.) unto them such things as they required" (Exodus 12:36). Egypt was ready to assist their departure and did not expect to see them again. The descendants of Jacob went down to Egypt as a family, grew into a "congregation" and left Egypt after 430 years, not as slaves but as conquerors called "the hosts of the LORD" (Exodus 12:41). God had all the glory. "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed" (Exodus 15:13). For Israel, this beginning of months, the first month of the year began with the feast of the Passover, the blood sprinkled lintel, and the slain lamb.

The Passover was:

A PROCLAMATION of DELIVERANCE; from Egyptian bondage, bitterness and blackness. It would have been easier for Moses, if the mixed multitude, (Exodus 12:38), and the murmurers (Exodus 17:3), had learned this truth.

A PRESENTATION of a MEMORIAL. "For a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy

mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:9). It was to be observed yearly. The Lord's supper is to be observed weekly. He said, "Remember Me". Are we prone to forget as did Israel?

A PREPARATION for DEPARTURE. "Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S Passover" (Exodus 12:11). Our dress and deportment should clearly indicate that we are a people who are leaving, and are not conformed to this world.

A PUTTING AWAY of LEAVEN. Leaven is the swelling and spreading power of evil, of that which was looked upon with favour in Egypt.

A PRIVILEGE of the CONGREGATION. "Speak unto all the congregation of Israel ... they shall take ... a lamb for an house" (Exodus 12:3). Many thousands of lambs were slain. The expression; "your lamb shall be without blemish" (Exodus 12:5), reminds us that we are redeemed, "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19).

A PROVISION for the PATHWAY. This was the pivotal day of deliverance, the beginning of months, as God promised Moses. They were no longer dwellers in Egypt, but pilgrims on the way, to, "a good land and a large" (Exodus 3:8). They were no longer slaves in the brick kilns but soldiers on the advance to Canaan. "And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies" (Exodus 12:51).

They were also singers, having finished with Egypt and having crossed the Red Sea, they sang the first recorded song in the Bible. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying: I will sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation" (Exodus 15:1-2).

The last recorded song in the Bible is in heaven, by the Sea of Glass. "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints" (Revelation 15:3).

This continues the harmonious accord of the song of redemption in heaven celebrating victory over a stronger foe than Pharaoh, through the blood of the Lamb. It is the song of victory over the beast and over his image, and over the number of his name. This is the consummation of the ordered events during the seven last plagues leading up to the second coming of Christ in glory. He is the Lamb that was slain, worthy to receive the worship and praise of all peoples, as they continue to sing, "The song of Moses, the servant of God" (Revelation 15:3).

Moses and the Books

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). The book of Genesis, along with the other four books of the Pentateuch (the Law), came by Divine inspiration from the hand of Moses. This is verified by the Lord Himself (Luke 5:14; 16:29; 20:37; 24:44). These books contain a vast expanse of teaching far beyond the limited scope of these papers.

The opening verse of Genesis, "In the beginning God" (Genesis 1:1), commences the inspired revelation of God. Moses knew God face to face. In the Law, he recorded the Holy standards of God. Exodus records redemption from Egypt but also deals with redemption to God. The early writings of Moses give us the basis of the lovely Gospel truths, man's complete ruin, in sin and pictures God's perfect provision in Christ.

The lessons learned at Sinai when the Law was given were:

The Majesty of God: when thunders, lightening and the cloud shut out all that was below (Exodus 19:16-19).

The Spirituality of God: "Thou shalt have no other god's before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:3-4).

The Holiness of God: John Baptist said; "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Paul writes; "The law was our schoolmaster (guardian) to bring us unto Christ" (Galatians 3:24).

Communities which have thrown off the standards of the moral law of allegiance to God have become cruel and offensive to men.

In preaching the Gospel we must never confuse the principles of Law and Grace. Law must not be separated from its solemn unchanging claims and Grace must not be robbed of its warm attraction. God's Holy claims must be upheld if the eternal need of the sinner is to be reached. Keeping the Law cannot save. The law reveals our sin and transgression. Our need is met in our Lord Jesus Christ, "He was wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5).

Moses and the Building

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel ... And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:1-2,8). Moses was raised up by God, to lead His people OUT of Egypt. In Exodus chapters 1-18, we see what God is to His people. Redemption from Egypt was their great privilege. In Exodus chapters 19-40, we learn what His people mean to God. The entering IN to the presence of God was their responsibility. At Sinai, God gave to Moses the Legal Covenant, God's Standard, the Law.

He was also given the pattern to build the Tabernacle, God's Sanctuary.

The candlestick, the table and the shewbread all speak of Christ. Within the second veil; the Holiest of All, had the Ark of the Covenant containing the Tables of the Covenant, the Law (Hebrews 9:1-4). This was the place where the Law was preserved, foretelling Christ; "The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake, He will magnify the law, and make it honourable" (Isaiah 42:21; Matthew 5:17).

The Brazen Altar was where the place of sacrifice was presented, speaking of Calvary; "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12).

The sanctuary was the place of God's meeting with His people. Moses wrote about the majestic work of God's creation in two chapters of Genesis. When God gave him the pattern of His House, it is recorded in twenty two chapters of Exodus "The glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:35). The place where God meets with His people is now the local assembly; "The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

The Tabernacle was the place of God's pre-eminence in the midst of His people. In the order of the holy vessels, as given in the pattern to Moses, the Ark of shittim wood overlaid with pure gold was given first (Exodus 25:10). Upon the ark was placed the mercy seat over which spread the wings of the cherubims (Exodus 25:17-22). The lesson is; "Thy testimonies are very sure: Holiness becometh Thine House, O LORD, for ever" (Psalm 93:5). "Judgement must begin at the House of God" (1 Peter 4:17). We must not approach into the presence of God without reverence; that is, not any old way. We should not be late for the meeting; that is, not any old time. This is not legality but essential dignity, deportment and dress; not any old appearance.

Moses spent forty days upon the Mount with God. This was a testing time for the people down below. The flesh cannot understand spending time with God. While Moses was receiving the precepts of the Law and the pattern of the tabernacle, the people were making a golden calf. They turned from the spiritual to the tangible. There were those who thought that the idols were "gods" that brought them up out of Egypt. It was not surprising that these were the people who soon wanted to return to Egypt. Instead of using the gold for the building of the tabernacle, they used it to make a golden calf. They brought the pattern from Egypt. How are we spending our time, our talents, our toil? What are we building?

The path of the Word and the path of the World never run parallel.

Our Unfathomable God, pt 2

C. Jones (Wales)

God's Passion is Unfathomable

Love which passes knowledge, Ephesians 3:19

The love of God cannot be understood or appreciated by attempting to compare it with human love which, at its best, is very wonderful. God's love is not called forth by any qualities or characteristics we might have. God, Who is holy, loves us despite knowing exactly what we are. "All have sinned", Rom.3.23, and yet we were loved with an infinite love, "Even when we were dead in sins", Ephesians 2:4,5, and we read that, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us", Romans 5:8. The source and cause of God's love is in Himself and cannot be comprehended, understood or described.

We read of "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge", Ephesians 3:19. God's sovereignty is revealed in His love, Deuteronomy 7:7,8. His love is eternal and unchanging and nothing can ever separate us from that love, Romans 8:38,39. God loved the world, John 3:16; the Lord Jesus Christ "loved the church, and gave Himself for it", Ephesians 5:25, and each believer can rejoice and rest in knowing the love of God and can say, "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" Galatians 2:20.

We are commanded to love God and each other, Mark 12:30,31; John 15:17. Doing this is evidence of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, 1 John 4:7, and the extent to which we show forth this love to fellow-believers will reveal our love for God, 1 John 4:11,12; 5:1. The Lord said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments", John 14:15, and "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" John 13:34,35.

Unspeakable gift, 2 Corinthians 9:15

In 2 Corinthians chapter 9, Paul wrote concerning giving by believers. God loves a cheerful giver, 2 Corinthians 9:7. All that a believer gives to others comes from that which God has given to the believer. God gives "us richly all things to enjoy" 1 Timothy 6:17. He gives us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" 2 Peter 1:3, and "exceeding great and precious promises" 2 Peter 1:4. The truth is that "Every good gift and every perfect gift" comes from God, James 1:17.

Paul closes 2 Corinthians chapter 9 by bringing before us the supreme gift, the greatest gift of all, and that is the giving by God of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So great is this gift that it is beyond our ability to express and describe the wonder and worth of it. He writes, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" 2 Corinthians 9:15. Knowing that God has given us

a gift which is beyond description, we can say, "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?" Romans 8:32.

God has given to us His well-beloved Son, and those of us saved by grace through faith in Him "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" 1Pet.1.8. This joy is deep within and is independent of outside, continuously changing circumstances.

Unspeakable words, 2 Corinthians 12:4

When Paul was caught up to heaven he heard words there which he understood but was not allowed to repeat on earth. What he heard was too sacred and holy to be uttered on earth, but what he saw and heard had a profound effect on his life and service for the Lord.

Unsearchable judgments, Romans 11:33

The doxology with which Romans chapter 11 closes praises, magnifies and glorifies God. Paul wrote, "how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33).

God is infinite, omniscient, supreme in power, wisdom and knowledge, and the fulfillment of all His plans and purposes is inevitable. God will be glorified and believers and the whole of creation will be blessed. God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways . . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" Isaiah 5:8,9.

All God's works cannot be infinite because they are physical and the created must be finite. But many aspects of created things give the impression of near infinity in detail, complexity, size, or minuteness, because they reflect the glory of their Creator.

J. Portman

The Passover in Egypt

Exodus 12.

C H Mackintosh.

The Passover celebrated in Egypt is the well-known type of Christ averting from His people the judgement which overtakes the ungodly. The destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt, and smote the first-born in every house. Israel escaped by the death of the lamb, and by that alone. The blood sprinkled on the door-post told the destroyer that the sentence of death

had been already executed, and he therefore passed over. Hence, then, the blood distinguished the houses of the Israelites from those of the Egyptians. This was the grand distinction. When it was a question of life or death, the blood, and the blood alone, fixed the line of demarcation: "When I see the blood, I will pass over." This was God's record, presented for the obedience of faith. The blood was outside, and Israel were inside, and hence they could not see the blood, nor was that needful. All that was needed was simple faith in God's record, and the more simple the faith the fuller was their peace. It was their privilege to eat the lamb within their houses with tranquilized hearts, while the destroyer passed through with unsheathed sword, inflicting terrible judgement on all who were not sheltered beneath the blood.

How simple is this! How striking! How much we learn from it! Throughout the vast mass of profession around us there are two classes those who have received God's salvation in the accomplished work of Christ, and those who, rejecting Him, build upon the multiplied forms of false or defective religion with which Christendom abounds. God's way of salvation is simple, as simple as it is complete: "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." (Romans 10:9.) Christ is God's salvation, and, moreover, it is God's estimate of Christ that forms the basis of the believer's peace. It is very necessary to understand distinctly this latter point. There are many who suffer not a little by looking at their faith, instead of at the Object of faith; in fact, by unwittingly making a kind of savior of their faith. Now faith is only the hand, as it were, that takes hold of the gift of God, just as the hand of a hungry man takes the proffered bread and conveys it to his mouth. If I have my eye off Christ, and begin to examine the amount of my faith, I must of necessity decline, for He is the only One on whom the sinner's eye can rest. Genuine faith never looks at itself, but only at Jesus. A faithful Israelite would not have thought of going out to look at the lintel of his door, nor yet of examining the amount of his faith. No; he simply rested in the fact put before him in those precious words, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." It was not said, When I see your girded loins, your shod feet, your unleavened bread, I will pass over. These things were most needful, yea, essential, but not to save from the sword of the destroyer. To meet this nothing could avail but the blood of the lamb.

It is well that my reader should be clear as to the distinction between the ground of peace and that which is the spring of holiness and devotedness in his daily course; in other words, that he should understand the distinction between the work of Christ for us, and the work of the Spirit in us. The former is illustrated by the blood on the lintel without; the latter by the Israelites' actions within. When any one through grace receives Christ in the divine efficacy of His accomplished work, he is introduced into a position in which God can address

him as to his conduct; he becomes the subject of parental care and discipline. But then he must be careful not to confound the question of his walk with the ground of his perfect, his profound peace in the presence of God. Many, I feel persuaded, suffer in this way; they do not understand the fullness of Christ for them, and their everlasting completeness in Him, together with the settled judgement of God about them. Now while there is any dimness or uncertainty as to this, there can neither be settled peace of conscience nor any intelligent ground of Christian activity. Everything will be referred to the question of peace, rather than to the glory of Christ, which should be our aim, and which will be our aim in proportion as we enter into the divine reality of what we are in Christ through the infinite grace of God. The more we realize the truth that everything has been accomplished by Christ for the perfect establishment of our peace in connection with the holiness of God, the more we shall see how futile is every thought about ourselves. A question as to the believers peace is in reality a question as to the accomplishment of the work of Christ. If you touch one you touch the other, for "Christ is our peace." He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." And not only is He the same always, but God's estimate of Him, and also of us in Him, is also the same: "Ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." "As he is, so are we in this world." "Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." (Numbers 23:21.) Not that iniquity and perverseness are not there, for "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It would not give us any peace to be told that the Lord's people have not perverseness in them, but that He hath not beheld it tranquilizes the heart most blessedly. It is God's grace that blots out sin, through the precious blood of Jesus. He delights to do this; yea, it is His glory "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." This, beloved Christian reader, should banish every fear from your heart. God is not looking at your sin, but at the blood of the Lamb, and in that He sees the exquisite fruit of His own love, and triumphs in it. Now if God is not looking at your sin, why should you keep dwelling upon it? If He graciously triumphs in the fruit of His love, why should you not triumph in it also? The spring of your communion is your keeping your eye fixed upon the same object that God is looking at. Now if God is looking at Christ, and you are looking at your sins, of necessity there can be no communion. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" God says by virtue of the blood of Christ, "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more." Are you calling them to remembrance? How many are anxiously occupied about the question of personal peace, which really stands at the very threshold of the Christian course! This sorrowful state of soul may arise from various causes. It may arise from imperfect or muddy views of the gospel, from not seeing the fullness of Christ, and

the absolutely settled character of the forgiveness of sins.

But there is another cause, and one of a far more grave and serious nature, namely, a careless and unconscientious walk; and cases of this melancholy kind often run to a great extreme—even to actual despair. Such cases teach the importance of seeking a close and faithful walk with God. "He will keep the feet of his saints;" but they are exhorted to "keep their hearts with all diligence." The Spirit reveals Christ, and, if not grieved by sin and worldliness, will build up the soul in His fullness, and establish it in the peace of God which passeth all understanding. But, alas! when conscience is tampered with—when we sin against light—when we walk in an indolent and self-indulgent spirit—when we let in the world upon our hearts, then the eye becomes dim, and the understanding darkened; feebleness and languor take the place of energy and vigour; and unless the soul be thoroughly broken down under the sense of its delusion, and restored by the grace of God, in all probability Satan will entangle it in the destructive meshes of carnality and worldliness; or, it may be, will well-nigh drive it into the dread region of infidelity. Should this paper fall into the hands of any one suffering in this way, let me entreat him at once to pause, and having ascertained, by honest selfjudgement, the real cause of his low, heavy state, to bring it into the presence of his heavenly Father, and thus confess, judge and put away his evil. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There is no reason why the believer should continue in a low or impoverished state of soul, unless he is deliberately trifling with conscience and grieving the Spirit of God. It is his privilege to have Christ, in all His divine fullness, between his soul and everything, no matter what—sins, infirmities, circumstances; and when the eye is steadily fixed upon and filled with Christ, nothing can interfere with his peace. But the secret cause of the low condition of so many of God's dear people is, that they have let slip Christ, and allowed other things to come in and occupy their hearts. He has been displaced; they have lost the freshness of the sense of what He is, and have therefore sunk down into a cold, formal condition. Moreover, the affections, feeling the lack of a definite object around which to entwine themselves, have gone out after the world. Nothing keeps the heart so free and peaceful as a single eye to Christ. There may be much to try and depress the heart; still there is peace. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me, peace." The Lord Jesus does not promise us exemption from tribulation; no, but He promises us peace in the tribulation, and this is far more gracious. He came into the midst of His poor, terrified disciples, and said, "Peace be unto you." He did not take them out of their circumstances, but gave them peace in them. This is divine. The believer should, like the Israelite, sit within,

in the blessed fixedness of faith, feeding upon Christ, knowing that the blood of sprinkling is between him and all without. The worst that could come was death and judgement; but these had already been executed, and of this the blood on the lintel was the witness. It was impossible that anything could harm those who had taken shelter beneath the blood of the lamb. It should be remarked, however, that peace of conscience and peace of heart are distinct things. Many have the former who do not enjoy the latter. Settled repose of heart in Christ is a precious fruit of simple communion with Him. It puts an end to all that restless anxiety which so eats up spiritual life. To the heart at rest—fully at rest in Jesus—circumstances are but of small moment. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." It is dishonoring to the Lord to see His people giving way to cares and anxieties about present things; and, moreover, adopting the plans and arrangements current amongst the children of this world. Men say, or at least get abundant reason to say, that there is no difference between Christians and other people, inasmuch as all are seen pursuing the same objects, and pursuing them in the same way. When God's sufficiency fills the soul, plans and arrangements are little thought of. It is really wonderful to perceive how easily the soul loses the practical sense of God's presence and God's sufficiency. It is not that one ceases to be a Christian; this is not at all in question; but, alas! how many Christians are there who do not habitually walk with God! And yet the secret of true victory over nature and the world is, to walk with God. Nature is kept down, and the world is shut out; but when the soul is withdrawn from its blessed center in God, everything becomes a difficulty.

We shall now look a little at the circumstances which accompanied the Passover. The blood on the lintel, as we have seen, formed the simple basis of the Israelite's security. It was an accomplished fact, with which he had nothing to do save to repose in its efficacy. But there were other points of deep interest and solemn moment into which the spiritual mind can enter with much profit.

First, then, the lamb was eaten "roasted with fire" No other process could have told out the significant principle with the same emphasis. The action of fire upon the body of the lamb gave expression, as forcibly as type could do, to the intensity of Christ's sufferings when He exposed His blessed person to the full action of Jehovah's righteous wrath against sin. Now it was one thing to rest in the security of the shed blood without and another thing to eat of the "lamb roast with fire." Hence the apostle says, "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and fellowship of his sufferings." Here was the desire of one who had already rested in the blood of sprinkling. The fellowship of Christ's sufferings is but little known even by those who are resting in the precious efficacy of Christ's blood; were it more entered into, there would be far more depth of experience and

power of Christian action than there is. We are too ready to rest content with knowing the value of the blood, without feeding on the Lamb, and thus we lose much of what is really our privilege in the way of personal fellowship with Jesus. We are introduced by the blood into a position in which we can dwell with ever deepening joy upon the intrinsic excellency of the Person of Christ. It is not merely the work which has been done, but the One who has done it. The former is properly the object for the sinner, the latter for the saint; and the more the saint is enabled to enter into what Christ is, the more perfect will be his repose in His work.

Again, the lamb was eaten with unleavened bread. This marked the power of holiness, as the practical result of that nearness to God into which the blood had introduced the soul. But, my reader observe, this holiness is the result of Christ's work applied to the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, and does not, in any wise, form the basis of our peace in the presence of God. This should be clearly understood, for the fact is, that this distinction will be found to constitute the great difference between true Christianity and all the false systems of religion of the present day. True Christianity puts Christ as the prominent object before the soul, and, moreover, shows that all real fruit to God must flow from the knowledge of our completeness in Him: false religion on the other hand, puts Christ in the background—puts Him in the distance, and teaches the sinner that he must work his way upward by virtue of his own fancied holiness. Terrible delusion! Oh! for a simpler, clearer, fuller view of Jesus!

Lastly, the lamb was eaten with bitter herbs. This expresses the believer's experience, under the teaching of the Spirit, of the bitterness of that which dwells in him, which, though it has been most fully met in the cross, must ever be recognized as that which brought the Son of God down into the horrible pit and miry clay. It is only in the cross that the real heinousness of sin can be seen; and though it is there viewed in the light of that which puts it away for ever, yet the heart is self-judged and humbled even while it rests in an accomplished redemption.

Let me say, in conclusion, that the highest thought of all is, to have Christ Himself before the soul. It will not suffice to have thoughts of His work merely—thoughts of what He has done for us. There is much of mere selfishness in all this. We must be drawn to Jesus because of what He is; and this, so far from detracting from the value of His work, will deepen our sense of it every day

Whenever God's people went down to Egypt of their own accord, they always went down morally as well as geographically.

Biblical Prophecy (1)

Jim Walmsley

It is calculated that three-fifths of the Bible is prophetic, and that nine-tenths of the prophecies focus on the "end of the age." The spirit of the prophets, each ministering to the local and current needs of their people and their time, is projected toward the end times. In this way, the local scenes and events of those times fly by to focus, in most of their prophecies, on the end of the age. The anointed eye of the obedient believer can thus discern descriptions of the events of the end time. The prophets prophesied about Egypt, Babylon, and Tyre, announcing judgments that have not yet been fully fulfilled, even though they seem to have had some measure of fulfillment. They describe Palestine and Jerusalem for us, and elaborate on the commercial greatness, social behavior, and political importance that will be characteristic of those nations that surround the cradle of the race in the countries at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

Creation, Providence, and Redemption

It is essential to understand that God's great works, so immense, diverse, and intricate, relate to three distinct spheres: Creation, Providence, and Redemption. In the material sphere created by God, He governs the ordinances of heaven and earth. In the sphere of Providence and moral government, God rules in a seemingly indirect way, but He keeps the race of His creatures divided into nations among which He reigns despite sin and the activities of Satan. These two spheres form the basis for the greater sphere of Redemption, eternal in the consummation of its objectives, whose truths are proclaimed by the Gospel. With regard to the events of the end times, we will be most interested in the outcome of Providence and moral government.

Paul's preaching in Athens, Acts 17, introduces the three spheres of Divine Government that fill the Scriptures, summarizing in a simple and clear way the concept of each one. He said, "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made by human hands... He is the one who gives life and sustenance and all things to all." In this short statement, God is the Creator and absolute Sovereign of the material realm.

Paul went on to say, "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation." This introduces the moral sphere in which God is the Author of nations, the Governor of their rise and fall, and the Sovereign of their destiny.

The work of Redemption, of which Christ is the center, is highlighted in the words: "But God now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in

righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained, giving assurance to all by raising Him from the dead."

GOD, King of the ages, Immortal, Invisible, the Only Wise God

God, who created each of these three spheres, governs in all of them, according to the principles of each. In the sphere of Creation, we relate to things and the processes that affect them, but in the sphere of Providence, its laws discipline our relationships with people and groups of people. Unjust activities and unrestrained behavior will bring their reward, though not always promptly, to those who choose to ignore moral laws. The world belongs to God, not to man, and although man can determine his actions, he cannot control the results of his actions. The man or nation who thinks he can cheat God in the moral sphere is a moral fool. God's operations in His moral universe leave man utterly powerless to avoid the consequences. But God can, by the application of higher principles, defer, lessen, or in some cases apparently suspend those consequences.

The people of Malta had a partial concept of God as a God of vengeance only. It is necessary to consider not only the dark cloud but also the rainbow of mercy and the diversity of its colors. Although God will avenge injustices, He is not always, in all things, only a God of vengeance, just as He is not, in all things, only a God of mercy. His perfect character is a harmonious blend and perfect combination of each and every one of His characteristics. This perfection was expressed in the Lord Jesus, who is God manifested in the flesh. He was characterized by firmness without harshness, tenderness without partiality, love without sentimentality, precision without routine, consideration without compromise, sympathy without indulgence, fulfillment without haste, ardent zeal without cruelty, hatred of sin without hatred of the sinner, rebuke without rancor, and a thousand other virtues without their corresponding defects. All these virtues combined are the glory of the unchanging God and have been seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

Many, like Israel, have confused His longsuffering with tolerance, His warnings with threats, His forgiveness with indulgence, His judgment with hostility, etc., and have come to have a distorted concept of God. They have overlooked the fact that without tolerating sin, God is patient with the sinner, warning him in time of his danger so that he may repent, and is willing to forgive him as long as his repentance is genuine. God is a moral being, a God of principles, who does not change, whose government operates in accordance with the unchanging qualities of His abhorrence of sin and punishment of all evil. However, it is found that inflexible Providence overshadows His goodness, since, in all things, His moral government operates for the fulfillment of His purposes of redemption. The responsibility of human beings is to pay attention and be willing to adjust their thoughts in light of the revelation given by God.

Israel and the Nations

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He divided the sons of men, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:8).

We will discover the origin of the nations in the book of Genesis, chapter 10, where we find the names of the families that represent the three branches of the human race. It seems from the repetition in verses 5, 20, and 31 that each FAMILY had its own LANGUAGE and its own LAND and thus became a NATION. "These are the families of the sons of Noah according to their descendants, in their nations; and from these the nations were scattered abroad upon the earth after the flood," v. 32. This interesting chapter tells of the origin of fifty-eight basic nations, to which God later added the nation of Israel, miraculously developed from Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3, the Moabites and Ammonites, descendants of Lot, the Ishmaelites, and the Edomites, Genesis 19:37,38, Psalm 83:6, Genesis 21:18 and 25:12-18, 36:1-43. God took the descendants of Japheth to the northern parts of the earth, the descendants of Ham to the southern continents, and those of Shem to the central zone. Israel received the crown of the lands in the center of it all, after God developed that nation from Abraham.

The God of Glory appeared to Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia... and said to him, "Leave your country and your relatives, and come to the land that I will show you... but He promised to give it to him and his descendants after him, Acts 7:2-5.

On that same day, God made an unconditional promise to Abraham, saying, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you." The principle that anti-Semitism will be punished has not been abrogated. Ancient and modern history provide examples of the permanence of this principle. In the time of Queen Esther, Haman's plans showed that antagonism against the Jews is like a boomerang, for everything came back with incredible force upon his own head.

The key piece of all prophecies is the people of Israel. We may have to turn around, as the apostle John did in Revelation 1, and look not to Washington or Brussels, but to the city of Jerusalem. "I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. All the nations of the earth will gather against it." Zechariah 12:3.

Empires – (1) Babel

Nimrod, "Rebel," represents the third generation after the flood, and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel. His kingdom included the cities of Erech, Akkad, Calneh, Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calla, and Resen, which was a great city. It is the first reference to a "kingdom" in human history, and this fact lends credibility to Spurrell's translation, renowned for its scholarship, which changes the expression "the first mighty" in Genesis 10:8 to 'despot' and changes "vigorous hunter" to "despotic tyrant." Nim-

rod was the first potentate on earth, taking advantage of the terms of the covenant made with Noah that gave man the right to rule, Genesis 9:5,6. No doubt he aspired to dominate the earth, and to this end he took advantage of the rules of idolatry that represented him as having divine attributes (pages 32-37).[1] The centaur "Sagittarius," the archer, among the signs of the zodiac that originated in Babylon, represents him. (Pages 42, 43)[1] His success is attested to by the fact that successive emperors, especially the Romans, used divine titles. Of particular importance was the tower that identified Babel, the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom. Obviously, the tower was important as a religious center. That center of idolatry fell under God's judgment, but the race, already divided into nations, each according to its language, carried with it the basic concepts of idolatry, as they were created and propagated in Babel.

There is no doubt that in the early centuries the name Semiramis was known. The worship of the Mother and Child spread to the ends of the earth. In Egypt, they were known as Isis and Horus; in India, as Isi and Iswara; in Asia, as Cybele and Zeus; in pagan Rome, as Fortuna and Jupiter; in Greece, as Ceres or Irene and Pluto.

In Tibet, China, and Japan, Jesuit missionaries were surprised to find that these peoples worshiped the counterparts of the Madonna and Child. The original Mother was Semiramis, worshiped by the Babylonians and other Eastern nations under the name Rhea, the "Mother" goddess. (Pages 19-22)[1]

Romans chapter 1:21-32

gives the apostate development of idolatry, marking the important steps in the process, from the time when man "knew God" to when he "did not approve of God" with the result that he was given over to a mind without discernment (reprobate). Their complacency was to practice things that did not suit them and that will bring judgment from God. Today, the criteria of those who promote the concepts of the "New Age" coincide exactly with this process. They cannot tolerate giving thanks to God or taking Him into account, and morally they are heading down the same precipice that will bring God's judgment upon the nations, Acts 17:30,31, Matthew 25:31-46, Joel 3:9-15.

[1] The numbers correspond to the pages of the book "The Two Babylons," fourth edition, by Alexander Hislop. His work is based on the testimony of two hundred and seventy-four sources of information, beginning with Valerius Maximus, published in Venice in 1505, and collected from places as diverse as London, Rome, Paris, Amsterdam, Dublin, Bonn, Brussels, Bassano, Geneva, Bratislava, Bombay, etc. His work, with 61 illustrations, proves that all the idolatrous religions of the world have arisen from a common source that originated in Babylon in the time of Nimrod, but with particular cultural adaptations of each people. His assertions have never been denied.

(Continued)