

Elements of Dispensational Truth
The Seven Churches

Chapter 5

What the Spirit Said to Smyrna

Smyrna – “from the second century to Constantine” (Andrew Miller).

Presentation of Christ

And to the angel of the assembly in Smyrna write:

(2:8) These things says the first and the last, who became dead, and lived.

This presentation of Christ has, of course, the persecution and martyrdom of the saints in view. He passed through death and now lives for His own. Secondly, this address also has in view those who say they are Jews. That claim brings in religion of the flesh, as *alive in the world* (cp. Col. 2:20). It couples religion and a place here in this world, bringing in what nature likes. But Christ became dead, and lives, and the saint now is *in Christ*. And Christ being my life, I am looked at by God as not *alive in the world*, though I live here with Christ as my life (Col. 2:20; Rom. 6:11, 13; Col. 3:4).

THE FIRST AND THE LAST (2:8)

This designation of Christ shows, of course, that He is God, uncreated and underived. Christ is the alpha and omega, the first and the last (Rev. 22:13). See Rev. 1:8, where the alpha and the omega is “the Almighty,” the “Lord God” -- Jehovah Elohim. The Lord Jesus is Jehovah. Of course, the Father and the Spirit also are Jehovah.

Evidently He presents Himself thus as the support of the suffering Smyrneans. Underneath them are the everlasting arms. They have the support of the first and the last, Him who is not contingent or dependent. Now, “the everlasting arms” is a precious figure of speech found in the OT. But it is true that the Son came here and took arms, human arms, and human hands. He has clothed the everlasting arms in flesh, but not as a man puts on a cloak. No! He took humanity into His Person. And in the humanity that He took He became dead, and lived. It involved martyrdom, of course, though there was involved in the sacrifice of Himself that which brought infinite glory to God.

WHO BECAME DEAD, AND LIVED (2:8)

There is nothing that the Lord has not gone through: death is the last effort of Satan’s power; it ends there for the sinner, as well as for the saint. The unconverted even are out of Satan’s power when they die: if they die in their sins, of course they come under the judgment of God, but Satan has no power in hell. He may have pre-eminence in misery, but no power there (his reigning is some poet’s dream, it is here he reigns, and that by means of the pride and vanity, the evil passions and idleness, of men); he is “the ruler of the darkness of this world,” not of the next.

But whatever may be the extent of power which he seeks now to exercise against the children of God, the Lord says, I have been under it -- I have been dead. Therefore, it is impossible for us to be in any circumstance of difficulty or of trial through which Jesus has not been. He has met the power of Satan there; and yet He is alive. And now He “is alive for evermore,” not only to sustain us while passing through the storm, but to feel for, to sympathize, as having experienced more than all the heaviness of the circumstances in which we are. He can pity with the utmost tenderness, for He came into the very center of our misery. But the weakness of God is stronger than man, and though Christ was dead, yet he is alive. ¹

No doubt the Lord is so presented here in view of martyrdom. Many were not martyred and this is a word to them also.

He must put them into trouble, because He would make them lean on Him. He would cast the church on her own proper position altogether. He will give them to find the hostility of the world, in order that they may be brought back to know their own privileges in their own real position. How strange that the church should need persecution, not only that Christ should suffer them to be cast into prison, but also that they were to be faithful even to death! And the promise to them is “the crown of life.” They may be martyrs, but there is positive blessing and honor for them. Christians are seeking what the world does. If the Lord turns the current, He puts them through the fire. If the church has the world, in any sense down here, it must give up a heavenly, a crucified, Christ. ²

But His own having become dead ³ is brought to bear:

Looked at as man, He is dead to this world, cast out and rejected. We now must, like Mary Magdalene, get an empty tomb, or a living Christ. If your heart is upon Christ, all that you can find in this world is an empty tomb with nothing in it. Then you have nothing to do with the world, for all heavenly blessing is yours. The constant tendency is to slip away from this, because, if we do not cleave to the world, it cleaves to us. This was the case of the

1. *Collected Writings* 17:352.

2. *Collected Writings* 34:157.

3. When the body of the Lord Jesus lay in death, the human soul and the human spirit remained, of course, united to deity, else the incarnation would have been dissolved.

churches here. They needed to be put through the fire to separate them from the world. Judaism had crept in; then development (Gnostics, etc.), “intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds.” Then persecution comes, and blows upon all this. The history of these times shows that the living power in the church was not in its doctrines, but in its martyrs.⁴

Commendation

(2:9) I know thy tribulation and thy poverty; but thou art rich; and the railing of those who say that they themselves are Jews, and are not, but a synagogue of Satan. (2:10) Fear nothing [of] what thou art about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days.

THY TRIBULATION AND THY POVERTY, BUT THOU ART RICH (2:9)

Very likely the many were poor, but there seems to be more than that meant by “poverty.” They were suffering and had nothing but their faith, but nonetheless had the true riches. They were rich in faith (James 2:5; cp. Heb. 10:33, 34).

THOSE WHO SAY THAT THEY THEMSELVES ARE JEWS, A SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN (2:9)

Christ and the new creation are the rule of life for the Christian (Gal. 6:2, 15-16). The law turned out to be the rule of death (2 Cor. 3:7) because of the state of the first man who was under it in the persons of Israel. The law places man in the position of responsibility as in the flesh before God. Christ suffered the penalty under God’s judgment; and He has communicated life to us. Our responsibility now is to manifest Christ who is our life (Col. 3:4). You should see the difference here between what is heavenly and what is earthly. The introduction of Judaistic doctrine and practice into the church is a solemn matter to think of. The Galatians were threatened by this at an earlier date. Here, it has made itself felt. The law is the rule of death for the earthly man. The fostering of Judaism is an attack on the heavenly calling of the Christian. Note that this synagogue is again noticed in connection with Philadelphia. It was in the Philadelphian recovery of the truth that the heavenly calling (and the heavenly position -- in Christ) was brought forward again. The word synagogue is used figuratively to mark a party of those who say they are Jews and are not. The point is that the meaning of the teaching is to make Jews of themselves -- though they are not Jews. These persons are not literal Jews but put themselves in the Jews’ position, respecting certain aspects of Judaism.

Some commentators point to the opposition from literal Jews against the

4. *Collected Writings* 34:158.

Christians as the reference, but it is more than that. W. Kelly well explained it:

In the letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna, a totally different state of things appears. It is essentially a special case instead of the general one first seen. After declension from apostolic purity, above all from first love, the Lord was pleased to afflict; He allowed all sorts of trial to befall His people by letting loose the power of Satan working by Gentile persecutors. “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the First and the Last, who became dead and lived: I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of those that call themselves Jews, and they are not, but a synagogue of Satan.” It is not now a trial by false claimants. A new evil appears. As long as true apostles were on earth, Satan was never able to get Judaism recognized in the church of God. The council in Jerusalem expressly exempted the Gentiles from being put under the yoke of law. And the apostle of uncircumcision showed on his own ground that it was really to annul Christ, and to fall from grace, if the law, introduced either for justification or for a rule of life, were imposed on the Christian. For justification this is manifest; but for a rule of life it is not so apparent, yet it is just as real a denial of the gospel. If Christ be the rule of life for the Christian, and the law be the rule of death as Jews ought to know (though they do not), it is evident that for a Christian to abandon that for this tends to apostasy. The early fathers thus Judaized; and the heaven has gone on working ever since. To take the position of a Jew virtually is to be one of those that say they are such and are not, but are, alas! Satan’s synagogue.

The Lord here contemplates these evil workers (which is what crying up of works comes to) forming a distinct party. It is not merely Satan struggling to get in Judaism by individuals, but, as He says here, “the blasphemy” (railing or calumny) “of those that say they are Jews, and are not, but a synagogue of Satan.” They have now a compact character, and can be spoken of as a synagogue. It was not merely the tendency of individuals. Individuals there were before, but this is much more. It is a formed and known party of the highest possible pretension. They set up to be more righteous and holy than the rest, whom they denounced as antinomian because these stood in the true grace of God. They were themselves corrupters of the gospel and destroyers of living Christianity without knowing it. Deceived by Satan, they were his zealous instruments, so much the more actively deceiving others, because perhaps earnest and honest after the flesh.

The patristic party, those commonly called “the Fathers,” seem the leaders in the evil here referred to. They had the awful ignominy of systematically Judaizing the church. They also exercised this influence in all ages, and even over the Puritans. Here, if one mistake not, their formation as a system is stigmatized by the Lord Jesus. Sometimes offensive against Himself, always ignorant of His work and heavenly relations, they were blindly opposed to faith in God’s sovereign grace. Their character is plain. They dragged down the Christian from his true heavenly associations to that of a spurious Jew. What is still more the significant point for John, they lost even the truth of a real life given to us in Christ. Thus whether it be the depraving of souls or forming a

catholic body after an earthly mold, or whether it be depriving them of known life in Christ (at least as far as false doctrine could go), and hence failing to walk as He walked, to put them under Jewish ordinances, the Fathers, as a class, fully earned the distinction here assigned by the Lord.

When things were regulated after the Jewish pattern, the whole beauty and aim of the church of God was ruined in principle. But the point of interest here is, that succession and ordinances became defined as a system about this time. Such is the great fact found among the ante-Nicene Fathers. Here the Lord seems to notice its working at the same time that God was in a measure using for good those faithful during the heathen persecutions. Even then Satan was not idle in forming his synagogue “of those that say they are Jews, and are not.”⁵

SUFFERINGS FOR CHRIST (2:10)

Fear Nothing of What Thou Art About to Suffer.

There were all sorts of opposition to the faithful in this church, but what does the Lord say to them? “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer” (v. 10). It is the constant effort of Satan to produce in us fear and discouragement when passing through trial; but the Lord says, “fear none of those things.” In like manner the Philippians are told to be “in nothing terrified by their adversaries”; again in Peter we read, “be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.” Our wisdom is ever to rest confidently in Him who is “the First and the Last,” who rises up in as great power at the end as at the beginning. The Lord does not say to this church, “I will save you from suffering,” for suffering was needful in order to prevent it from tumbling headlong into decay; just as Israel was obliged in consequence of its sin to go a long way round the desert, and yet the Lord says, as it were, to some among them who were faithful, Do not be the least uneasy. So here His word is “fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.”⁶

Tribulation Ten Days.

The ten days’ tribulation in the message to the Smyrnan angel comes first in order. Here it is felt that caution is needed; for men like the late Mr. E. B. Elliott would carefully eschew such evidence. It is well known that they deny the seven Apocalyptic assemblies to be types of the main varying phases of the church on earth [Rev. 2 and 3] till the Lord takes His own on high. Here therefore is a rent among both futurists and historicalists, some on the two sides owning, many rejecting, the larger view of these churches. Yet there are those even of the latter school who, in accordance with the acknowledgment of their application to distinct stages in the church’s history, interpret these ten days {Rev. 2:10} of the ten years’ persecution under Diocletian, the most remarkable in the early times of the church. So, after speaking of the Seventy Weeks, the late Mr. G. S. Faber says:

“We find likewise that the Apocalyptic ten days’ persecution of the

5. *The Revelation Expounded, in loco*. See also *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:342.

6. *Collected Writings* 17:353.

church of Smyrna has been similarly proved by the event to mean, not a persecution of ten literal days, but a persecution of ten mystical days; that is to say, the persecution of ten years which is recorded by Eusebius, and Lactantius, and Orosius.” (*Sacred Calendar*, 1. 45, 46).

Homogeneity is supposed to require a similar construction of the various other numbers of these two prophets. It is notorious however that many, even in early times, interpreted the ten days of the ten persecutions down to Diocletian, as others recently in more general terms. The real thought appears to give the persecuted the comfort of knowing that it was limited, a meaning familiar to the reader of scripture from Genesis to Daniel. But on the prolonged scheme one need not set aside the general facts more than this.⁷

J. N. Darby was asked:

Ques. Do the “ten days” mean ten years?

No; still, I should think it was a specific time; the devil could do no more than the Lord allowed him; it is like saying, ‘I have measured how long it shall last.’ And the promise here, “he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death,” meets this state of things, as it always does in each particular temptation of the Church.⁸

To this may be added these helpful remarks:

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich.” Christians were poor and despicable in appearance, when the church was first set up. Leaving their first love, they were in danger of falling in with the current of the world’s reasonings; and the Lord lets loose the prince of it against them, makes them find their sorrow where they were in danger of finding a false ease and joy, but the true character of enmity of the world, instead of its false allurements, which draw them into it, and away from the Father’s love; and they sink into the insignificance and poverty which the world’s opposition sets the saints in. “But thou art rich,” says the Lord. These poor despised few possessed divine and exhaustless riches. They had got multiplied in the world and enlarged, and then there was a tendency to rest in the effects produced and not on the Lord; and the Lord, loving them too much to suffer this, must put them into the furnace to make them lean on Himself. For He will cast the church on its own proper portion altogether, and therefore He uses the hostility of the world to drive it back into its own proper hopes and privileges. But for this it would seem strange that the Lord should leave them to be tried “ten days,” were it not to teach them that heaven is their portion and not the earth; that they are not to remain on the earth, but to pass through it as pilgrims and strangers, to glorify Him who, when down here, was a stranger, and who now in glory is a stranger to the world, as the world. But then this shows also that the trial is measured. God may use Satan as a rod, but he cannot touch a hair

7. W. Kelly, *W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy*, Morganville: Present Truth Publishers, p. 329.

8. *Notes and Jottings*, p. 366.

of our head beyond what is allowed.

But the church must be brought to the deep consciousness of the state from whence she has so deeply fallen. Hence, Christ not only suffered the devil to cast some of them into prison, but says also, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." They may be martyred, and what then? Jesus gives them a crown of life. The church had slipped into the world; still, where living faith was in exercise, the effect was to give Christ His true place, and to strengthen all. When once it came to the question of giving up Christ, there were martyrs, perhaps even amongst the worldliest. This is often seen. Just so it is now, in the day in which we live. Christians are largely seeking just what the world seek, wealth, power, and influence: these three things are just what the Lord had not. And can I be said to be a stranger where I have power and influence? Certainly not; and if the Lord turns the current against them, then they must pass through the furnace. The church must give up a heavenly Christ and a crucified Christ, if it take the world up in any sense as its portion. The church of God cannot associate the world and religion without losing its true character.⁹

Judgment

None.

Admonition

(2:10) Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee the crown of life.

The "crown of life" is noted in James 1:12, promised to those that love Christ, where a blessing is pronounced on those that endure temptation -- in the sense of trial. In Rev. 2:10 the crown of life is promised to those faithful unto death in Smyrna. J. N. Darby noted this:

Here is something striking. It is not a question of knowing how far the heart responds to Christ; but of knowing if it is worthwhile leaving everything, even one's own life, in order to enjoy the privileges which are in Christ.¹⁰

G. V. Wigram remarked:

The Scripture is very much handled according to the state of the mind a person is in. Some would dwell upon the "ten days." Then the Lord would have them see they are little compared with the "crown of life" at the end -- "Our light affliction which is but for a moment," &c. You may get all this tribulation, affliction, &c., and they are as a crucible. What effect has the crucible on you? If you are dwelling on the things, you will find the crucible affect you much; but if your mind is on what is beyond, you will pass easily through it . . .

We think much of a little suffering; but if it cripples my fleshly energy, breaks

9. *Collected Writings* 5:294

10. *Collected Writings* 34:152.

my will, and in the glory I have a crown of life, I may rejoice in it. We must remember, too, that flesh takes hold of suffering as well as doing. If doing is the expression of self-will, it is out of place; but if God is sending it me, and I bow down to His will and suffer it, that is another thing.¹¹

Crowns are found in 1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 3:11; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10; Rev. 4:4.

Call to Hear

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies (2:11).

Promise to the Overcomer

(2:11) He that overcomes shall in no wise be injured of the second death (2:11).

The next thing forfeited by the first man is now before us:

The promise to the church of Smyrna is "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." This recognizes the fact that sin had come in where the Creator and the creature were once together, walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and that as a consequence the crown had fallen from the head of Adam, the fine gold had become dim, and death stood before him as the penalty inflicted -- the wages of disobedience. But this dark cloud is dispersed by the bright shining of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and makes even death to be the new measure of faithfulness (as it was in His own pathway upon the earth), and puts upon the head of all such the crown of life. Thus each promise gets its fulness from Him in whom God has been glorified; and so death, in the pathway of an overcomer by obedience, is made a power by which he reaches the crown of life. He shall not be hurt by the second death, for "he that loseth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Even Satan, who had the power of death, knows by the risen Lord his own defeat. Death cannot hurt. "We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." Moreover, as regards Satan, "Thou shalt bruise his heel, but it shall bruise thy head."¹²

The persecutors could kill the body but not the soul. The dead in Christ will rise in the first resurrection, and in particular in that stage of the first resurrection that will occur at the rapture (1 Thess. 4). The first resurrection is not one point in time, as is explained in *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 2. It speaks of a *class* of persons, hence it is "the resurrection of the just." It is a *kind* of resurrection, hence it is called "the resurrection of life." Just before the millennial kingdom is introduced, the first resurrection will have been completed. It is seen completed in Rev. 20 and there we read:

11. *Memorials of the Ministry of G. V. Wigram*, London: Morrish, 1:154, 155, n.d.

12. *The Bible Treasury* 8:365.

This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power.

Smyrneans might experience the first death, physical death, at the hands of persecutors. But they are exempt from the second death, i.e., exempt from being cast into eternal, conscious punishment. Such a promise would be very precious indeed to them in the trial of their faith.

At the same time, it is true that all believers will not experience the power of the second death. This indicates that the promises to the overcomers are the portion of all believers, though each promise has a special bearing on the state that is addressed by the Lord in each respective assembly.

Those of Smyrna were like the martyrs of the Tribulation period:

And *they* have overcome him by reason of the blood of the Lamb, and by reason of the word of their testimony, and have not loved their life unto death (Rev. 12:11).

Cp. Rom. 8:37 and Heb. 11:35. I spoke to John Begg one time about such things and said I did not see how I could go through such things. He told me that my trouble was that I was looking for *dying grace* when what I needed right now was *living grace* (i.e., grace for living for Christ). That was helpful. Yes, we need living grace, grace to live every single day for Christ's glory.

Do ye not know . . . ye are not your own? for ye have been bought with a price: glorify now then God in your body (1 Cor. 6:20).

To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood . . . (Rev. 1:6).

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

Elements of Dispensational Truth *Romans 9-11*

Chapter 9.3

Romans 11

Continued

Romans 11:30-32

Objects of Mercy When All Had Fallen Short

- 30 For as indeed *ye* [also] once have not believed in God, but now have been objects of mercy through the unbelief of *these*;
- 31 so these also have now not believed in your mercy, in order that *they* also may be objects of mercy.
- 32 For God hath shut up together all in unbelief, in order that he might shew mercy to all.

The point to these verses is that all blessing comes through God's sovereign giving of it, not through any merit. In the ways of God with man, he puts down all notion of merited blessing. He has ordered all things so that man has nothing in which to boast or glory.

GENTILES NOW AS OBJECTS OF MERCY (v. 30, 31)

"*Ye* [also] once have not believed" means the Gentile. Such are now objects of mercy through the instrumentality of the unbelief of "*these*" (v. 30). "*These*" means Israel, Israel as broken out of the Olive Tree. It is "*these*" in v. 31 that have not believed in mercy to the Gentile. In the ways of God, then, "*they*" (v. 31; Israel in unbelief) may also be objects of mercy -- in due time, of course.

ISRAEL WILL YET BE THE OBJECT OF MERCY (v. 31)

Verse 31 refers to the unbelieving nation of Israelites and to mercy extended to Gentiles. When Israel rejected Christ they forfeited any claim to the ancient promises. Therefore the future Israel that is saved will have the good of those promises, not in virtue of any human claim or merit, but by the mercy of God, just as God is displaying mercy now to Gentiles who have no claim to anything.

“For as ye were once disobedient to God but now have become objects of mercy through their disobedience, so have they also now become disobedient to the mercy strewn to you, in order that they also may become objects of mercy. For God shut up together all in disobedience in order that he might shew mercy to all” (vv. 30-32.)

Wiclif, Tyndale, and Cranmer, with the Vulgate, the Peshito and the Philoxenian Syriac, the Arabic, are here more correct than the Geneva Version, Beza and the Authorized. Calvin seems nearer to the truth, but has not quite hit the marl. “That they became unbelievers through the mercy shown to the Gentiles” is indeed somewhat harsh; nor is there any need of his explanation for clearing up a difficulty created by his own mistake. The Jews rebelled against the mercy shown to the Gentiles as we learn from the Acts, 1 Thess. 2, &c. and as experience shows in fact to this day.

There appears to my mind not only, an absence of any just sense in modern view but positive error at issue with the chapter, the context, and scripture in general. With the chapter it clashes, because the previous argument treats the restoration of the Jews as life from the dead to the world, not the fullness of the Gentiles the means of their restoration; with the context, because the express point is to crush all conceit from both Jew and Gentile, and especially from the Gentile as now enjoying light whilst the Jew knows a dark and cold eclipse; with scripture at large, because nowhere is the mercy shown to the Gentiles hinted at as the (or a) means of Israel’s recovery. No doctrine can be conceived more foreign to the Bible than that it is by the instrumentality of believing Gentiles that Israel as a nation shall at length look to Christ and so obtain mercy. As the Gentiles were warned that they must be cut off if they continued not in God’s goodness (and none but the most unspiritual, not to say hardened, can affirm that they have so continued), the sentence is excision, not the honor of bringing Israel into the faith. No doubt the believing Gentiles will be translated to higher blessedness, as the believing Jews were when the faithless Jews were cut off. Thus the prime object is to extinguish all self-confidence and boasting. As mercy alone accounted for bringing in the Gentiles on Israel’s rebellion against God, so the Jews when grafted into their own olive tree will feel that nothing but mercy could have done it or explain it, somewhat in unison of spirit with the apostle of the circumcision when at the council of Jerusalem he uttered the memorable words, so worthy of the occasion, “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they” (the Gentiles), not they, even as we (the Jews).

Thus they were all sinners; and the dealings of God in holiness and love and truth only brought out the stubborn insubjection of both Jew and Gentile, on the one hand, and the incomparable mercy of God, on the other: man’s claims, righteousness, privileges, all ending in unbelief and rebellion, but God never more truly shining as God than in His mercy enduring for ever.¹

In Isa. 45:25 we read:

1. W. Kelly, *Notes on the Epistle to the Romans, in loco.*

In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

In v. 32 “all,” both times, refers to the “all Israel” of v. 26.

Romans 11:33-36

The Completeness of All Is in God

- 33 O depth of riches both of [the] wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways!
- 34 For who has known [the] mind of [the] Lord, or who has been his counsellor?
- 35 or who has first given to him, and it shall be rendered to him?
- 36 For of him, and through him, and for him [are] all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen.

Gentiles who believed not, now professing faith, have now obtained the special place of privilege through the casting away of the nation of Israel. Yet, Israel will be grafted in again and have the special place in the millennium. And so God is shown to display His glory in these great and grand dealings with man on earth.

OF, THROUGH, AND FOR HIM (V. 36).

Let us close our study of Rom. 9-11 with an article from *The Present Testimony* 4:174-180.

Of Him, And Through Him, And to Him, All Things!

Rom. 11:36

(A quotation)

Such, under the power of divine inspiration, was the language of a servant of God. He had been just made to run rapidly through the past, present, and future of the inhabitable earth; had seen its changing phases as connected with God, and His dealings through various economies; had been shown that the divine object in all those variations, so bewildering to man in his pride, had been *very simple*: God had so wrought as to include all in unbelief that so He might have mercy upon all. It is not here Adam and Paradise, but man (Jew and Gentile) outside of Paradise. He speaks not *here* directly of how the creature had been allowed to break up the creatures’ circumstances of finite blessing, so as that the ruin might fall into the hand of God, that He might do, *in mercy*, as might seem good to Him, with that which had failed as being an expression of His power and wisdom -- and had failed when set upon its own responsibility: but He speaks rather of how all light and responsibility committed to the *failed* creature in the various economies or dispensations only more fully proved the creature to be a failed one, and brought him into the place in which

mercy alone had a right to speak. Tried, in various ways, man ever proved himself a ruined rebel; but God had planned a wide-spread display of His own mercy, and when all the various parts of the inhabitable earth should have shown out what they were, God would show out, in these same places, what He was as the God of Mercy. He would have scope enough to do it in them; varieties of vessels too would be there; and the display would have its brightness enhanced by the contrast between the smallness of what had been and the greatness then to be present, and by the contrast between the mercy of God and the unrighteousness of the creature. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all" (v. 32). His whole soul is moved -- and well it might be so -- and filled with the glorious subject -- it rolls forth the blessed anthem: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (vv. 33-36).

This last clause, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things," is thus the reasonable solution of the whole vision of God's dealings with man upon earth, *in dispensation*. It is abstract enough, yet strikes a cord of praise in the apostle's heart, and he adds, "To whom be glory for ever. Amen."

This explanation of these ways of *the God of Mercy* in His long-suffering dealings with man in rebellion upon earth, traced (from ch. 9 to 12) through various economies, comes in after the explanation (from ch. 1-8) of the mercies of God. Nothing but mercy could do for man, whether without revelation, or under the law, or without law: and mercy's path was already plain, for Christ had died, and risen, and ascended up on high, and God, the Holy Ghost, was come down to be at once the power, and seal, and sustainer of blessing to those that believed in Him from whom He was come down. These mercies of God (from ch. 1-8) so rich, so full, so heavenly, and so divine as they are set forth in ch. 8, magnified and confirmed by their connection with these ways of the God of mercy, through all His dealings with man upon earth, are brought to bear (ch. 12 to end) as the power of living *to* God. The origin or source of mercy is God; its power of endurance and success is God; it leads all whom it embraces to God: *of, through, and to* Him, in one sense or other, are all things, but most directly *of, through, and to* Him all those things of which Paul was here speaking.

And this truly is a great salvation -- to see God as the end of our retrospect; God as the source to us of it, at least, *as a whole*; to know God to be more present in power than all else, whether it be self, Satan, the world, or the flesh -- God overruling all -- causing all things to work together for good to them that love Him; in the *present* purpose, too, of all that is there as to faith, God and God alone. And if He be alone in the purpose which is present, He surely must fill the future -- of Him, through Him, to Him all things.

Our Gospel is divine as well as heavenly. As being heavenly, the grand purpose

of it is shown in the Family, as seen in the Father's house in John 14, and in the Bride, the Lamb's wife, seen in glory in Rev. 21 and 22. In this respect, our glad tidings lead us up to heavenly spheres in contrast to Israel's glad tidings, which will place them in the center of an earth which shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, even as the waters cover the sea. As divine, it gives us the power of known association, through grace, with the God of eternity in the past, the present, and that which is to come; in knowing the spring and source of our all to be the Eternal God; in knowing the way, first, of deliverance from evil and of entrance into blessedness -- in all the wondrous works, sufferings, services, and offices of the blessed Lord Jesus; and; secondly, of the application of this, and the securing of it, immediately to us to be by the Holy Ghost; and all tending to God; but because tending in *a present purpose* of the soul, God is known as a present as well as a future end.

I desire to say a few words upon this in connection with the full liberty of the gospel of Christ in the soul and life of a believer. For I believe many have failed, and that there is danger to many of us of failing herein: to some, from not seeing the importance of this truth, *as a united whole*, viz., that our gospel, in its fulness, is this our full association with God -- our being able to say with truth, "of Him, through Him, to Him, all things"! And to others there is danger from their not seeing the inseparableness of the three statements *of, through, and to* Him, all things. The subject is one of immense importance to the Christian, as to his own soul, as having to judge himself that He be not judged of the Lord; and it is one of pre-eminent interest to brotherly love, as affording the solution of, and the cure for, a great deal of ill-proportioned Christianity in those we love; -- it gives, too, the explanation, I am fain to believe, of a great many of the differences that try brotherly love. May the meditation of it lead us to judge ourselves, that we may be better able to help others, to forbear toward the weak, and not to be stumbled by the strong.

I may add, that in a day like the present, when rush, hurry, and bustle characterize man in all his doings, quietness and calmness will be the fruit of this being hidden (oneself and all ones's circumstances) in God. For what trouble can trouble His abode? What whirlwind can reach the soul that dwells in the secret of His presence?

Adam, in the fall, took *a new position* for himself. Creation was all of God, and through God, and to God; and so was himself, Adam, as part of it. His position and condition, as created, were in accordance one with another also. In the fall, he changed his condition and position too. Refusing to be subject to, to live to God, so far as the thoughts of his heart and the intentions of his mind were concerned, he, *in purpose*, set up for himself. He would be as God. That he could not thus take himself out of the Almighty's hands is clear. The unchangeableness of the living God's purpose, "that all should be to his own glory," stood fast. The creature that *would* not be so could not reverse that; he could only, in his puny littleness, set himself in opposition -- and be broken. He did change his inward condition in changing his position before God, in ceasing to be subject, and in acting upon his power to be voluntarily dependent, he lost himself -- he fell.

This departure from God was man's own act, though set on to it by Satan. It was man's own act; and he has reaped the fruits of it, and is under the consequences of it. It is a great moral disease, it is morally ruin, for a creature so to have sunk down into itself -- to have become so surrounded and filled with itself, that self has taken the place of spring, and power, and end of everything to it. It knows, in sin, no God above it, that it can depend upon. God is to it a Being of power adverse to itself. Now the Gospel of God's grace meets man in all his selfishness -- meets him just there where he feels that God ought to be against him, and brings in those parts of the divine character which man, so placed, can recognize, in order to give rest to his soul. Such a soul must own God to be above it, and not adverse to it either. And yet it may be very far from seeing how the whole salvation is of God, and the whole application of it through Him. But it is learning that there is a mighty God above, and something of His ways, and is getting unconsciously set in its right place before God -- its right place of dependance. When light dawns more clearly into it it finds that, indeed, it is fully saved, and that the blessed work of its salvation, while it suits it, came forth not for its sake, but because of what God was and is in His own being. He is merciful, and delights in mercy -- has delighted in doing mercy's work, and does delight in giving to man the full enjoyment of it. The discovery of this gives solid peace -- we understand where mercy has set us. And this is most blessed. Yet I think it will be found that there is a something which precedes this, even the spirit of obedience; -- the soul seeking, oft it knows not why, God and His presence, and entire surrender to him of everything. Now, this desire to do God's will, -- this owning of "all to God" -- and therefore that nothing can suffice oneself save to be "wholly" -- heart, mind, soul, and body -- in principle and in practice to God, is a very important thing. In a creature it is nothing less than God's glory. It can never be given up if we are to be like Christ, -- if God is to be God to us. I call attention to this point, because I am persuaded that in a clear understanding of it the safety of the whole flock of God, and of every soul individually is concerned. God must be the end, the sole end, where His power is. The Son of God, the perfect servant of God, knew no other end than God's will and God's glory. It was His glory to be here below, doing nothing but God's will, suffering nothing but God's pleasure. If any fain any other state as one of blessedness here below for the disciple, they deceive their own selves, and are hearers only, and not doers of His will.

It is true the desire to be, to live, to God may in us, at first, be mixed up with other elements, which may have to be judged and removed. It may be, at first, little more than the revived sense of what we were made for as creatures, when conscience is acting in the presence of God. It may be mixed up, afterwards, with a sense of power in us to stand upon nature's foundation; -- and as such power exists not, -- the thought that one has it is a delusion; it may be legal, from one supposing that the law was given that we might live by it; it may have a thousand false colorings, -- but when all is said and done, the truth remains, that if any one have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His; -- and the Spirit of Christ was and is emphatically the spirit of holy gracious obedience to God. Spirit of discernment, without doubt, He is -- to divide, nicely, between foundation and superstructure;

between the duties of root and of branch; spirit of judgment too He is, owning Christ the Savior in *His* place and service, and the believer as saved in his place and duties, too, -- but always the spirit of obedience; always and ever in subjection to God and the word of His grace, and leading unto obedience. Let the difficulty of retaining the spirit of obedience unclouded be fully admitted, -- but still, if saved, we are saved unto God, and the life of God in the soul, and he that touches that touches our all.

The Spirit of God has, as His unmixed purpose, to seek the glory of God and the honor of Christ. What else would you charge upon that Holy One as *His* purpose and work here below? Is it from a taste for the world in its present state, -- is it from the pleasures of the treatment He has experienced from the flesh and from the devil, that He abides among and in us? Did He own us as His end, -- when He sought us, -- while He keeps us? Oh, no: merciful and long-suffering as He is to us-ward, He is so because He links us up with a great purpose of God in Christ. And would I debase to the level of my thoughts and affections His actings in me? Nay, I am called upon to rise to His level rather. Now I do most solemnly believe, may I be wrong, that very many are in jeopardy just in not seeing how their perfect liberty in Christ supposes (what it gives) a perfect purpose to live, to be to God, and to God alone. And sure I am that it is impossible for two to walk together except they be agreed. Will God give up His object in order to walk with me, if I have an object at variance with His? Or must I give up my object to walk with Him, according to that which He seeks? And is it not here that one fruitful course of separation among disciples of Christ is found? namely, the various allowed measures of mixing up with God's sole object -- which is His glory in the honor of Christ as Lord of all -- portions of worldliness, fleshliness, and Satanic objects. I warn my brethren, the Church and the world cannot walk on together. God's spirit is onward, forward the face of every one that is led by Him is, as it were, set firmly for an onward, forward course. If men will walk according to the flesh, they cannot seek heaven, but the world; and then not the Holy Ghost, but the prince of the power of the air is He that worketh in them. I feel the moment to be one of crisis in this respect. If you are God's, -- live to Him and go onward, -- forward a little while further; how very little is the little while! and count the flesh to be already crucified with its affections, and lusts, and the world a wilderness. If you will not do this Satan will catch your flesh, and into the world sink you must. ♦

Excursus on All Israel Being Saved

In considering the meaning of "all Israel" in Rom. 11:26, here is a quotation from W. Kelly regarding some of the history of interpreting the meaning:

There is no comment in the New Testament more important for determining the just meaning of Old Testament prophecy. The allegorical school of ancients from Origen down to the moderns of our own day are in this far from the truth of God. Indeed it is as a system mere trifling and its root unbelief, as its dogmatic effect is to shake confidence in the plain written word, and its practical result is not only to deprive the ancient people of God of their hope, but to lower and obscure our

own by substituting the earthly position of Israel (confused and spoiled by a so-called spiritualism) for separation to and union with Christ in heaven, the true place of the Christian and of the church. It will astonish some of my readers to learn that Origen, undoubtedly one of the ablest and most learned of the early Greek fathers, speaks of Zion as representing the Father in this very connection! Others may be more sober; but they understood the truth no better than he, if they did not commit themselves to such wild flights of fancy. If some might have hoped better things of Theodoret, like Chrysostom, I am forced to prove how precarious is the teaching which, after saying truly that the Jews will believe, on the conclusion of the work spoken of among the Gentiles, tells us that “all Israel” means those who believe whether of Jews or of Gentiles. Even this meagre expectation of blessing at the end for Israel is boldly denied by Jerome (Comm. Esai. xi.), who will have all to be understood of the first advent!

Nor did the reformers clear themselves from the ignorance and prejudice of the fathers, partly through their dread of Anabaptist violence and fanaticism in their dreams of a fifth kingdom, dreams which after all are far more akin to the theories of Rome and the fathers than to the holy and heavenly hopes given in the written word. For it will be observed that such visionaries look for a Zion of their own on earth, just as in a modified sense their adversaries interpret the prophets of the church. All were at fault, though in different directions; so must all be who do not see the church’s portion to be a heavenly one with Christ at His coming, who will restore His people to the enjoyment of every promised blessing and glory on the earth, the nations being then only blessed as a whole though subordinately. But the risen saints will reign with Christ over the earth. We are blessed in heavenly places in Him.

Hence we can understand the vacillation of Luther. But Calvin was always wrong, as an instance of which may suffice his interpretation of this place where he makes “all Israel” to mean the whole of those saved, the Jews having only the superior place as the firstborn.²

Much more correctly have Beza on the Protestant side, and Estius on the Catholic expounded the verse and shown the opposition of $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ Ἰσραήλ in the future hardening $\acute{\alpha}\pi\theta$ μέρους, which strictly means “in part,” not a mere qualifying of a severe declaration, “until” also specifying the point of time at which the great change takes place. To say with Calvin that “until” (ἄχρις οὗ) does not mark this but only equivalent to “that” shows the strong prejudice of a good man whose knowledge of the language was imperfect and who missed to a

2. “Multi accipiunt de populo Judaico, acsi Paulus diceret instaurandum adhuc in eo religionem ut prius; sed ego Israelis nomen ad totum Dei populum extendo, hoc sensu: Quum Gentes ingressae fuerint, simul et Judaei ex defectione se ad fidei obedientiam recipiant: atque ita complebitur salus totius Israelis Dei, quem ex utrisque colligi oportet: sic tamen ut priorem locum Judaei obtineant, ceu in familia Dei primogeniti.” (Comm. in loc.) Nor is his reason sounder than his conclusion; for he considers the mystic sense to suit better because Paul wished to point out here the consummation of Christ’s kingdom, “quae in Judaeis minime terminatur sed totum orbem comprehendit.” The argument really goes to confirm what is denied; for the church is essentially an election out of Jews and Gentiles, and never can embrace the whole world; whereas the salvation of Israel at Christ’s coming to reign inaugurates and characterizes His kingdom over all the earth. Compare Zech. 12, 14.

great extent the point of the chapter before him, through that wisdom in one’s own conceit against which the apostle is warning the Gentiles. That “the fulness of the Gentiles” *cannot* mean the general conversion of the world to Christ, is perfectly certain if it were only from the previous reasoning of the apostle in the central portion of the chapter, where he asks if the slips of the Jews were the world’s riches, how much more their fulness? and shows how he was provoking them to jealousy to save some; for if their rejection be the world’s reconciling, what their reception but life from among the dead? And this, as already shown, harmonizes with the constant testimony of the Law, and the Psalms, and the Prophets, which invariably make the blessing of Israel as a creation the condition and under God the means of the blessing of all the earth -- a new state of things, not the gospel or the church as now known, both of which are inconsistent with it, but the kingdom in its manifestation of glory when in the broadest sense all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Here the commentators are, I must say, painfully defective. The effort of some ancients, and of moderns like Grotius and Hammond, to find the accomplishment in the apostolic times is of all schemes the grossest absurdity, and the most directly opposed to the text commented on.

It may be added that, though Dean Alford took the term Israel in its proper sense, he like the rest spoils much of the force of the truth by winding up with the assertion that the matter here treated is *their reception into the church of God*. Not so. The question of the olive tree stands wholly distinct from the church, though no doubt there are branches now in the olive tree since Pentecost which are also members of Christ’s body, the assembly of God. But the olive tree is another idea altogether and embraces the dealings of God on the footing of promise since Abraham through Israel of old, the Gentile profession now, and Israel again in the millennial age, not believers only but responsibility according to the privileges given, with judgment executed on the faithless Jewish branches of the tree to let in the Gentiles, as it will be executed on the disobedient Gentiles when God will give repentance to Israel and remission of sins at the appearing of Christ and His kingdom.³

(Series concluded)

Ed.

3. *Notes on the Epistle to the Romans, in loco.*

*Elements of Propitiation, Substitution,
and The Righteousness of God*

Chapter 10

Made the Righteousness of God in Him

Christ Was Made Sin

SIN AND SINS

There is a difference between sin, referring to the evil nature within, and sins, which are the fruits produced by that evil nature. 1 Pet. 2:24 speaks of sins, the fruits, and Christ has borne the sins of believers. *Sins* are forgiven (Eph. 1:7). However, a nature is not forgiven. We do not read that the believer has the forgiveness of *sin*. But the nature is judged. Christ was made sin for us on the cross and thus God removed sin from before Himself regarding the believer as viewed *in Christ*.

In Romans, there is a main division of subject matter which occurs between Rom. 5:11 and 12. Before v. 12, the subject is our guilt and our sins. We read that Christ was delivered for our offences (Rom. 4:25). Beginning at Rom. 5:12 the subject is our sin, our evil nature, the flesh, and our state before God. Of course, by the cross God has dealt with both the fruit (sins) and the root (sin). In the first part of Romans we read that Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-8); in the next part we read that we have died with Christ (Rom. 6:8). Christ has died to sin (Rom. 6:10) and so then have we died to sin also (Rom. 6:2) as having died with Him. Thus, we are justified from sin (Rom. 6:7). You cannot charge a dead man with sin. He is dead. Thus is the believer viewed *in Christ Jesus*. On the other hand, we are viewed as alive from among the dead (Rom. 6:13) and "alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11). Thus is the believer viewed *in Christ*. So we are not viewed by God as in the flesh, i.e., in the Adamic standing of the first man. It is not only sins forgiven, but more: a new standing before God. The *life* of being alive to God in Christ Jesus *stands in justification* (Rom. 5:18). No charge can be brought against that life.

What we have in 2 Cor. 5:21 refers to *sin*. This connects with the second major division in Romans, ch. 5:12 through ch. 8. And here Rom. 8:3 helps us:

... God having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh ...

"Likeness of flesh of sin" does not mean, of course, that any sin was in Him, as 2 Cor. 5:21 assures us, for "he knew no sin," referring to sin as what is *in* man.¹ He appeared a man among men is the thought. The Son was sent for sin; He was sent to deal with it, and did so on the cross. He was "made sin" for us in such a way that God could remove sin from before Himself. As W. Kelly said:

... I understand thereby, that God charged Him with all its consequences as far as this could be done by imputation to the Holy One, who suffered for sin as really, yea, far more perfectly, than if it had been His own. Christ went down as truly and unsparingly under the direct judgment of sin, as if He had been Himself guilty. He was so completely charged with sin that God not only dealt with Him in death but in judgment. For nothing more distinctly marks judgment than God forsaking one.²

Regarding the offerings in Lev. 1-5, Christ being made sin answers to the sin-offering (Lev. 4); while the trespass-offering (Lev. 5) speaks of Christ bearing our sins.

Christ was made sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It was not a life-long being made sin. No. It was in the three hours of darkness on the cross.³ The righteousness we are made does not come from the law in any way, as J. N. Darby well pointed out:

What I deny is the doctrine that, while the death of Christ cleanses us from sin, His keeping the law is our positive righteousness, and that His keeping the law is imputed to us as ourselves under it, and that law-keeping is positive righteousness. I believe that Christ perfectly glorified God by obedience even unto death, and that that is to our profit in such sort that, while His death has canceled all our sins who believe, we are accepted according to His present acceptance in God's sight according to the value of that work, being held to be risen with Him, that our position before God is not legal righteousness, or measured by Christ's keeping the law, but His present acceptance, as risen, in the whole value of the work, and we accounted righteous according to the

1. "The notion that He of whom it is said, "knew no sin," is God as such, and that He was made sin in incarnation, which is Dr. B.'s {Horatius Bonar} interpretation, is too monstrous and too offensive as well as absurd to need reply. God has made God, who as God did not know sin, to become sin by being a man: can any Christian taught of God receive such a thought? God does know sin perfectly: to apply it to His not knowing it in conscience is blasphemy; to affirm it of One who was in the likeness of sinful flesh is of vital importance. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" In Him is no sin. Is God's making God become sin (vicariously of course, I admit) any better? The Lord declares He comes to do God's will and that His law is in His heart. It was the Lamb, the spotless Lamb, the victim that was made sin" (*Collected Writings* 23:239).

2. *The Bible Treasury* 12:12.

3. See "The Atoning Sufferings of Christ" in *Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule* 1:142-165.

value of that. ⁴

SIN IS LAWLESSNESS

It is well to be clear about what is meant by sin contrasted with sins. That “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4) is an utterly false translation. The law came by Moses (John 1), and sin was in the world before Moses, as is clear from the fact that sin was introduced by one man, Adam (Rom. 5:12). Adam had *a* law, but not *the* law. It is convenient, however, for covenant theology to *invent* the teaching that Adam had *the* law, necessitated in order to be compatible with the notion that sin is the transgression of the law. The reader should understand this: that if Adam had not *the* law, and if ‘sin is the transgression of the law,’ then Adam could not have sinned. Therefore it has been invented that Adam had *the* law. ⁵

So sin was in the world before Moses (Rom. 5:12), before *the law*, and thus sin cannot be the transgression of *the law* – since sin was there before *the law* which was given by Moses (John 1:17).

I pointed this out to some KJV advocates who virtually treat the KJV as inspired, and *who claim to be dispensationalists*, the result being only to be lectured, or sent a paper to fill out so that at the conclusion I might see that I was a “dunce” (reminding me of what has often been pointed out in *Thy Precepts*, that the guilty often reverse matters) -- but no answer, no facing up to this glaring, patent contradiction. It is an outrage that anyone claiming to be a dispensationalist will hang on to this falsification of the translation that has resulted from covenant theology. But it would breach the agenda of covenant theology to admit it and the seriousness of it, as it would breach the agenda of ‘dispensationalists’ who treat the KJV as virtually as inspired as the autographs.

That champion of error, the NIV, *only appears to give* with the right hand -- but certainly takes away with the left. Listen to it:

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

This is absurd. It is the same old law-mindedness in theology, worded a little differently. Those before the law of Moses was introduced sinned, but had no law to break. Moreover, the Gentiles never were under the law, yet they sinned.

W. Kelly translates:

Everyone that doeth sin also doeth lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

I will cite but one small comment from him:

One hardly knows a verse in the New Testament more perverted if one may so

4. *Collected Writings* 14:250.

5. The reader should look at Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 1, second edition, chapter 3.4, “Romans 5:12-21: The Christian Under a New Head,” and the chart on p. 93, which diagrams these points and many others that bear on this matter.

call it, or more productive of widespread misapprehension. ⁶

Let us see the translation by A. Marshall:

Everyone doing sin also lawlessness does, and sin is lawlessness. ⁷

And here are some of J. N. Darby’s forceful strictures:

The other {false translation} is, “Sin is the transgression of the law.” This is really, I must say, a wicked subjection of the word to theology; The word (*anomia*) is never used for “transgression of the law” anywhere else in the English translation of the holy scriptures; another expression is, *parabasis nomou*. I call it “wicked,” because by it a human system denies what the word of God carefully insists on. Not only so, but it is the word rightly translated elsewhere “without law.” Sin is not transgression of the law; to say so, universal as it may be, is a wicked anti-scriptural perversion. Sin is the evil nature which produces lust, the enmity of the heart against God. It is written, “Sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful,” which could not be if sin was not there before the commandment. Again, the contrary is expressly stated. “Until the law sin was in the world.” There is no transgression without sin. Further, it is said, “They that have sinned without law,” the same word as an adverb (*anomos*), in contrast to sinning under the law. That is, the word of God puts it in direct contradiction to what this false translation does.

These gentlemen believe men are born in sin. I do not blame them for this, surely; but are men born in transgression of the law? It is false theological perversion, and nothing else; and it is time that false theology gave way to the word of God: for this affects the whole nature and character of Christianity. Patience has its just place; but, after all, souls are more precious than false theology. ⁸

Men are born in sin, not born in the transgression of the law. “Sin” has to do with the nature in us; transgressions refer to acts committed -- i.e., transgressions are a class of sins committed. Moreover, when Christ was “made sin,” He was not made the transgression of the law. It is most true that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, but that is not what 2 Cor. 5:21 describes. This passage is dealing with our nature, the root within us from which sinning springs. And this root within was in the world before the law was given by Moses. And men acted in accordance with that root within them without the law. They acted in self-will, without reference to the will of God. Rom. 1:19ff bears directly on this issue and the law is not brought up in this passage. All before Moses were without the law, and when it was given it was given to Israel, not

6. *Exposition of the Epistles of John, in loco*. See also *The Bible Treasury* 14:111; 20:328; New Series 3:244. Such comments are collected in D. Ryan, *Two Nineteenth Century Versions of the New Testament*, Morganville: Present Truth publishers.

7. *The NIV Interlinear Greek English New Testament*.

8. *Collected Writings* 23:307. See also 10:149, 150 for strong strictures; also 10:24; 26:239; 3:59, 60.

the Gentiles, who never were under the law.⁹

9. J. N. Darby addressed this issue repeatedly. Here is a sample:

But it is said, we confound all laws together. I take it as the word of God does. That law is not the way of righteousness or sanctification, nor of obedience. Paul does not even say *the* law. Law came in by the by (νόμος παρεϊσθήθαι), that system and way of dealing on God's part. He carefully distinguishes men under law, and men not under law -- without it; he alludes to Adam as under a law, Israel also; whereas people between them are on a different ground: so all Gentiles, having no law (νόμον); so Christians. I know that great pains are taken to undo his words, and shew they must have had some law, though the apostle declares they have none, and perish without it, instead of being judged by the one which was given. I know that it is urged they were a law to themselves where they had none, because they had a conscience; but this is only to prove that actual righteousness by conscience is better than the having a law and breaking it; that working good was better than having a law, if it was broken. Scripture contrasts being under law and being without law, and does not know these speculations on it. What it calls law as absolutely as words can make it, it declares the Gentiles to be without (μη̄ ἔχοντες νόμον), having no law at all. It does say every one has a conscience which tells him of right and wrong. They are without law -- χωρὶς νόμου. They are inexcusable, from natural proofs of God, and as giving up God when they knew Him. But they are not proved guilty by any law they were under; but it is declared, having sinned without law (ἀνόμως), they will perish without law -- while others have sinned under law, and will be judged by it. The sense in which scripture says they were without law and had none, in that sense I believe and say it. Nothing can be more absolute. The reasonings of men as to it are all inventions not found in scripture. What scripture calls law, Gentiles and Christians are not under. I know passages are quoted to show that they *must* be, in spite of what scripture says. I shall refer to these. Ignorance of Greek can hardly excuse the use of some of them, where positive scriptures are so plain.

Sin, we are told, is the transgression of the law. Now, no one knowing Greek could cite this theological, but fatally unscriptural, translation. It is simply, Sin is lawlessness, ἀνόμια, not παράβασις νόμου. Another passage quoted is, "under the law to Christ"; but neither here is the law spoken of at all; it is, not as lawless in respect of God, but rightly subject to Christ -- ἔννομος Χριστῷ. It is in contrast with having to say to the law. But there is another passage which is reckoned on to prove that all men are under law, Rom. 3:19. It is astonishing how anyone could so little see the force of the apostle's argument. I am aware that Dr. O'Brien refers to this; but I am only so much the more astonished. The apostle had proved Jews and Greeks all under sin, and then turns back to the many advantages the Jews had. He was not derogating from them. Well, he says, you have the oracles of God. Let us hear them. Are we better than Gentiles? You are as much under sin as the Gentiles. Read your own books, from which he then cites passages, and, relying on the claim of the Jews that the law belonged to them, that the law spoke to those who were under it, applies these denunciations to the Jews who were; thus stopping their mouths by their own oracles, which they claimed as belonging exclusively to them. There you are then, says Paul. You say the scriptures apply to you, and that is what they say; and then every mouth is stopped. That the Gentile was a sinner was admitted; they were not Jews by nature. But their own oracles brought in the Jews too; and every mouth was stopped. How any one could think that the statement that the law spoke to those who were under it, meant that it spoke to all, when the subject is the Jews alone possessing it and its advantages, (continued...)

SIN WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE UNIVERSE

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

But now once in the consummation of the ages he has been manifested for [the] putting away of sin by his sacrifice (Heb. 9:26).

Christ has not taken away the sin of the world -- a very absurd notion -- and the subject is not about sins. Keep in mind that the subject matter in these Scriptures is sin, not sins. Heb. 9:26 is broader than John 1:29. Heb. 9:26 states:

1. The *purpose* for the manifestation of Christ -- the putting away of sin;
2. The *means* -- Christ's sacrifice; and,
3. *When the work was done* -- in the consummation of the ages.

There is still another age coming, called in Scripture "the age to come." That refers to the kingdom age, the millennium. This shows that the phrase, "consummation of the ages," does not refer to the time-ending of all ages; it refers to certain ages, namely the ages of the probation of the first man. When the testing of man was to end, Christ appeared as the final test; and He was rejected and nailed to the cross.¹⁰ However, this was used in the ways of God to accomplish His purpose. Included in His purpose is the removal of sin such that the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21) will be entirely clear of sin.

It is not said that the putting away of sin has occurred. It still remains to be done, but *the basis* for doing it has been accomplished. The Lamb of God has accomplished the work by which this will be done.

Heb. 9:28 shows that when Christ appears, He will not take up the question of sin -- "without sin for salvation." Those that so look for Him will have the benefit of His work on the cross.

These Scriptures do not mean that there will be no eternal punishment. Hell is not considered to be part of the new heavens and new earth. In the new heavens and the new earth, Scripture says, "righteousness dwells."¹¹

9. (...continued)

would be hard to think, but for the prejudices of a system. I do not go on to insist on what follows, that the righteousness of God is manifested (χωρὶς νόμου) absolutely apart from law, because I have done it elsewhere (*Collected Writings* 10:98, 99).

10. The reader should look at *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1, second edition, chapter 3.9, and the charts on pp. 91 and 112 regarding the subject of the testing of the first man and its termination in the rejection of Christ. The Scofield system leaves this out. No wonder, for there really is no testing of the first man now and the Scofield scheme continues testing after the cross.

11. The infernal beings noted in Phil. 2:10 will never be annihilated.

We Made the Righteousness of God in Him

MADE NOW ¹²

It is a fact that the one who is *in Christ* is made the righteousness of God in Him -- *now*. It is not in glory that we shall be made this, because it is already true for the believer now. W. Kelly addressed this point, and while the remarks he wrote in answer to a question do not name the person he had in mind who is being rebutted, it is clear to me it was F. E. Raven:

The object of the enemy is plain: now as ever anything new or old to enfeeble the blessed fruit of Christ's work. Nobody doubts that righteousness was proved in setting the rejected Christ in glory (John 16). But here we are taught that, as God made Christ sin for us, so we become His righteousness in Christ. It is simply and solely our present standing in Christ. Nor does anybody question the future glorification of the saints but *this hope is wholly outside the passage*, which refers exclusively, as its full scope, to what we Christians become (or were made) now in Christ -- even God's righteousness. This is what many saints fail to believe. And the objection to apply in an absolute way to the believer, in his mixed condition down here, statements in scripture which refer to what he is in Christ, shows that it is pure unbelief, which is so blindly put forward as "advanced truth," to ensnare, unsettle, and overthrow the unwary. For the truth, which is to deliver from the weakness, and doubts, and all other evil to which the mixed condition is naturally subject, must be received and applied absolutely if taught of God: the faith is made void, and what is worse and goes along with it, the work of Christ and the grace of God alike. If I am not to believe in the most absolute way what the Holy Ghost declares I, a Christian, am already made in Christ, not only is all claim of advanced truth vain, but the gospel in any full sense is systematically denied. And the more evidently is it of Satan, because those who adopt such destructive reveries flatter themselves that they are going on to higher things, instead of virtually, though unwittingly, abandoning that distinctive truth, even as to the foundations of the faith, which used to characterize those waiting for God's Son from heaven. A sober and duly instructed Christian cannot doubt, unless under the strong bias of personal or party feeling, that the teaching is retrograde, false, and incompatible with the gospel. ¹³

He also called attention to this, regarding the word *become*:

None of the early editors seems to have suspected the reading of the present (γιν.), which besides has not one good known MS in its favor. If true, it would mean a process going on, contrary to all sound doctrine taught elsewhere. The best witnesses, if not all, have the aorist, which imports an

12. The reader will find helpful material on 2 Cor. 5:21 in my *The Eternal relationships in the Godhead*. See "On Righteousness," by Charles Stanley, pp. 164, 165; and supplement. See, B. F. Pinkerton, *Remarks on Eternal Life and Divine Righteousness*; W. T. Whybrow, *Eternal Life and Righteousness*, pp. 156, 157.

13. *The Bible Treasury* 19:240.

accomplished fact. ¹⁴

And a quotation from J. N. Darby is quite relevant in view of this:

"We wait [it is true] for the hope of righteousness by faith"; not for "righteousness by faith," because we have that, or rather in Him are that; but we wait for the hope that belongs to it; and we know what that is, for it is that which {Christ}¹⁵ has now in glory. And we are to be "changed into the same image from glory to glory." Christ is our righteousness, and we have it, or rather we are it; "we are made the righteousness of God in him." But we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness. The Spirit was sent down to witness that Christ is glorified; and hence He becomes an object to us in the glory. ¹⁶

MADE WHY?

The righteousness of God is involved with making the believer the righteousness of God in Christ. That is, the righteousness of God would be compromised if He did not do so, as J. N. Darby pointed out:

Now He glorified God by His work, accomplished for those who believe in Him. The Holy Ghost then descends on those who already believed in Him (John 7:39; Luke 24:49; Acts 1 and 2), and announces through their means this glorious salvation; announces to all men that the blood is on the mercy-seat, and invites them to draw near. But, besides that, He gives, as dwelling in the believer, the assurance that all his sins have been borne by Christ (1 Pet. 2:24), and are blotted out for ever (Rev. 1:5; Heb. 1:3, and other passages); that he, the believer, is made the righteousness of God in Christ; 2 Cor. 5:21. For the righteousness of God must accept and glorify the believer: otherwise the work of Christ has been done in vain, and God's righteousness is not put in exercise with respect to it; God does not recognize the value of this work, does not render to Christ that which He in every way deserved, which is absolutely impossible. Next, the Holy Ghost is in the believer, the seal for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30), that is to say, for his entering actually into the glory of Christ; then He gives to the one in whom He dwells the consciousness that he is with Christ, in Christ, and Christ in him (John 14:16-20); that he is the child of God, and His heir, joint-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:16, 17; Gal. 4:5-9); finally, He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to him, while leading him through the wilderness by the path that leads to the glory; Rom. 8:14. ¹⁷

THE EFFECT NOW

The fact that we are made the righteousness of God in Christ has a bearing on what we read in 1 John 2:1:

14. *The Bible Treasury* 19:377n. See also his *Notes on 2 Corinthians*, *in loco*.

15. {The word "Christ" is in the older Morrish edition. No doubt it was mistakenly omitted in the newer edition.}

16. *Collected Writings* 30:60.

17. *Collected Writings* 23:260.

We have, there, a standing witness of righteousness and of propitiation. This is because Christ is there, and He is both. Then, in 1 John 2, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," etc. Christ is our righteousness, and so all is settled; if it were not, we should have sins imputed to us, but we stand in Him as our righteousness before God, and He is there according to the value of His propitiation; then, if we fail, He takes up our cause there, and grace comes to deal with our hearts and spirits, to restore us, without our righteousness ever being touched. It is because our righteousness never can be touched that we can go on. This is not our highest place, which we have as members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones; in one word, as being "in Christ"; but it is the highest character of His grace now to help us when we are in weakness, and in infirmity. If God commended His love towards us, it is when we were sinners, and as we learn this, we joy in God; He loved us when there was nothing in us to love. The grand testimony to absolute divine love is that God loved sinners. Well, it is the same way as to the graciousness of God. The grace of Christ is not, after all, our highest place; but it is the highest place of Christ. It makes us little and Christ great. To be put into Christ makes us great.¹⁸

The reader should read the article, "Divine Righteousness," in *Collected Writings*, vol. 10.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 2 COR. 5:21 AND ROMANS

We have observed previously that it is a mistake to import 2 Cor. 5:21 into the treatment of the righteousness of God in Romans. This is again emphasized here in the words of A. H. Rule:

Here it is not the believer accepted according to Christ's work, as in Rom.6, nor yet Christ, the righteousness of the believer before God; but it is the believer *becoming* the righteousness of God in Him. It is what he *becomes* in Christ. It is *in* Christ, not *apart* from Him. Christ is the perfect expression of God's character. Christ on the throne is the expression of God's righteousness there. So the Holy Spirit convicts the world of righteousness because He had gone to the Father (John 16). It was righteous in God to set Him on the throne, and He is there as the expression of that righteousness. But the believer through grace is *in* Him, and looked at as a part of Himself, so that he also becomes the expression of God's righteousness in Him. "As He is, so are we in this world." What marvelous grace! Made the righteousness of God in Him! This is of God. God made Christ the expression of what we are. He made Him to be sin on the cross. What are we but a mass of sin? And God made Christ the expression of this, in order that in Christ He might make us the expression of Himself in His character of righteousness. How manifest this will be when we are in the glory! Christ is the pattern of what we will be then. "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." "What a glorious position now belongs to the believer in the righteousness of God in

18. *Notes and Jottings*, p. 244

virtue of Christ's work! Surely it calls for praise and adoration from these poor hearts of ours.¹⁹

NOT CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUS LAW-KEEPING

W. Kelly observed:

There prevails a notion (unknown to the Bible) that Christ was making out our righteousness when He was here below. Now the life of Christ was, I do not question, necessary to vindicate God and His holy law, as well as to manifest Himself and His love; but the righteousness that we are made in Christ is another thought altogether -- not the law fulfilled by Him, but the justifying righteousness of God founded on Christ's death, displayed in His resurrection, and crowned by His glory in heaven. It is not Christ simply doing our duty for us, but God forgiving my trespasses, judging my sin, yea, finding such satisfaction in Christ's blood that now He cannot do too much for us; it becomes, if I may so say, a positive debt to Christ, because of what Christ has suffered. It is not seen that the law is the strength of sin, not of righteousness. Had Christ only kept the law, neither your soul nor mine could have been saved, much less blessed, as we are. Whoever kept the law, it would have been the righteousness of the law, and not God's righteousness which has not the smallest connection with obeying the law. It is never so treated in the word of God. Because Christ obeyed unto death, God has brought in a new kind of righteousness -- not ours, but His own in our favour. Christ has been made a curse upon the tree; God has made Him sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Were the common doctrine on this subject true, we might expect it to be said, He obeyed the law for us, that we might have legal righteousness imputed or transferred to us. Whereas the truth is in all points contrasted with such ideas. Surely Christ's obeying the law was not God's making Him sin. So, in the passage that is so often used, "by His obedience many are made righteous." How is His obedience here connected with the law? The apostle does introduce the law in the next verse, as a new and additional thing, coming in by the way.²⁰

Christ Made unto Us Righteousness

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30).

Above we considered something of what the Christian is made -- in Christ. Here, we read of what Christ is made -- to the Christian.

THESE THINGS NOT IMPUTED

JND very tersely put down the idea of dragging imputation into this:

"Imputed" cannot be applied to all these words. If to any, it is not the subject

19. *Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule* 1:139, 140.

20. *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul, the Apostle, to The Ephesians*, London: Race, p. 104, n.d.

of this text. People talk of “imputed sanctification”; how about imputed redemption? What does that mean? I hope we shall get more than imputed redemption on going into glory! It is the kind and measure and standard of these things, and that is Christ, and He made them of God to us.²¹

GOD IS THE SOURCE

Of Him Are Ye in Christ Jesus. We are of God. It is of God we are in Christ Jesus. It is the result of sovereign grace, consistent with the righteousness of God. What we are before God, what we are of Him, is the result of His acting in accordance with His righteousness, acting upon us, as we saw when considering Rom. 3:21-26. “Of Him,” then, denotes the source of the blessing; and the blessing is “are ye in Christ Jesus.” Being in Christ Jesus, and what we are in Christ Jesus,” results from God Himself. Thus is man put down and God is everything.

Christ Jesus Has Been Made . . . From God. Not only do the words “of Him” direct our thoughts to God and His divine activity; so do these words that Christ has been made something, from God. All this comes from the heart of God. It is His good pleasure, and His good pleasure expresses itself through, and in, Christ.

So we have that which is of God, and that which is from God.

FOUR THINGS CHRIST HAS BEEN MADE TO US

Next we are told what Christ is made for us. Speaking generally, the Christian’s place before God is the place Christ has before God. *His place is our place.* He Himself is the measure of our place.

Concerning Wisdom. 1 Cor. 1 shows us the foolishness of man’s wisdom. It works against himself. Indeed, we read: “Christ God’s power and God’s wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:24). Man’s wisdom leads him to the pit, from which none escape. How different it is concerning the wisdom of God.

Not wisdom in the mind being acted upon and so I am wise about God, but “of him,” that is of God, “are ye in Christ Jesus.” I am of God, and I have my wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption of God, all in Christ. I am of God in Christ, and have all there of God in Christ. It comes from Him; it is not my thinking about Him. And so man is totally set aside, flesh is put down. The world by wisdom was not to know God, but I am in Christ as a new being, a new creature, created again; and I have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption all in Christ. These verses are a remarkably complete statement of what a Christian is, with full redemption itself at the end, body and all.²² ♦

Christ is divine “wisdom” for us: God has made foolish the wisdom of this

21. *Collected Writings* 31:177. See also 32:340.

22. *Collected Writings* 26:207.

world, but “we speak wisdom among them that are perfect.” He has “abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will.” (See Eph. 1:8-10.) The divine revelation of all God’s thoughts and intentions is in Christ; “the wisdom of God in a mystery,” which word means what only the initiated understand: as in Freemasonry, I do not know anything about it because I am not initiated.²³ ♦

In 1 Cor., chapter after chapter, the flesh in one form or another, is put down. In 1 Cor. 1, the wisdom of the flesh is shown in its true character; and in ch. 2 we see Paul excluding man’s wisdom from His ministry, for he spoke God’s wisdom in a mystery. Only God’s wisdom will do for us.

Concerning Righteousness.

True it is that Christ is our life, and that we have received a nature which in itself is sinless, and that, looked at as born of God, we cannot sin because we are born of God. It is a life holy in itself, as born of Him. But, besides that, we have the flesh, though we are not in it; and the practical result in respect of our responsibility as to the deeds done in the body does not, even if we have this new life, meet the just demands of God, if we should pretend to present them as doing so. That is, righteousness is not made out by our being born again. We need, and have, a perfect righteousness apart from our life, though in Him who is our life. Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. No soul can or ought to have solid settled peace in any other way. The whole perfection of Christ is that in which, without any diminution of its value, we are accepted. The delight of God in His obedience is that in which we are received. What we have done as children of Adam, He took on the cross in grace, and entirely put away. And what He did is our acceptance with God. It is needed for us, for otherwise we have no righteousness. It is a joy to us, because we enter, as immediate objects of it, into the delight which God has in His own Son.²⁴ ♦

Some have thought that, as Christ is made these things to us, the passage speaks of imputation. It does not, however. Imputed wisdom, or imputed redemption, has no sense; other passages do shew that imputation is true in the case of righteousness. But here the thought is not found; it is, that Christ gives the true character and reality of these things on the part of God . . .

Then we get “righteousness” -- the righteousness of God revealed on the principle of faith, so that we have no part in its accomplishment at all. Supposing you kept the law to a tittle, this would be man’s righteousness, not God’s. God’s righteousness is revealed in His setting Christ at His right hand, as in John 16 the Spirit convinces the world “of righteousness, because I go to my Father.” Christ having perfectly glorified God, it was due to Him on the part of God, to set Him in the glory, as He says: “He will straightway glorify him,” John 13:31, 32. “Sit thou at my right hand .” There was righteousness! but it was done for us; and, because this work of redemption was done for us, we get the result of it all. God

23. *Collected Writings* 32:339. See also 32:340.

24. *Collected Writings* 7:281.

is “just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus”; not “just and yet the justifier,” but just in justifying.

And it is a different kind of righteousness in which we stand. Man’s righteousness is the measure of the judgment; but the righteousness of God is the measure of my place before Him. What a poor sinner needs is that his sins should be met; and, thank God, they are met. But Christ has done more; He has glorified God. Where has God’s love been manifested? In the cross. Supposing He had cut off Adam and Eve, there would have been no love in it, though just. If He had passed over all sins simply, we should have called it love; it is what man calls mercy; but then it were no matter about righteousness. But, in Christ dying on the cross, I get all that is in God perfectly glorified; and therefore He puts the Man who did it into the divine glory.

He is “made unto us righteousness.” It is of faith that it might be by grace. A man may believe me when I tell him I have paid his debt, but his belief does not add one farthing to the payment. All the good comes to us, but all the glory comes to Him, and He is worthy of it. ²⁵ ◆

Concerning Holiness.

I will here add a word as to sanctification. Scripture speaks of it, as both absolute and progressive. Where it is connected with justification however, in spite of “the orthodox,” it precedes it in scripture. In its ordinary natural sense, it is absolute, and once for all. A vessel sanctified to God is set apart to Him simply and absolutely, and so is a person. We are saints by God’s calling. But as a man is a compound being, and the flesh is there as well as the new nature, there may be, and ought to be, practical progress in practically reducing it to subjection, and in the new man’s growing up to Him who is the Head, in all things. We are “sanctified in God the Father,” “sanctified by the word,” that is, set apart to God: so we are “washed, we are sanctified, we are justified,” where it precedes justification. So when it is said we are “sanctified unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” -- we are sanctified *unto* the blood of sprinkling. That it is not by the law is carefully brought out when it is said; Christ is “of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and *sanctification*, and redemption.” There, it may be said, it follows righteousness. I do not think it refers to application, but states what we are to hold as sanctification; but I make no resistance, as I think there is an intended order, though not a state described. The Spirit of God seems to me to be speaking of the first necessity as before God, righteousness; and then the actual result, as viewing the end of being actually before Him; and hence sanctification, the setting apart of the whole man according to what is in Christ Himself, is brought out afterwards; and then final delivery from our whole mortal state into glory, which is what I understand here by redemption.

In 1 Thess. 5:23, we get what may justly be called progressive sanctification -- “May the God of peace sanctify you wholly.” Again, Heb. 12:14, “Follow after holiness.” (See too 2 Cor. 3:18.) These fully justify speaking of progress in holiness, or practical setting apart of the heart and mind to God by its being

25. *Collected Writings* 32:340, 341.

filled with Christ, provided that the first truth be held of a primary setting apart, which is absolute and once for all, and that in the way of a new life, being born of God -- of water, and of the Spirit. If this be not held, sanctification becomes a mere gradual fitting of man as such for God, leaving out a new life, and denies that in that he is washed (*λελουμένος*) he needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit. ²⁶

Concerning Righteousness and Sanctification.

It is true that Christ has been given to us, made of God sanctification, and it is true that no human efforts can add to sanctification; but though on one side the life given by God is holy -- Christ is our life -- it is not the whole truth that we are accounted holy in Him. It is evident that the writer loves holiness, but the word speaks of following holiness (Heb. 12:14); it says, “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly.” The sanctification that I have in Christ is as perfect as the wisdom and righteousness. But the righteousness is always perfect as my righteousness; I possess it, and so I am the righteousness of God in Him. Could I say I am holiness, or I possess perfect holiness? God sees me in Christ perfectly righteous; He sees me, we can say, perfectly sanctified -- granted -- but, as to righteousness, there is no other righteousness before God but Christ. If I could have any other righteousness, I would not wish to have it; but I do desire holiness; I follow after holiness: could I follow after righteousness? God chastens us that we may be partakers of His holiness; this could not be said of His righteousness. There is, thus, a difference between sanctification and righteousness, although we have both in Christ. We are, as to our persons, sanctified in Christ, since we have the new life; but our state of soul may be bad or good, and we ought to follow holiness. If this be done before knowing the perfect righteousness of God, before being justified and knowing it, we are not really seeking sanctification, but justification, hoping that if we were more holy God would accept us. There is no true holiness until we have peace; after we get peace, holiness for its own sake is the desire of the soul. We must certainly first of all go to Christ, that is not the question, but what we are to do when we have gone to Him, and have found peace. That we have received an entirely new life, which ought to be developed, and the activities of the heart in prayer, in the use of the means given by God, are things often forgotten when sanctification is spoken of. ²⁷

Concerning Redemption.

Then there is “redemption.” He is “made unto us redemption,” which is the full accomplishment, in full deliverance, of all God’s plans and counsels as to us; all these are in Christ. ²⁸

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

26. *Collected Writings* 10:77, 78.

27. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:74.

28. *Collected Writings* 32:341.

Answer to Questions on Women Praying

April 3, 2001

Dear sister in Christ,

You have asked four questions, remarking that:

This may be a subject that no one wants to talk about for fear of criticism since I've never seen any written ministry about it.

Many years ago, at a meeting for the reading of the Scriptures, I saw A. C. Brown for, perhaps the second time. I was looking down at my Bible when I became conscious of a prolonged hush in the meeting. Looking up, I saw brother Brown wiggling forward bit by bit in his seat until he got so close to the edge I thought he would fall off. But stopping just in time, from the edge of his seat he looked around the room at the saints and then announced very distinctly and clearly:

WE ARE NOT HERE TO PLEASE EVERYONE.

It made a great impression on me and I rejoiced in anticipation of hearing some needed words. In the spirit of this, I will attempt to answer your four questions.

1. Are women's scheduled prayer meetings Scriptural?

Your first question is interestingly worded in that you say, "scheduled prayer meetings," because that raises a question about sisters' prayer meetings that might be irregularly held. But that might not have been in your mind.

If a few sisters were visiting together and an exercise arose to pray about some matter that was of concern to them, that would be far different than holding prayer meetings, whether on a scheduled basis or an irregular basis.

What is the motive for having any 'sisters' prayer meetings'? Do they not say "amen" in the assembly prayer meetings? Is it the case that matters have to be stated to God in some certain way that some sisters think it should be, and brothers are not doing it right? Does Rom. 8:26 have a bearing on that?

I have heard that there have been occasions where a prayer meeting was held on one floor, by brothers, and a sisters' prayer meeting on another floor. So that makes two prayer meetings. Does that double the power of prayer? (Nor is either an assembly prayer meeting.) My own thought is that such doings work towards weakening general faithfulness. It seems to me that it is a subtle facet of the Christian women's liberation movement, furthering this with a cover of piety.

J. N. Darby remarked:

I think I have found that typically viewed the woman represents a condition, and a man rather the action in the condition and conduct if you please (*Collected Writings* 19:95).

It seems to me that holding women's prayer meetings indicates a condition that needs to be brought before God in prayer so that He would come in for us to be satisfied with the provisions found in Scripture.

It may be said that all the brothers agree that it is alright, so it must be alright. Well, if they all said it was wrong, then it must be wrong. Is that how such things are settled? If the brothers said it was alright that would indicate "the action in the condition and conduct." It is public sanction of what is really divisive in thrust.

Moreover, what effect does it have upon children of Christian parents to observe such things? Does it strengthen the family? Does it bring before their minds the importance of the assembly and of assembly prayer? Does it help them to see the truth of the one flock (John 10)? Or, does it tend to foster groupings in the one flock?

We may also note the bearing of 1 Tim. 2:8 on this question:

I will therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up pious hands, without wrath or reasoning.

Of course there is nothing similar said about women praying in every place, as I am sure you are aware. It is instructive that what we have in the next verses follows upon the matter in v. 8. Verse 8 shows us that it is the man that has the public place (as do other Scriptures) and the following verses show us that the woman does not have the public place. Rather, her place before God, according to His ordering, is a non-public place, in which her "modesty and discretion" should be in evidence by the proper adornment mentioned in vv. 9, 10. And v. 11 says:

Let a woman learn in quietness in all subjection . . .

What kind of subjection? *all* subjection. The subject heart finds out what that is that pleases the Lord. And instead of "quietness" we see much *restlessness*, and I think that restlessness is at the bottom of "women's scheduled prayer meetings."

2. Does Scripture teach that wives can pray audibly with their Christian husbands?

This is a matter between the husband and wife. If the husband objected to her praying, she ought not to do so as being in the subject place. She ought to be covered whether or not she audibly prays, just as in her private prayer. The husband addresses God. She is included in that address to God. Will she say Amen, indicating her joining in prayer (even though not audible)? A wife may not feel free to pray audibly with her husband. I believe a husband should respect that.

3. Does Scripture teach that wives can pray audibly with their Christian husbands *and* children together?

. . . the families that call not on thy name . . . (Jer. 10:25).

The remarks under 2. apply here also. It is well to have family prayer and that can be done whether or not the wife prays audibly. Certainly 1 Tim. 2:8 includes the family, and so the head of the house should have family prayer.

This also brings up the subject of a widow, or deserted woman, with children. The family may not have a husband and father, but the family has the privilege of calling on the name of the Lord. I would expect that a sister in Christ would pray with her children, as the normal thing.

4. Is only closet prayer taught in Scripture for women?

I am not aware of Scripture teaching that. What is taught in Scripture is that the woman does not have a public place and that she is under man's headship. Various questions continually arise about this, and that is well when there is a seeking of the Lord's mind, as you are doing. But often it is a chafing under what is considered an unwanted restraint. So, just as in the case with many men, women also wish to be free of restraint from the Word, instead of cultivating a submissive heart of obedience. The Lord Jesus *never* pleased Himself!

* * * * *

I am sorry I cannot give you "chapter and verse" for every thought, but I do think that a soul bent on subjection to the mind of God finds guidance in the Word. Take an example. The question gets asked, How long is "long hair?" in 1 Cor. 11:14. That can be asked to please oneself, of course. The subject soul will find out.

With love in Christ,

Ed.

Pharaoh's Second Attempt

His second attempt is much more adroit . . . He says, "I will let you go. Only ye shall not go very far away." Now that seems a fair enough proposal. Why should one travel farther than is needful? and who is to determine the precise distance? All distance is relative. Reasoning thus the soul will find itself settled in a new Haran, on a kind of border land of spiritual life, a land of earthly worship and fleshly associations; a land of doubt and danger. It is a poor condition when a man shall say, "How near can I live to the world without being involved in its judgments?" "Is it wrong to do this?" "It cannot be much harm to do that." When he says -- not "*May* I," but "*Must* I do such a thing for the Lord?" it is a poor condition and a dangerous position: like walking on the edge of a precipice to see how near you can go without falling in. An eccentric man engaging a coachman asked some of the candidates how near they could drive to the edge of an adjacent cliff. Some of them said they could go within the breadth of a threepenny bit. At last came one who said he would go as far away

from it as ever he could: this one was instantly engaged.

To these two Machiavellian propositions the Seer, "firm to resolve, stubborn to endure," makes answer with that calm dignity which gives far more evidence of an inflexible purpose than all the tempestuous wrath which has been shown against him. "We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as He shall command us." That is the shortest distance that must separate Israel from Egypt: *three days* -- death and resurrection. "Three days' journey" carried them to the other side of the Red Sea -- that Red Sea where God's righteousness is vindicated; where Justice strikes and Mercy saves. It is the type of the Cross, where in an infinitely larger sense judgment was executed and salvation was accomplished; and which ends for the disciple the course of Egypt, and begins that of the wilderness. In that Cross the world is crucified to him and he to it.

The Bible Treasury 17:240.

On the Doctrine of Balaam

(Rev. 2:14)

It is a very blessed thing, and a great relief to the saints in Christ, that the path of His sheep is so simple in the mercy and goodness of God. On the one hand there is Christ, Whose voice they know, and Whom they follow as their good shepherd: on the other hand there are strangers, however numerous and various, whose voice they do not know, and whom they will not follow. And the simplest way to detect a stranger's voice is by its contrariety to that of the Good Shepherd.

But while in the knowledge of Christ as our shepherd, strangers, as such, are detected, yet for their particular judgment as they arise and are about to arise, as also for the further security of the saints, it has seemed well unto God to designate them and their followers under sundry characters.

It is rather in connection with the actual necessities and trials of the saints that these things are brought out, than as subjects of profit apart from those trials.

It does not appear the way of God either to dwell upon corrupt evils which do not lie in the way of His saints, or to omit those by which they are in some way endangered, though the reverse of this course sometimes pleases the flesh and leaves the conscience undisturbed.

To dwell on the pure doctrine of Christ is very sweet and comforting to those who know and love Him. Not so with false doctrines and evil people; yet the faithful testimony of the word of Christ about it is wholesome and needful, and the presenting of that testimony may be a service of love ministered in due

season, and the fruit of such righteousness may be very peaceful.

Personal feelings should not be allowed to hinder from a course of faithfulness to Christ.

When He addressed the declining churches in Rev. 2 and 3, He first acknowledged and commended the good that was there; but He did not overlook the bad of which His servants stood in need of warning or reproof. And as to the circumstances connected with that need, it is to be remarked in the addresses to those seven churches, that the two churches which are not spoken to as assailed by certain special evil persons are the two worst -- the church in Sardis, which had a name to live and was dead, and the church in Laodicea, which was lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot. In those churches where the Spirit of the Lord was most in energy, there the wicked one stirred up a counter energy in special positive opposers: there were those who said they were apostles and were not; there were the Nicolaitanes, whose deeds were worthy of being hated; there were those who said they were Jews and were not -- those who held the doctrine of Balaam, and that woman Jezebel who called herself a prophetess.

I would now make a few remarks connected with the doctrine of Balaam and those who hold it, having long desired to do so, and believing such to be one of the special trials of the saints through the power of the enemy and the work of the flesh in this place (Demerara).

It is important to notice in the addresses to the church in Pergamos, that Christ does not charge those that hold fast His name with also holding fast the doctrine of Balaam; neither does He give any credit to those who hold fast²⁹ the doctrine of Balaam for holding fast His name also: but He totally disconnects the two parties.

In the doctrine of Balaam there is a strange voice, and Christ's sheep will not own it. "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers."

He blames His own people for allowing the others among them at all. "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold (or hold fast) the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." "Repent; or else I am coming unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:14-16). He says, "I am coming unto thee, and will fight (not against thee, but) against them."

As to the doctrine itself, it is "the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balak." It is not the case of a man overtaken in a fault; nor is it the case of those who

29. The Greek word is the same for "holding fast" Christ's name, and for "holding" the doctrine of Balaam. The word signifies "to hold fast."

having committed sin are ready to confess and mourn over it as sin in the presence of the Lord; but it is the case of those who hold fast sin in the shape of a doctrine. This is a very important distinction. It is the doctrine of Balaam, though I do not believe that those who held it made an open acknowledgment of Balsam in it any more than the Jews did of their father the devil, when they were doing his works and boasting in the names of the children of Abraham and the children of God. But names cannot alter things.

The doctrine is the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. What is it to eat things sacrificed unto idols? Eating is an emblem of participation and communion. As to the idols, we know that covetousness is idolatry: and those things which do not minister to the glory of God, but which yet are delighted in because they minister to what an evil heart of unbelief puts its dependence on instead of putting it on God, are things sacrificed to idols. Therefore, while the scriptures teach that the love of money is the root of all evil, the doctrine of Balaam teaches the very opposite, that it not only is no harm at all, but that it is prudent and praiseworthy. The Scripture also teaches that women should adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works (see 1 Tim. 2:9, 10). Such is the doctrine of the sacred scriptures; but whose doctrine is it that teaches that if women acted thus, they would be neglecting their future prospects in life, and that as for this shamefacedness and sobriety, that at least it is not to be valued, but that brodered hair, gold, pearls, and costly array are, more or less, proper adornments? Whose doctrine is this? Is it the doctrine of Christ? But then a person may say, We can hold the doctrine of Christ too. But what does Christ say to His servants? 'I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.' The holders of this doctrine might like to be among those who held Christ's name: but Christ does not allow it. He tells His servants that He is coming to fight against the holders of this doctrine; and that they cannot have such among them.

In the teaching of this doctrine there is also taught to commit fornication. What! Is this a doctrine taught? Yes! It is the doctrine of Balaam, though it may be in a more refined form to deceive, the world. I would here quote the words of Christ in Matt. 5:27, 28, marking that it is the doctrine of Balaam that sets those words aside, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." The doctrine of Balaam may say that this is no harm, that it is quite innocent. But it need not be said to the faithful in Christ Jesus, "Do not hold such doctrine," yet it may be needful to say, "Have no fellowship with those who

hold it." Christ is coming to fight against them with the sword of His mouth. If you have an ear to hear, hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

I will quote a few scriptures, most important to those who would take heed of the heaven of this doctrine.

Heb. 13:4. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." In what connection does this scripture stand? It comes as a solemn warning against the flesh after the saints had been called to such services of grace, as brotherly love continuing, entertaining strangers, feeling bound with those in bonds: but lest the flesh should come in under the pretext of preserving the continuance of brotherly love, or of the kindly hospitality of entertaining strangers, or of tender sympathy with those in bonds, the apostle immediately adds, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." The doctrine of Balaam in connection with a formal but false profession of Christ, would make a pretext of brotherly love or christian hospitality for unclean liberties, which even in the world would not be allowed.

1 Tim. 5:1, 2. "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity." To whom are these last words, "with all purity," referred? Let those who would judge the doctrine of Balaam see! The Spirit of God does not give a precept where it is not needed, neither does He withhold one where it is needed. It is the way of the flesh often to do the very reverse. Even Timothy needed this caution!

Titus 2:1-10. In this scripture Titus is instructed by the Apostle in reference to aged men, aged women, young women, young men, and servants; of these five divisions four only are immediately referred to Titus: one of them is not personally committed to him, but to the aged women!

Let the godly take warning in fear and trembling.

How often do aged sisters say, "I am not able to do anything for the Lord." This is a wrong word for any one who knows Him to say: but let the aged sisters know that their age and sex constitute them fit and proper persons to be servants for Christ in many things of great need to some of the exposed ones of His flock.

The godly should not make light of these reserves of manner and watchfulness in the sight of God who has by His Spirit given us the exhortations; and through His grace they will not do so. We will find the experience of every day vindicating the wisdom of God in such words, whether it be in the consistency of those who hold them though often sore beset with trials, or in the failure and breaking down of those who lightly esteem them.

Shocking must it be to those who tremble at God's word, and are the pure

in heart, who see Him by faith, to witness the sinful liberties that are too often to be met with under the excuses of "play." So it is play: but remember "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." And this Scripture is quoted by the apostle in warning to us, immediately before the Scripture of warning from the scene at Baal-Peor. "Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." In this Scripture they who hold the doctrine of Christ are warned against the deeds maintained in the doctrine of Balaam: for the saints need to watch against the flesh in those things which their spiritual judgments and consciences condemn.

One more reference to Scripture I would make in consequence of having heard it said, "Why do you make more of this sin than of any other?" An awful word! But the apostle says, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body [and in your spirit, which are God's]" (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

In Acts 15 the brethren were bid to abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. Why is fornication put here with other things? Because it is the offence to the church of God as blood would be to the Jews, or things offered to idols to the Gentiles: for the character of the church is that of a chaste virgin for Christ (2 Cor. 11:2, cp. Matt. 25:1, Rev. 19:7). And therefore, while in abstaining from things offered to idols, it would be for conscience not thine own but of another (1 Cor. 10); it would, on the other hand, be for conscience thine own in the fullest possible sense in abstaining from fornication of the slightest degree.

May His blessing attend those few remarks for Christ's sake and to His glory. Amen.

T. T., *The Bible Treasury* 17:46-48.