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God's Sovereignty and Glory in the Salvation of Lost Man

Chapter 5

God's Sovereignty in the Book of Romans

Man's Condition as Presented in Romans

A major division in the book of Romans occurs at the end of Rom. 5:11. Up to that point sins are dealt with. This is sins as actions and conduct. In Rom. 5:12 through Rom. 8, the subject is "sin in the flesh." This has to do with the root within us, i.e., the evil nature acquired through the fall. Much confusion results from not seeing the difference between *sin* in the flesh and *sins* produced from that root.

Concerning sins, in Romans man is looked at as alive in sins, and running from God as fast as he can (Rom. 1). The Jew is judged in Rom. 2. Rom. 3 concludes *all* under sin. In keeping with what we read in Luke 14:18:

And all began, without exception, to excuse themselves,
we read in Rom. 3:10-12:

There is not a righteous [man], not even one; there is not the [man] that understands, there is not one that seeks after God. All have gone out of the way, they have together become unprofitable; there is not one that practices goodness, there is not so much as one . . .

Old Testament saints had faith. If they had faith because of their human will, that would have been good, and would have pleased God (but see Rom. 8:8). But God implanted faith and life into souls during the trial of the first man in His fallen-Adam standing of responsibility, else there never would be a saint. The fact is that there was no initiative in man to seek after God.

Moreover, man is declared in Rom. 5:6 to be "still without strength." He is like the woman in Luke 13 who was bound down and in need of the Lord's intervention of sovereign grace. And have you ever wondered why the word "still" is in the sentence? God had tested man under varied circumstances up to and including the revelation of the Father in the Son (John 15:24). Man had every opportunity to show he had strength toward God. But after all the opportunity under trial he was shown to be "still without strength."

Concerning sin in the flesh, it is plain from reading Rom. 6 and 7 that man is in bondage to the law of sin and death. A law is a fixed principle of operation.

And man is under the power of the law of sin that is within himself and is a slave of sin. He is morally bound regarding God. His will is controlled by the law of sin working in himself. Hence we have in this section death with Christ. Sins are forgiven, but forgiveness does *not* apply to a *nature*, in particular to the old nature. God's does not forgive the old nature. But I, as identified with the old nature, in responsible Adamic standing (as fallen), can be removed from before God by the death of Christ and then I may be identified with the new position before God:

So also ye, reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11).

Romans looks at the sinner as *alive in sins* and needing death to effect deliverance from "the law of sin," and then being alive in Christ Jesus. We have died with Christ and now reckon ourselves to be *alive unto God*. In Eph. 2 the sinner is looked at as **dead** in trespasses and sins and in need of **quickening**. They are both true views and the doctrines of Romans and of Ephesians are complementary in character. We may not set some Scripture against the fact presented in Eph. 2 and complain, "How can a dead man believe?" Face it! He cannot, and therefore he is in need of the quickening power of God, Who implants faith and a new nature. Physically dead Lazarus also could not hear. But the voice of power of the Son of God gave him hearing. These things are the operations of God.

A "Called Apostle" Wrote to "Called Saints"

But we *do* know that all things work together for good to those who are called according to purpose (Rom. 8:28).

EFFECTUAL CALLING IS DIVINE AND NON-CONTINGENT

There is a call of invitation, as we saw in the parable of the great supper. Many were invited, but all, without exception, made excuse. This is seen in the following Scripture:

For many are called ones, but few chosen ones (Matt. 22:14; see 20:16).

The chosen ones are those brought and compelled in the parable of the great supper. The call of invitation is the call of the gospel to come to Christ. None do so except God sovereignly intervenes. The call of invitation is in contrast to the effectual calling of divine sovereignty. By "effectual calling" is meant the choice of God that is divine, non-contingent upon man's will, and effective in its operation producing the intent of God that the person be saved. Let us consider the apostle Paul as an example, being a called apostle:

Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ, [a] called apostle, separated to God's glad tidings . . . (Rom. 1:1).

The meaning is that Paul was an apostle by divine calling. He had nothing to say about it. The Lord made him an apostle, a gift to the body (Eph. 4:8-11). Men speak of being "called" by a church to be its "minister" (a thing foreign to Scripture and subversive of its teachings on ministry) but *calling* in Scripture has nothing to do with what men and "churches" do. The apostle Paul also has told us

this about himself:

But when God, who set me apart [even] from my mother's womb, and called [me] by his grace . . . (Gal. 1:15).

Concerning calling, Paul was personally called to know Christ as savior. Thus the called apostle wrote to the Roman saints as being "called saints."

. . . among whom are ye also [the] called of Jesus Christ: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints (Rom. 1:6, 7).

"Called saints" does not mean that they are to be referred to as saints.¹ It is vastly more than that. They are saints by calling. This does not mean merely that they were called in the sense of being invited to become saints. The call of God constituted them saints. They were saints by virtue of His call, just as Paul was an apostle by virtue of God's call. It is not a question of manner of life (that is an additional consideration) but of position before God. Saints are 'holy ones' positionally. How they answer in practice to this standing is another matter.

"Those Who Are Called According to Purpose"

CALLED ACCORDING TO PURPOSE

In contrast to the general call of invitation noted in Matt. 20:16, here in Rom. 8:28 we have the effectual call, the *call according to purpose*. This text is a comfort to many a saint in trial. It asserts the control of God over circumstances in which the believer finds himself, not by accident but by the God of circumstances. And, he sees that he is one who is "**called according to purpose** {*ρπόθεσιν*}." "Purpose" is used also in Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11; and in 2 Tim 1:9 concerning God's effectual intention. This *calling* is a sovereignly forged link in the unbreakable chain of Rom. 8:30. This *calling* flows from God's purpose. This calling gives effect to God's purpose. Our calling has a number of features, or characters, or aspects, to it, one of which is stated in 2 Tim. 1:9:

. . . who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to [his] own purpose and grace, which [was] given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time . . .

The point is not only the non-contingent purpose and grace (true as that is) but also

1. In his introduction to the Vevay NT (French) J. N. Darby wrote:

The equivocal meaning of the word "call," which signifies alike "to give a name," or "to invite a person to come to us, or into some position," makes the use of this word difficult when it is attached to the term "saint" or "apostle." In the absence of a better expression we have nevertheless retained it. Rom. 1:6, 7; 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:1, 2, 24; Jude 1; Rev. 17:14. To translate it, as has been done, by "called [to be] saints," is to pervert the sense; "who are called saints" is still worse. To give the exact meaning, it should be said "saints by call," the persons in question having become saints by the call of God; and the reader will do well to remember this in the passages we have named (*Collected Writings* 13:197).

how calling is linked -- named here "a **holy calling**." Well, certainly it is implicitly a holy calling, since God's effectual call is necessarily holy; and, accordingly, "called saints" are 'called holy ones' as to standing before Him. How we reflect the holy calling in our walk is another question and a matter for which we shall give an account of ourselves to God (Rom. 14:12). Considering the tracing of the development of evil in Christendom in 2 Timothy, the reminder that the calling is a holy calling will be seen to be very appropriate in view of such defiling conditions and associations from which we are to be separate. That it *is* a holy calling is consistent with God's sovereign purpose.

In Hebrews it is a "**heavenly calling**" (Heb. 3:1). These Hebrew saints had been accustomed to the thought of an earthly calling as Israelites.

The calling is also a **calling on high** (Phil. 3:14). Thinking of vv. 1, 2, 18, 19, the upward calling stands in stark contrast with boasting in the flesh and glorying in shame. Such aspects of our calling are instructive. It is well to trace the word calling in Scripture as applied to our effectual calling by God, to consider all the things that God speaks of as consistent with our calling. Such truth is meant to act upon our walk.

There is also "the **hope of his calling**" and "what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). Observe that it is "his calling." The calling takes its character from Him, as does the inheritance, as J. N. Darby noted:

We find, it appears to me, the two things which, in the previous part of the chapter, we have seen to be the saint's portion -- the hope of the calling of God, and the glory of His inheritance in the saints. The first is connected with vv. 3-5, that is, our calling; the second, with v. 11, that is, the inheritance. In the former we have found grace (that is, God acting towards us because He is love); in the latter, the glory -- man manifested as enjoying in His Person and inheritance the fruits of the power and the counsels of God . . . By the calling of God we are called to enjoy the blessedness of His presence, near to Himself, to enjoy that which is above us. The inheritance of God applies to that which is below us, to created things, which are all made subject to Christ, with whom and in whom we enjoy the light of the presence of God near to Him. The apostle's desire is, that the Ephesians may understand these two things.²

This hope is referred to again in Eph. 4:3, designated "the hope of your calling." Eph. 4 begins the part of the epistle regarding the practice of the deep truths presented in the earlier part of the book. This is clear in Eph. 4:1 where we are exhorted to "walk **worthy of the calling** wherewith you have been called."

No doubt all saints in OT times, as now, have been called in some particular character, though the matter of calling was first brought out in Gen. 12 in

2. *Synopsis, in loco*.

Abraham's call. This matter is important but not our subject here.³ "Calling" has numerous aspects⁴ but we will not consider it all here. However, before passing on we should note 2 Pet. 1:3, 4, 10, 11.

(3) As his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue, (4) through which he has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of [the] divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

(10) Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure, for doing these things ye will never fall; (11) for thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you.

We are **called by glory and virtue** (v. 3). We notice here that all is given to us that pertains to life and godliness. The new birth is a new life and this is given to us by "divine power." The glory and virtue is His and it is by His glory that He has called us. This is meant to have an effect on our walk. Just so His calling us by His *virtue*. I suggest that this indicates God's *moral excellency*. In v. 4 we are made partakers of [the] divine nature (not partakers of deity). We partake of the moral features of God; yes, partakers of His moral excellency as having the divine nature. We have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. A call by such glory and such moral excellence is necessarily an effectual call, or else the glory and excellence are not worthy of God.

In v. 10 we are to "use diligence to **make your calling and election sure**." Why does the calling precede the election here? This exhortation follows upon what the apostle had said in vv. 5-9 concerning our walk, which in turn was said because we are partakers of [the] divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), i.e., we partake of the

3. See J. N. Darby's *Teachings Regarding Dispensations, Ages, and Administrations and the Two Parentheses*, available from the publisher.

4. For example, a question was answered in *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 5:64:

Q. What is the difference between the calling and the inheritance as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, from the same terms in the First Epistle of Peter?

A. The Apostle Paul was given to reveal the calling and the inheritance in all the height and depth, length and breadth of the glory of Christ, the Son and glorified man in the heavenlies, the Head over all things and Heir of all things, our portion one with Himself and joint-heirs with Him.

The Apostle Peter was inspired to present rather the Christian's heavenly calling and place, and God's family, His priests and kings, in contrast with Israel's hopes; and therefore to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance reserved in *the heavens* for those that are here, guarded by God's power through faith for the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. It is not a great mystery as in Eph. 5:32, respecting Christ and respecting the church; any more than the mystery of God's will and purpose (Eph. 1:9, 10) in setting Christ at the head of the universe heavenly and earthly, the inheritance in its fullest extent.

moral qualities of God. This should be displayed in our practical conduct, thus making our calling and election sure in our hearts and evidenced in our walk:

It is plain that the fresh appeal is to our state and consequent course and character of walk. The very order of the terms indicates this; for on the side of divine grace election according to scripture necessarily precedes calling. God's choice of the Christian is in eternity; as His calling of us is in time out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Pet. 2:9). So in the opening of the First Epistle the saints were said to be elect according to God the Father's foreknowledge; but it was in virtue of the Spirit's sanctification that they were separated unto the obedience and blood-sprinkling of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . The order is as clearly of God's grace; as that in our text, where calling comes before election, is of its actual application to man. And this is in keeping with the context which deals with the present moral government of souls . . .

Here Christian responsibility is pressed, that there should not be inconsistency in our ways. His calling like His election is a matter of sovereign grace, and admits no question. But the case is different when we hear of our calling and election. Here negligence disorders the walk, and compromises our profession of His name, takes away our joy and enfeebles or hinders our testimony, and all the more if our conscience be tender. The heart condemns us, as is said in 1 John 3:20; and how much more does God, who greater than our heart knows all things, and draws us into self-judgment, so that it should not condemn us!

Practical fidelity, then, is urged the more with diligence to make our calling and election sure; "for doing these things" which please God, and are His will concerning us, they are made firm to our enjoyment, instead of being loose and unstable by a careless state; and so one may add, they are to others who look for our ways agreeing with our words.⁵

Carrying out these things in our practical conduct, thereby giving expression to the divine nature God has planted within us,

thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be richly furnished to you (2 Pet. 1:11).

So walking in dependence and obedience, we give evidence first of all that God has called us. Then, also, it becomes apparent that He has chosen us (election) before the world was.

In 2 Pet. 1:3 we see that God called us *by* glory, not *to* glory. However, it is true that in a complementary way we are also **called to glory**:

. . . ye should walk worthy of God, who calls you to his own kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12).

But the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus . . . (1 Pet. 5:10).

Here are some wholesome words from J. N. Darby in keeping with the kingdom

5. W. Kelly, on 2 Peter, *in loco*.

and glory to which we are called:

If my assurance and comfort or hope be drawn from the experience of what passes within me, though it may be verified against cavils thereby, as in the first epistle of John, then it is not the righteousness of God by faith; for the experience of what passes in my soul is not faith. I repeat, that by looking to the work of Christ the standard of holiness is exalted; because, instead of looking into the muddled image of Christ in my soul, I view Him in the Spirit, in the perfectness of that glory into the fellowship of which I am called; and therefore, to walk worthy of God, who hath called me to His own kingdom and glory. I forget the things behind, and press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and my self-examination becomes, not an unhappy inquiry whether or not I am in the faith, never honoring God in confidence after all that He has done, but whether my walk is worthy of one who is called into His kingdom and glory. But the disconnection of Christ from the operations of the Spirit is an evil, and tends to the same point, though the application be not so immediate.

In the teaching of ordinary evangelicalism, a man is said to be “born of the Spirit,” its need perhaps shown from what we are, and its fruit shown, and the inquiry stated -- Are you this? for then you will go to heaven. These things have a measure of truth in them. But are they thus presented in Scripture? There I find these things continually and fully connected with Christ, and involving our being in that blessed One, and He in us; and consequently not merely an evidence by fruits that I am born of the Spirit of God, but a participation in all of which He is the Heir, as the risen man (in the sure title of His own sonship), as quickened together with Him -- a union of life and inheritance, of which the Holy Ghost is the power and witness.⁶

You get the word “worthy” in three ways. In Thessalonians, “Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” In Ephesians it is the same thing practically: “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Here, in Colossians, it is, “Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” Did He ever do His own will in anything? No, He did His Father’s. Are you content never to do your own will, but to take Christ’s will as that which is to be the spring and motive of all you do? Then communion is not interrupted; and it is joy and blessing beyond all human thought. You say, “Am I never to do what I like?” Like! Do you like not to be always with Christ? This detects the workings of the flesh.⁷

CONSIDER YOUR CALLING, BRETHREN

Since we are considering our calling here, we should refer to 1 Cor. 1:26-29:

(26) For consider your calling, brethren, that [there are] not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many high-born. (27) But God has chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may put to shame the wise; and

6. *Collected Writings* 3:76, 77.

7. *Collected Writings* 21:354.

God has chosen the weak things of the world, that he may put to shame the strong things; (28) and the ignoble things of the world, and the despised, has God chosen, [and] things that are not, that he may annul the things that are; (29) so that no flesh should boast before God.

“Not many” leaves room for *some* wise, etc., to be called. God has so worked the matter that “no flesh should boast before God.” It is not the supposed moral free will towards God that has secured the result “that no flesh should boast before God.” Here may be a good place to draw attention to a prayer that C. H. Spurgeon proposed as suitable for those who believe in such free will:

An Arminian on his knees would pray desperately like a Calvinist. He cannot pray about free-will: there is no room for it. Fancy him praying, ‘Lord, I thank Thee I am not like those poor Calvinists. Lord, I was born with a glorious free-will; I was born with power by which I can turn to thee myself; I have improved my grace. If everybody has done the same with their grace that I have, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know thou dost not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. Thou givest grace to everybody; some do not improve it, but I do. There are many that will go to hell as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was; they had as much of the Holy Spirit given to them; they had as good a chance, and were as much blessed as I am. It was not thy grace that made us to differ; I know it did a great deal, still I turned the point; I made use of what was given me, and others did not -- that is the difference between me and them.’ That is a prayer for the devil, for nobody else would offer such a prayer as that. Ah! When they are preaching and talking slowly, there may be wrong doctrine; but when they come to pray, the true thing slips out; they cannot help it. (*Freewill-- A Slave*).

In chapter after chapter in 1 Cor., the Apostle strikes down some aspect of the working of the flesh in the carnal Corinthians. In chapter 1 he does so using the character of God’s calling. But persons vaunt their alleged free will anyway. In 1 Cor. 2 the Apostle tells those so called by God about the incapacity, the inability, of the natural man to receive the things taught by the Spirit:

(12) But *we* have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which [is] of God, that we may know the things which have been freely given to us of God: (13) which also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, communicating spiritual [things] by spiritual [means]. (14) But [the] natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know [them] because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:12-14).

“He cannot know [them] because they are spiritually discerned.” God communicates, implants, the capacity to know spiritual things. Claiming to recognize within ourselves free moral will towards God does not come from spiritual discernment when we consider our calling. Rather, we fall on our knees and thank God for His sovereign grace to us.

Romans 8:29-30

Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be [the] firstborn among many brethren. But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified (Rom. 8:29, 30).

Those spoken of here are the “called according to purpose” (v. 28).

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

W. Kelly noted:

Election is to fitness for His presence with a nature like His own. Predestination is to a relationship, as like as possible to His Son's.⁸

This distinction is very important to observe. Why? Because there may be saints who are equally elect but are not predestinated to the same thing. For example, the OT saints (holy ones), as elect, are fit for God's presence with a nature like His own, as having been born again. They were children of God (John 11:52; Rom. 9:7; Gal. 4:3) -- though that was not a *revealed* ground of relationship in the OT while the fallen first man had a standing under probation. However, OT saints were not predestinated to the place *we* have *in Christ*. Moreover, the church will have an eternally distinct place (Eph. 3:21). Saints in the millennium are also among the elect. When we consider Eph. 1:4, 5 we will find the above distinction applicable. In Eph. 1:4 we are holy and blameless; we are fit for God's presence, as having a *nature* like His own. However, we observe a distinctive feature in the election of the Christian: “chosen us in him.” Moreover, in Eph. 1:5 we will see predestination to *sonship*, a special relationship for Christians that gives them the Beloved's place before the Father.⁹

It is also important to keep in mind that in Scripture the word predestination is never used in connection with the eternally lost. The word predestination when used regarding persons is used in connection with a place of blessing before God.

FOREKNOWN AND PREDESTINATED

Comparison of Rom. 8 and Eph. 1. J. N. Darby observed:

The object of Eph. 1 and Rom. 8 is I think clearly to show what we are predestinated to, but when it says predestinated us, it is hard to say it does not refer to persons: “Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate.” Now this shows that in the main the object was to teach what they were predestinated to,

8. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 6:104.

9. Is it not obfuscation to write as follows?

The terms predestination and election are used interchangeably in Scripture. The basic meaning is the same: to mark out beforehand for a special purpose and blessing (Dave Hunt, *What Love Is This?*, p. 219).

but then it is affirmed of the persons whom He foreknew, that is a distinct class of persons so foreknown¹⁰ -- not, predestinated those whom He foreknew would be conformed (which was the Arminian scheme); but those whom He foreknew He predestinated to be conformed. Election supposes a large number out of whom God chooses; and if we take it as eternal, or no time with God, still a number are in view out of whom a choice is made. Predestination is the proper purpose of God as to these individuals: even supposing there were no others, God had them in His mind -- surely for something, which is thus as we see connected with it; but it is a blessed idea that God had His mind thus set on us without thinking of others. “The good pleasure of his will” is connected with it, and if we ascribe it to grace that we are elect, that thought, though we stop in it, does suppose others. We are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” . . .

The main object of the apostle in both Ephesians and Romans are those that are members of the church, but the passages do not go into church privileges as such, but children's and brethren's place. Election properly is more in Eph. 1:4, and in v. 5 the peculiar place belonging to these {i.e., predestination to}; and in both, though the principle go beyond, the apostle is speaking actually only of us: not that I exclude others, but these were then occupying the apostle's mind. He is always practical. Rom. 8:28-30 does not say us. In v. 31 he begins with us: it is applied.

It thus involves and supposes the persons as you say -- “not persons, but rather the state and conditions to which they are brought”; but then “they” are persons, and some special ones. Now in Ephesians he only actually speaks of

10. James Moffat, *Predestination*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, p. 7 (n.d.), holding moral free will towards God, after writing about foreknowledge, election, and predestination, rejects the thought that the reference is to a distinct class of persons so foreknown:

The lack of deliberate intention to foreknow comes out better in Rom. 8:29. When it is translated, as it should be, thus -- “For whom He *foreknew* them also He did predestinate.” There was no prompting or extraordinary working of His selective will. According to His own attribute, He foreknew them by the ordinary process of His own prescience, from which no future thing could hide itself or be hid.

What this quotation means is that the teaching of the text is this: ‘In accordance with *what* He foreknew he did predestinate.’ That would be “the ordinary process of His own prescience . . .” We do not deny God's omniscience and prescience, but do affirm His foreknowledge of *persons* as in Christ, a class of persons -- and that is the result of, to use his words, the “working of His selective will.” For this class of persons, i.e., Christians, foreknowledge, election, predestination, and calling are interlocked in God's sovereign purpose. Thus, we are “called according to purpose” (Rom. 8:28). In Eph. 1:11 we read: “. . . in whom {i.e., in Christ} we have also obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will.” The “counsel of his own will” excludes other wills. His *own* will is not contingent upon man's supposed moral free will towards God. “So then [it is] not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy” (Rom. 9:16).

“us”: in Romans it is general . . . ¹¹

Everyone Foreknown Christian is also Predestinated to be Conformed to the Image of His Son.

Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son . . . (Rom. 8:29).

It is a fact that not everyone is predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. This means that God has not foreknown those who die in their sins. How is it that God does not foreknow them? Does He not foreknow all? Does he not foreknow all in advance? The answer is that the text does not refer to God's omniscience and prescience, ¹² to His knowing everything, else all persons would end conformed to the image of His Son. It is very important to note that this text tells us that *all* foreknown are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. This is a particular and discriminatory foreknowledge of *persons*: *whom* he has foreknown. Every foreknown person is predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. He is foreknown *in Christ*.

The use of the word foreknown in regard to the salvation of souls is not that God knows everything ahead of time. It does not mean that He has foreknowledge (prescience) of everyone. The words “whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son” are discriminatory and selective. It is a selection of persons that are said to be foreknown by Him. Moreover, we do not read, “whose faith he has foreknown.” That may be the way an advocate of moral free will towards God may read it, but that is not what the text states. The “called according to purpose” (Rom. 8:29) are those “foreknown” in v. 30. Again, “*whom* he has foreknown” is not the same as saying ‘*what* He foreknew.’ Foreknowledge of persons, select persons, is not about what God would see them do; it is about knowing them, foreknowing them, in the place

11. Letters 1:476.

12. Here is Dave Hunt's view:

To foreknow is simply to know in advance and can't legitimately be turned into anything else . . .

Clearly what God foreknew would be the response of certain persons to the gospel was the *reason* for electing/ predestinating them to the blessings reserved for the redeemed (*What Love Is This?*, p. 226, 227).

He has made foreknowledge to mean the same thing as God's general omniscience, God's prescience. But he has here, in effect, confined this foreknowledge to a select group -- those who would believe, a thing read into the passage. But in fact *it actually is* a select group, namely those sovereignly, unconditionally, elected. The truth is that foreknowledge is not used in the same way that we think of God's general omniscience.

Besides that obfuscation, his obfuscation concerning the distinction between election and predestination (cited in a note above) is carried into various points that he makes, as we see here when he says “election/predestination.” They are not the same thing. We shall see below how the distinction is true also in some cases of God's *knowing*.

for which His purpose has destined them; *in Christ*. Perhaps 1 Pet. 1:20 may help us to see this:

. . . Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of [the] world . . .

This has nothing to do with any such thing as if God ‘looked down the avenue of time’ to see what Christ would do, and then God would do such and such contingent on what He saw Christ would do. In Chapter 7 of this series we will see from 1 Peter that Christ and the Christian are bound up together in the same bundle of divine sovereignty regarding “election,” “chosen,” and “foreknown.” All three words are used of Christ and of the Christian in 1 Peter. The fact that these words are used of Christ gives a character to them such that we need to keep that character in mind when looking at the application of these words to the Christian. Not only do these things have nothing to do with the imagined moral free will of man towards God, they are strikingly in opposition to the notion. God's (1) purpose, (2) foreknowledge, (3) election/choosing, (4) predestination, and (5) calling according to purpose are in no way contingent upon man's will.

Rom. 8:29, 30 presents to us an unbreakable chain forged in the irresistible will of God. The chain reaches from eternity to eternity, if we may so speak. Beginning with foreknowledge of persons, it ends with glorification of those persons. Yes, we are not yet actually glorified, but the text states explicitly that we *are* glorified. So is it the fact in the mind of God. It is all accomplished in the divine point of view. And this is meant to command our faith, resting on what God has declared, knowing thus the certainty of our being in the glory above.

God's Foreknowledge of Israel. Since we are considering foreknowledge, rather than consider the case of Israel later, we will look at it here. The selective and discriminatory character of foreknowledge is seen also in Rom. 11:2:

God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew {προέγνω}.

Did God merely look down the avenue of time and see that Israel would believe? We know what the history of that people was and that of old there was an election among them. The nation is presently set aside, though there are presently Jews called “an election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). But God is not done with Israel as a nation. His dealing with Israel has two phases. The first was dealing with them in responsibility, in Adamic standing, under the law. The last phase is when all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26). Do you really dream that every last one of them will be righteous because they all decided to exercise their alleged moral free will towards God? They will all be saved in the millennium when His purpose for them will be realized. But why will they all be saved?:

According as it is written, the deliverer shall come out of Zion: he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26).

Giving my laws into their mind, I will write them also upon their hearts (Heb. 8:10).

Thy people also shall be all righteous (Isa. 60:21).

Rom. 11:26 shows that God will sovereignly undertake it to do this. Heb. 8:10

refers to divine implantation into them. Isa. 60:21 indicates the result. In connection with this we may read Amos 3:2:

You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.

The selectiveness of God's *knowing* is quite clear here, just as is His *foreknowledge* of them noted in Rom. 11:2. Did God in His omniscience and prescience not know the other nations? Yes, of course. But that is not the teaching we have here. That is not the sense in which "You only have I known" is used here. "Known" is used in accordance with the character of "foreknowledge" that we have been observing. The same is true of Rom. 11:2. His foreknowledge of Israel was selective and discriminatory. See also Deut. 4:37.

Comparing the present situation of the believing Jews with the 7000 in Elijah's day, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, Paul wrote:

Thus, then, in the present time also there has been a remnant according to the election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

We see from the word *also* that those 7000 represented an election according to grace. Thus, *within the nation* of Israel there was an election of grace. The election of the 7000 was not a corporate election, or rather a national election, as it should be called. It was an election of individuals. There is now such an election of grace and those who compose it now are also members of the body of Christ. There shall be a remnant during the 70th week of Dan. 9 also. The *elect nation* shall not come into existence as such before the appearing of Christ in glory. But before that appearing, and after the removal of the church, there will be elect persons among the Jews. They are designated as "elect" in Matt. 24:22, 24, 31. Any of the elect who are not martyred during that period, and do not die, shall form the nation of Israel when the deliverer comes out of Zion and turns away ungodliness from Jacob. Then *all Israel* will be saved (Rom. 11:26). They shall all be righteous (Isa. 60:21). They are all elect (Isa. 65:22). The ungodly will have been removed (Ezek. 20; Zech. 14).

Rom. 9:5 states that the "adoption" is Israel's. This is a national adoption -- for the earth -- when Israel will have supremacy. They shall all be saved because the Deliverer will turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26). It is divine action that brings this about. The will of God will cause this to occur.

"Foreknew" in Rom. 11:2 is the same word as in Rom. 8:29 (but the word predestinate is not used here as there). He foreknows them as His people and that is why they will be His people. Israel's future place is sovereignly determined. In Rom. 11:25-36 we can see the greatness of God's sovereign control and sovereign mercy, for the gifts and calling of God are not subject to repentance and we ought to join the Apostle Paul in exclaiming:

(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 counselor? (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.

We Are Known of God. We are observing that the election of the believer is according to selective and particular foreknowledge of persons. It is not general omniscience and prescience. *Foreknowledge used in connection with this subject never means merely omniscience or prescience.*

This use of the word *know* is seen also in Matt. 7:23:

And then I will avow unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, workers of lawlessness.

These were not at one time sheep of Christ who were lost again; because, the Good Shepherd said:

I know those that are mine (John 10:14).

My sheep hear my voice and I know them (John 28).

If those professors of Matt. 7:23 had once been saved, He would have had to say, 'I knew you once, but I do not know you now.' Not only does the Good Shepherd know His sheep, in 1 Cor. 8:3 we read:

But if any one love God, *he* is known of him.

Though God is omniscient and knows all, this is a selective knowing just as His foreknowledge of persons is selective. Oh, you may say, we loved Him before He knew us. He looked down the avenue of time, saw that we would decide to love Him, and therefore He decided to know me. This is the Arminian mantra that is used against all Scriptures that assert God's unconditional sovereignty in the salvation of lost men. Gal. 4:9 says:

. . . but now, knowing God, but rather being known by God . . .

"But rather" is exceedingly precious to us. It is clear that God's *knowing* is being used in a restricted sense, a particular sense, having to do with a personal election of us, and not merely God's prescience of all things. Our knowing God is contingent on His knowing us, not the other way around. See also John 13:8 and Jer. 1:5.

Evidence for uncontingent, selective foreknowledge of persons is clear from Scripture and leads on to glorification.

UNCONTINGENT GLORIFICATION IS THE COMPLEMENT OF UNCONTINGENT FOREKNOWLEDGE OF CHRISTIANS

To set poor worms, and dying worms, in the same glory as the Son of the Father has nothing to do with responsibility, or meeting it; although the act by which our failure in it was met did lay the ground for it, in that Man perfectly glorified God; and hence Man is set in God's glory. Our sins and our sin were met on the cross, as we have seen. But besides that God was glorified; and man, exalted to His right hand, entered into the glory as our forerunner. For, besides His personal and eternal title, it is because of what He did for us that Christ is entered into the glory. Here then we pass beyond responsibility and get on

purpose: only that in this epistle we do not go farther than the individual place. We are to be conformed to the image of God's Son. And so scripture constantly testifies. "We have borne the image of the earthy," says 1 Cor. 15, and "we shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam." "When he shall appear, we shall be like him," says the apostle John; 1 John 3. "He will change our body of humiliation, and fashion it like his glorious body," says our apostle; Phil. 3. Such as to this point is the wondrous counsel of God. For how, as to state, could we conceive anything more glorious, more blessed, than to be conformed to the image of God's Son; to see Him as He is, and be like Him?

The Spirit then blessedly states the security of those whom God has predestinated to be so conformed, stating the steps by which they are brought to the great result, only omitting wholly the work in us, which had been fully stated previously, because He is speaking of that which God is for us in His own purpose as its source (and securing that purpose in grace up to its accomplishment), and not of man's responsibility and the necessary requirement of God's nature and righteousness. These have been discussed in the previous part, both as to guilt and righteousness, and as to nature and state, so as to render it possible to have to say to the holy God. Grace has wrought that, but has wrought what was needed that we might be reconciled to God. Here (as already stated), alone in Romans, he touches on purpose and counsels. So in Eph. 1:4. There it is so according to the purpose of His own will. Men must be holy and in love to be before Him; but making us sons is according to the purpose of His own will. He might have made us something lower -- could not, indeed, if we think of Him. It was part of His perfection to think and purpose thus. But we can think as a fact of a lower place. But His counsel was to make us sons, "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus." Part of His glory -- of what angels learn -- would have been lost else; part of the glorious offering of the atonement. This could not be. Well, He called them, justified them, and brought all to perfection in His plan -- He glorified them. It is not as yet in historical accomplishment, but all one unbroken chain with God.

We have then the great and blessed truth derived from it all -- God is "for us": if so, "who shall be against us?" It is the great central truth of grace: God is for us. He is for us, in giving, in justifying, and in securing that in all difficulties nothing shall separate us from His love. And first, in giving, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us": with Him given, we can reckon on receiving everything else. No gift like this: how should He then not give everything else? Again, it is God Himself who justifies. It is not here justified before Him, but He justifies us Himself -- little matter who condemns us then. God is for us in this also.¹³

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

13. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 26:174, 175.

The Christian's Heavenly Place and Calling Eviscerated by Messianic Judaism

Chapter 3

Was Paul a Messianic Jew All His Life?

Concerning "Jewish practices," Dr. David Stern claims that Paul "observed them all his life (ac 13:9&N)." ¹⁴ So he claims that Paul

remained a Jew all his life, indeed, an observant Jew (16:3, 17:2, 18:18, 20:16, 21:23-27, 25:8, 28:17; and see 21:21N), even a Pharisee (23:6, Pp. 3:5) . . .¹⁵

Of course, Paul was an ethnic Jew all his life but that is not what is meant here. Messianic Judaism is based on the notion that Gentiles have perverted the meaning of the NT, and Messianic Judaism is the true representation of the meaning of the NT. Necessarily, then, the Apostle Paul, who wrote so much of the NT, must have been a Messianic Jew and must have lived like a Jew and all his life engaged in Jewish practices. So Messianic Judaism will rescue the NT from the Gentile distortion it has received and will show us that the NT is Jewish.

Thus, Paul's avoiding giving unnecessary offense, his love for the Jewish people, his use of opportunity to speak in synagogues, his use of Jewish holidays to be able to evangelize crowds of Jews, and, alas, failure on his part regarding several lapses, are utilized by Messianic Judaism to affirm that Paul was Jewish all his life and observed Jewish practices all his life. The alleged proofs given are the above noted texts. Let us examine them.

Did Paul Remain a Pharisee All His Life?

But Paul, knowing that the one part [of them] were of the Sadducees and the other of the Pharisees, cried out in the council, Brethren, *I* am a Pharisee, son of Pharisees: *I* am judged concerning the hope and resurrection of [the] dead (Acts 23:6).

(2) See to dogs, see to evil workmen, see to the concision. (3) For we *are* the

14. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 611. By "(ac 13:9&N) he means Acts 13:9 and note.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

circumcision, who worship by [the] Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh. (4) Though I have [my] trust even in flesh; if any other think to trust in flesh, I rather: (5) as to circumcision, [I received it] the eighth day; of [the] race of Israel, of [the] tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews; as to [the] law, a Pharisee; (6) as to zeal, persecuting the assembly; as to righteousness which [is] in [the] law, found blameless; (7) but what things were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss. (8) But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ; (9) and that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness, which [would be] on the principle of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which [is] of God through faith (Phil. 3:2-9).

WE ARE THE CIRCUMCISION

Let us first consider Phil. 3:2-9. The expression “the circumcision” is used in the NT to describe the Jews but in this passage Paul calls them “the concision.” This is a play on words, the thrust of which is to describe the circumcision as a mutilation. It had had a validity for the Mosaic covenant, but the cross ended that covenant. Circumcision pointed forward to the cutting off of the flesh from before God. It was suitable for the trial of the first man (to see if he was recoverable) in the persons of the favored Jews, under the mosaic covenant. As with the other shadows, they have been displaced by the reality (“the body,” Col. 2:17). Any spiritual value attached to circumcision in the flesh is false. Messianic Judaism does not advocate the circumcision of Gentile believers, but does place spiritual value (not salvation) on circumcision of Jewish believers. They do trust that there is spiritual value in it for Jewish believers, and insist it be done.

“For we *are* the circumcision” speaks of a spiritual matter. Note that *all* Christians are the circumcision. That is, *all* Christians answer to the meaning of circumcision *positionally* -- for we all are dead with Christ (Rom. 6:8) and what we are in the flesh has been judged and dealt with on the cross (though in practice we may fail in living it out as we should).

For the present time, Christ’s work is to “form the two {Jew and Gentile} in himself into one new man” (Eph. 2:15). But Dr. Stern thinks that Gentile believers, as Christians, “become joined to Israel without becoming Jews.”¹⁶ He does not speak of the newness of the “one new man.” And no wonder, because what he sees as the thrust of this is that Paul’s object is to assure Gentile believers that they

are not second-class citizens of the Kingdom. His purpose is not to downplay

Jewish distinctives, but to “up-play” what God now has done for Gentiles.¹⁷

At bottom, then, at best Dr. Stern’s view means that Gentile believers have been elevated to the level of a Messianic Jew. But, Paul is not downplaying Jewish distinctives. Accordingly, the Gentile believer is a first-class citizen as is the Messianic Jew who is to retain his Jewish distinctives -- which distinctives, however, appear to have spiritual value for the Messianic Jew not shared by the believing Gentile. So, in spite of ostensibly granting first-class status to a Gentile believer, there must be a super-first-class status for Messianic Jews, for they retain Jewish distinctives that have spiritual value for them, not shared by the merely first-class citizens of the Kingdom (the kingdom is not the subject of Ephesians). The result is that there are indeed two status-classes, one superior to the other, despite any claims to the contrary.

The Gentile believer’s being made “nigh” (Eph. 2:13) is through the blood of Christ. Let us be sure that we understand that this nearness is so near that nearer we cannot be. The fact is that Jews had been dispensationally, externally, near to God (and the most of them were not born of God), and the Gentiles who were dispensationally far off, have now both been elevated into “one new man.” The meaning of the Jews having been dispensationally near means an outward thing, an external relationship, not a relationship of soul. It was the covenant relationship in the Mosaic system. Being nigh by the blood of Christ is vital reality. This was not the character of Israel’s nearness. But it is the character of nearness of all who compose the “one new man.” God has now acted beyond those dispensational distinctions and elevated both Jewish and Gentile believers into something that is *not* Israel, but something new. Israel is not new. The body of Christ, formed consequent upon Christ’s exaltation (Acts 2:32, 33; 1 Cor. 12:13), with Himself as Head in the glory above, is the “one new man.” This excludes distinctives and the thrust of Messianic Judaism to have, in effect, two classes, one of which has special distinctives of spiritual value. Actually, such views lower Christianity, refusing to see the force of being dead with Christ, mar the true character of the church, and fail to apprehend the true Christian position in Christ.

The “one new man” never existed before. The “one new man” is not Gentilish and it is not Jewish, nor any mixture of them, and excludes special distinctives of spiritual advantage.

We Christians, all of us, are the circumcision. Positionally, in Christ, we answer to what it pointed to. We are dead with Christ (Rom. 6:8); we are dead to the law (Rom. 8:4); we are dead to sin (Rom. 6:2); we are crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). We have no trust in flesh (Phil. 3:3). The fact is that the Messianic Jew does trust that his distinction in the flesh results in distinctive spiritual advantage -- while claiming that it would be Judaizing to push the Gentile into circumcision and other Jewish observances. This is a device to ward off the charge

16. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 599. It should hardly be surprising that he rejects dispensational truth.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 588.

of Judaizing, because it is said that you cannot Judaize a Jew! Only a Gentile could be Judaized. This is a wonderful self-deception as we observe Jewish believers being Judaized. Jewish believers have been taken out of the Jewish position and Messianic Judaism puts them back in a Jewish position, however modified.

Notice that Paul *did count* as loss those things that were gain to him Phil. 3:7; and *does count* as loss (Phil. 3:8). Among the things he counted as loss, and continued to count as loss was: “as to the law, a Pharisee.” No doubt Messianic Jews would regard Paul as still a Pharisee, but a new kind of Pharisee, different from the kind he was before being saved. We read, “as to the law, a Pharisee,” so for the new kind of Pharisee he will need this: ‘as to the new kind of law, a new kind of Pharisee.’ It was a Jewish distinction in the flesh, and Messianic Judaism insists on law-keeping (all 613 laws?) for such as have Jewish distinction in the flesh. If the Jewish distinction is not *in the flesh*, where is it? -- in Christ? But Paul nowhere makes such distinctions, though he sometimes failed in conduct to measure up to the inspired truth he taught apostolically. The Jewish distinctives maintained by Messianic Judaism, having spiritual benefits for Messianic Jews, while not for salvation, none-the-less partakes of Jewish distinctiveness in principle, as “the circumcision” has Jewish distinctives. The claim that the motives of Messianic Jews are different does not alter the principle of the matter. All such distinctiveness is under the ban as “loss” in Phil. 3.

I AM A PHARISEE, SON OF PHARISEES

It is with great diffidence, conscious of failures on my own part, yet necessary, to speak of the great Apostle not having always lived up to the height of the truth he taught. There was only One Who, when asked Who He was, could say:

altogether that which I also to you say (John 8:25).

There was no gulf, however small, between what He said and what He did. Regarding Paul's being before the council another wrote:

He takes the ground of a righteous man under the law before them, and asserts his innocence. The high priest, without waiting for the decision of the council pre-judges the case, and commands him to be smitten on the mouth, contrary to the law (Deut. 24:1, 2). Paul was but human, and he broke down under the provocation. And here we do well to consider *Him*, “Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself unto him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23; Matt. 26: 67; John 18:22, 23). When He answered it was in the gentle firm consciousness that neither Satan nor man could bring aught against Him. Paul pronounces judgment from God on the high priest. He did not know him as such, and probably he was not robed; but when rebuked, he instantly reverts to the word of God, to which he desired to be obedient (Ex. 22:26).

And here we find a precious principle. Whenever we make a false step let us instantly revert to *the word of God*. It braces our loins again, and strengthens us for service. And now we find him taking advantage of his position by natural birth, and dividing the council in his favor by this means. It was a clever

expedient, but hardly justifiable from one who was confessedly dead as to the flesh. Cp. Phil. 3:3, 7.¹⁸

Moreover, he is not now merely a Jew and a Roman, but also a Pharisee. Such a title he counts no longer dross and dung, it has become once more a gain.¹⁹

Paul's Avoiding Giving Unnecessary Offense

Him would Paul have go forth with him, and took [him and] circumcised him on account of the Jews who were in those places, for they knew his father that he was a Greek (Acts 16:3).

It is true that this was done to avoid impeding the gospel.²⁰ But that does not address the matter of Messianic Judaism. Should not Timothy be a Messianic Jew? He should have been circumcised because of Jewish distinctives allegedly properly maintained by Messianic Judaism and not “on account of the Jews who were in those places.” The stated reason was not because the law required it or that it was proper to Messianic Jewish distinctives which a Messianic Jew should observe. What was done is quite in accord with Paul's teaching that circumcision meant nothing in Christ Jesus (Gal. 5:6; 6:16), and thus we see that this is actually *contrary to Messianic Judaism*.

Moreover, 1 Cor. 7:18, 19 says:

Has anyone been called circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised: has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping God's commandments.

Instead of bowing in heart to the words, “circumcision is *nothing*,” Messianic Judaism infers out of this that “circumcision is *something*” for Messianic Jews.²¹

18. *Words of Truth*, New Series 3:76.

19. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 25:433.

20. As the *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 283, says. In Titus' case, being a Gentile, circumcision was refused (Gal. 2:3).

21. Concerning v. 18 a, Dr. Stern writes:

From this we can reasonably infer that he should not assimilate into Gentile or so-called “Christian” culture but should remain distinctly Jewish . . . Instead of understanding that a Jewish believer converts from sin to righteousness (the same as a Gentile believer), it {the Church} has thought he converts from Judaism to Christianity . . . Members of every other ethnic group are encouraged to maintain their culture and express their faith within it. But when a Jew does so he may be accused of “legalizing” . . . “Judaizing” . . . and “raising again the middle wall of partition” . . . (*Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp. 454-456).

Really, this is offensive against the place of vital nearness by the blood of Christ that saved Jews and Gentiles have (Eph. 2:13, 14). Such a *position* precludes the possibility of distinctive spiritual

(continued...)

God's calling leaves us where we are concerning our ethnicity but brings us to a new position before God that is the same for all "in Christ Jesus." We all, Jewish and Gentile believers, answer to the meaning of circumcision (Phil. 3:3); and though we might have been near, dispensationally speaking, or far off, we are all *now* in the same vital nearness by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13, 14). In Christian position and privilege we do not have distinctions in the flesh. Well, but are there not Jewish believers and Gentile believers? Yes, concerning natural ethnicity, but all Christian position and privileges are the same, and all are to walk by the same rule (Gal. 6:16) -- for natural ethnicity does not set up several classes of Christians concerning spiritual privileges and distinctives. So, when called of God, whether having been circumcised or not having been circumcised, that matters not. Remain as one is when called; and, of course, attach no spiritual significance to it. Rather, attach significance to keeping God's commandments -- and clearly circumcision is not one of those commandments for Christians. God was patient with Jewish believers until they were finally told to go outside the camp (Heb. 13:13) -- before God sent His armies and destroyed Jerusalem (Matt. 22:7). But Messianic Judaism perverts God's manifestation of patience during that epoch into sanction for their Judaistic system.

Concerning Timothy's case, he was called of God when uncircumcised; and according to 1 Cor. 7:18, 19, should remain that way, there being no personal, spiritual advantage to being circumcised. However, in Timothy's case, grace could act with a view to the spread of the gospel.

And Timothy's case serves as an example of what we read in 1 Cor. 9:19-21.

Paul's Use of the Synagogue to Reach Jews

. . . where was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom he went in among them, and on three sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures . . . (Acts 17:1, 2).

It is asserted that Paul was an observant Jew and "it was his usual practice to

21. (...continued)

differences before God. Eph. 2:13 says, "but now in Christ Jesus . . ." That is where all believers are positionally; and that forms right Christian practice. Christian position forms Christian practice.

As to Christians in various cultures, it is obvious that there are religious practices concerning which a Christian is to stand separate. Take for example Hindu death anniversary ceremonies. Concerning Judaism, the Mosaic system is set aside by God, by the cross, and sealed in AD 70 by the destruction of the continued practice of the system.

Christianity is much, much more than converting from sin to righteousness. Will not such conversion be true in the millennium? Of course it will. Messianic Judaism strikes at the heavenly truth of Christianity and lowers things down to a millennial level. The truth of the church and the new creation is not understood, for the *heart* is fastened on maintaining Jewish distinctives.

attend synagogue." ²² It appears, then, if this allegation is true, that Paul was practicing Judaism in non-Messianic Jewish congregations; i.e., he was engaging with unbelieving Jews in the unbelieving Jews' continuation of the Mosaic system. Do Messianic Jews advocate doing this? Is this what Messianic Jews believe and do they advocate doing that?

At this time some Jewish hearers became Christians, as well as a great multitude of Greek worshipers, and also numbers of chief women (Acts 17:4, 5). This was the beginning of the assembly of God at Thessalonica. It must have been large and predominately Gentile. Do you think that it was a Jewish Messianic congregation? Or, do you think the Jewish believers set up their own assembly in Thessalonica so as to have a Messianic Jewish congregation separate from the Gentiles Christians? See Eph 4:3, 4.

At any rate, Paul was using the synagogues for the spread of the gospel, not to practice Judaism with unbelieving Jews. When he was in a place where there were believers he partook of the Lord's supper on the Lord's day (Acts 20:7). And on Lord's days when an assembly was not accessible, he and his companions could break bread in remembrance of the Lord's death for us.

Paul's Shorn Head and Vow and His Desire to Be at Jerusalem

And Paul, having yet stayed [there] many days, took leave of the brethren and sailed thence to Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila, having shorn his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow; and he arrived at Ephesus, and left them there. But entering himself into the synagogue he reasoned with the Jews. And when they asked him that he would remain for a longer time [with them] he did not accede, but bade them farewell, saying, [I must by all means keep the coming feast at Jerusalem]; I will return to you again if God will . . . (Acts 18:18-21).

I think that the comment,

On more than one occasion even Paul judaized to a considerable extent, as at Jerusalem (Acts 26:26) and probably at Cenchrea (Acts 18:18) ²³

is correct, whereas a Messianic Jew would see evidence here that Paul did not abandon the law. Details of what was involved are not given but the fact that he did this is recorded in the Scripture. But this was not a case such as the circumcision of Timothy and does not fall under 1 Cor. 9:19-23.

Regarding "[I must by all means keep the coming feast at Jerusalem]," it is in brackets because it is doubtful as being part of the original text though the Textus Receptus includes it. As to the textual matter, W. Kelly's comments may

22. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 286.

23. *The Bible Student* 2:164.

be consulted;²⁴ and he notes that even if the words are true, we do not know that he actually kept the feast.

And why is it that he “must by all means” do so? What was imperative? And if it was imperative to do so according to the law, why did he spend a year and a half at Corinth, and not visit Jerusalem? Well, Dr. Stern notes the fact that the prevailing view of scholars is that the words in brackets were added to the text later.

So, here we appear to have an example of the Apostle’s use of a feast-time for the work of the gospel. Such would be the case in Acts 20:16 also:

for Paul thought it desirable to sail by Ephesus, so that he might not be made to spend time in Asia; for he hastened, if it was possible for him, to be the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem (Acts 20:16).

We recall from Acts 2 how many Jews came to Jerusalem for that time and how it provided opportunity to Peter to preach to the people.

Paul’s Following the Jewish Advice

Thou seest, brother, how many myriads there are of the Jews who have believed, and all are zealous of the law. (21) And they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews among the nations apostasy from Moses, saying that they should not circumcise their children, nor walk in the customs. (22) What is it then? a multitude must necessarily come together, for they will hear that thou art come. (23) This do therefore that we say to thee: We have four men who have a vow on them; (24) take these and be purified with them, and pay their expenses, that they may have their heads shaved; and all will know that [of those things] of which they have been informed about thee nothing is [true]; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law. (25) But concerning [those of] the nations who have believed, we have written, deciding that they should [observe no such thing, only to] keep themselves both from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. (26) Then Paul, taking the men, on the next day, having been purified, entered with them into the temple, signifying the time the days of the purification would be fulfilled, until the offering was offered for every one of them. (27) And when the seven days were nearly completed, the Jews from Asia, having seen him in the temple, set all the crowd in a tumult, and laid hands upon him (Acts 21:21-27).

This false position into which Paul entered was never fully consummated. As God prevented David from going with the Philistines to battle against Israel, likewise God over-ruled that just before the act of sacrifice was to take place, Paul’s opposers took hold of him. Blessed be God, Paul was prevented from joining in with the sacrifices to be offered by, apparently, Nazarites, at the end of their vows

(Num. 6:14). Agabus’ prophecy (Acts 21:10, 11) was true, but in bringing Agabus’ prophecy to fulfilment, God allowed His servant to engage in following that wrong advice of leadership at Jerusalem. We might wonder if Paul reflected on this when, consequently, later in a Roman prison he wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, saying that there was no more sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:18). We might wonder what these leaders thought upon reading that epistle to the Hebrews. Well, their compromising advice was prevented from full realization by God in His governmental ways. How gracious of Him when He stops us from the completion of a course that is not His will. Paul’s going to Jerusalem ended his public service, though God over-ruled what He did, and brought him to Rome as a prisoner, from where the so-called “prison epistles” were written. Thus, God both marked His displeasure at what His servant did, for which there were consequences, yet He sustained him, brought him to Rome under quite different conditions than Paul originally had hope to see the saints at Rome, and He brought blessing out of it in the inspired writings that issued from that very prison, from the Apostle of the uncircumcision. Indeed, the Epistle to the Hebrews was written from prison telling those addressed to go outside “the camp,” i.e., outside Judaism (Heb. 13:13). God graciously gave this inspired direction before the awful judgment on Jerusalem fell in AD 70, prohibiting further having to do with the temple there. Grace called them to this separation from Judaism before His governmental blow fell on its capital seat. That call of grace to Hebrew believers to separate from “the camp,” followed by that signal blow of His government, is the guide for Hebrew believers ever since. The appeal of Messianic Judaism to the practice of Hebrew believers before this occurred, to justify what they do in observing Judaism, is contrary to the Word of God. The patience of God, up to that point, regarding those who came from a system once owned by Him, is not to be distorted into justification for its continued practice. Thus, having direction from the Word of God, and in addition His governmental blow against the seat of Judaism, Messianic Judaism stands in contradiction to His Word and His governmental ways. It is a man-made system of contradiction of the Word of God, a system that Judaizes ethnic Hebrew believers. The Messianic Jewish cliché that “you cannot Judaize a Jew” is shown by God’s Word to be false, for that is exactly what is going on. It is far, far removed from merely a “weak brother” in Rom. 14 -- i.e., a Jewish believer in the assembly who is not strong in Christian liberty and has scruples about some things Jewish -- it is a *system* that is divisive and pretends to special Jewish distinctives having spiritual values that Gentile believers do not have, and claiming the subjection of all Jewish believers to this Judaism.

W. Kelly has written a helpful sketch concerning God’s ways occasioned by the Apostle’s course. There is much for us to learn in this.

While they tarried there, a certain prophet came down from Judea, who repeats the warning to the apostle. Binding his own hands and feet with Paul’s girdle he declares, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.” And thus it was accomplished to the letter. Nevertheless, spite of the tears of the saints, spite of

24. *An Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles, in loco.*

the warning of this prophet, as of others before, Paul, with mind made up, answers, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

After all the apostle goes accordingly, and in Jerusalem the brethren receive him gladly. "And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present." It is evident from this picture that all ecclesiastically was in due order at Jerusalem. An apostle was there who had an apparently high place of local dignity. Besides there were the ordinary overseers whom the Holy Ghost had set as guides and leaders in the assembly (that is, the local charge of elders). "And when Paul had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry." They owned the way in which the Lord had been glorified. At the same time their word to him is, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands" (the true meaning is tens of thousands, myriads, which may probably give some a larger thought than is familiar of the vast and rapid spread of the gospel at that time among that nation) "of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law; and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs." This was a mistake. Such was not the course of the apostle.

What Paul really taught was the impropriety of putting Gentiles under the law: he did not interfere with the Jews at this time, Later a distinct and peremptory message came from the Holy Ghost; but the process of the Lord with them was gradual -- His method with His ancient people I deem of importance for us to learn and imitate. It is perfectly true that it was in the mind of God in due time to bring out fully the deliverance of both Jew and Gentile from the law; but this was not done all at once, at least as regards the Jew. What the apostle set himself decidedly against was the effort to bring the Gentiles under law; and this was precisely what Pharisaic brethren were zealous for. Whether Judaizing Christians or the Gentiles themselves took up the law, the apostle did most resolutely reject and condemn the fatal error. But as regarded the Jews themselves there was the truest forbearance, flowing from, not characteristic largeness of heart only, but tender consideration for scrupulous consciences. If God had not yet sent out the final word that told them the old covenant was ready to vanish away, how could he who so closely followed His ways be hasty? The early days were really a time of transition, where Christ was ministered first to Jew and then to Gentile. The Gentile, never having been under law, was far more simple than the Jew in appreciating the liberty of the gospel. The Jew was tolerated in his prejudices until the closing message came from God, warning them of the danger of apostasy from the gospel through their adhesion to the law.

Having dwelt on this in sketching the epistle to the Hebrews, there is the less reason to say more about it now. But that epistle was to the Hebrew believers the last trumpet which summoned them to renounce all connection with the old system. Up to that time there had been a gradual transition, the gap widening, the difference more pronounced, but still every tie was not broken till

this the final call. Such a way strikes me as worthy of our God -- a way which to our precipitate minds might seem somewhat difficult, because we have been mostly trained as Gentiles. Since we have entered into the truth of God more perfectly, we have seen the enormous mischief of bringing in the law and mixing it up with the gospel.

Let us remember then that, whilst the Holy Ghost always maintained liberty for the Gentile, there was unquestionably a time of waiting on the Jew. Even the apostle Paul was no exception to patience with their prejudices. As to the twelve, they seem to have feebly enough entered into this liberty from the law. Doubtless Paul, as being apostle of the Gentiles, called from heaven by the risen Jesus, and witness of sovereign grace, apprehended it after a different sort and richer measure; but we shall find that even he could warmly sympathize to a great extent with the feelings of a Jew. He is the one to whom, under God, we are indebted for knowing anything about Christianity in its full form and real strength; yet, for all that, it is quite evident that he had, if not Jewish prejudice, certainly the warmest Jewish attachments; and, in point of fact, it was the strength of his affection to the ancient people of God that brought him into the trouble recorded in these concluding chapters of this book, the Acts of the Apostles.

This, we must remember, to a certain extent, may be viewed as an answer to the love found in our blessed Lord Himself; but then there were striking differences. In our Lord, love for Israel was, as all else, perfect: there was not, nor could be, the faintest admixture of a blemish. We know well the bare hint of such a thought would be repulsive to our faith and our love for His person. To the Christian it is impossible to conceive it for an instant. At the same time, we know His love for that people was felt and expressed up to the last. It was His persistent love which brought Him into the circumstances of utter rejection when God's time was come, and He suffered all the consequence of their hatred (though infinitely more also for sin in atonement, which was His alone). Now the apostle knew what it was to love Israel and suffer for that love. Not only among the Gentiles, but among the saints, the more he loved, the less he was loved. This was true; but, if in general true there, emphatically was it to be verified among the Jews. Thus stands the wonderful fact in the history of the apostle Paul: the very man who brought out the church distinctly, and showed its heavenly character as none other approached; the very man that proved the absolute abolition of the old ties and relations, swallowing up all in Christ exalted to the right hand of God: -- he is the man whose heart retained the strongest attachment of love to the ancient people of God. And I have not the smallest doubt that God gives us in this case a grave but gracious warning of its danger. Were it an apostle, were it the greatest of the apostles, still Paul was not Christ, and what in Christ could be and was absolute perfection, in Paul was not. Yet Paul was a man who puts all that have been since that day into the shade.

If I may express my feelings here, let me say that I felt nothing a greater trial to my own spirit than touching on this very theme. I could not point out any one thing I shrink from more than having the appearance of reflecting on

such a servant of Christ. Yet God has written the history of all this, and He has written it surely not for sentiment and silence, but for utterance and common profit. He has written it, no doubt, that we should feel our own great shortcomings, and that we should beware of our spirit in setting up to condemn such an one as the great apostle of the Gentiles.

Still, I repeat, the Holy Ghost has recorded here His own warnings on the one side, and on the other the refusal of the apostle to act on them, if I may venture so to say, though it were through fulness of tender love, and an ever-burning affection for his brethren after the flesh. Alas! when we think of our faults; when we reflect how little they spring from anything that is lovely; when we recollect how much they are mixed with worldliness, and impatience, and pride, and vanity, and self; when we observe that he was so deeply chastened, and met with such a distressing stop to the world-wide work which God had given him, in what a light do our faults appear! He had a pressure of trial such as few men ever knew beside himself; and, what might embitter it to him, all this the natural effect of slighting the admonitions of the Spirit of God by yielding to his undying love for a people out of whom, after all, he had been divinely separated to the work the Lord had given him to do. God having given us the account, whatever may be one's own feelings, can it be doubted that we are bound to read, and by grace to seek to understand? Yea, not this only, but may we apply it for the present blessing of our souls, and for our progress in the path of Christ here below, whatever it may be. We may have the smallest possible sphere; but, after all, a saint is a saint, and very dear to God, who magnifies Himself in the least of those that are His.

It is assuredly for our profit and to God's own glory that the Holy Ghost has written this remarkable appendix to the history -- the onward history -- of the Acts of the Apostles. Here we have a check which brings in new things, the fruit of persisting in going up to Jerusalem spite of the Spirit's testimony against it. The more blessed the man, the more serious the miss of firm footing. There is one step outside what the Spirit enjoined, whatever may be the mingling of that which is beautiful and lovely; at the same time, it was not the full height, so to speak, of the guidance of the Spirit of God. This exposed the apostle to something more, as it always does; and, indeed, so much the more, because it was such an one as Paul. The same principle is plain in David's life. The lack of energy, which might have been comparatively a little hurt to another, became the gravest snare to David; and, found out of the path of the Lord, he soon slips into the meshes of the devil. Not that I mean anything in the least degree tantamount in the apostle Paul; far from it; for, indeed, in this case the apostle was mercifully preserved from anything that gave the smallest activity to the corruption of nature. It was simply a defect, as it appears to me, of watching against his own love for Israel, and thus setting aside, consequently, the warnings that the Spirit gave. The tears and appeals seem to have rather stimulated and strengthened his desire, and accordingly this exposed him to what was a snare, not immoral but religious, through listening to others below his own measure. He took the advice of James.

"What is it, therefore? The multitude must needs come together; for they

will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee. We have four men which have a vow on them; them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads" -- what a position for the apostle to find himself in! -- "and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing." Without pretending that there was nothing in the previous line of Paul tending to this (cp. Acts 18:18), it is evident that the object was to give the appearance that he was a very good Jew indeed. Was this warrantable, or the whole truth? Was he not a somewhat ambiguous Jew? I believe that, as we have seen, there was an undisguised respect for what once had the sanction of God. And here was just the difference in his case from our blessed Lord's perfect ways. Up to the cross, we all know, the legal economy or first covenant had the sanction of God; after the cross, in principle it was judged. The apostle surely had weighed and appraised it all; he did not require any man to show him the truth. At the same time there was no small mingling of love for the people; and we know well how it may intercept that singleness of eye which is the safeguard of every Christian man.

The apostle then listens to his brethren about a matter in which he was incomparably more competent to form a sound judgment than any of them, Accordingly he suffers the consequence. He is found purifying himself along with the men who had a vow. He enters the temple, "to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended" -- which it is well known had to do with the Nazarite vow -- "the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help! This is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place; and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place." The next verse shows us why. It was a mistake; nevertheless it was enough to rouse the feelings of all Israel. "All the city was moved, and the people ran together," and the issue was a frightful tumult, and the apostle was in danger of being killed by their violent hands, when the chief captain comes and rescues him. This paves the way for the remarkable address which the apostle delivers in the Hebrew tongue, given in the next chapter.²⁵

Did Nothing Against the People or the Customs of the Forefathers

Paul answering for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar, have I offended [in] anything (Acts 25:8).

And it came to pass after three days, that he called together those who were the

25. *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Acts, The Catholic Epistles, and the Revelation*, pp. 147-155.

chief of the Jews; and when they had come together he said to them, Brethren, /having done nothing against the people or the customs of our forefathers, have been delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans (Acts 28:17).

In Acts 28:17-29 we have arrived at a momentous juncture and it is well to have that entire passage before us. The time of God's patience with the Jews (and His patience with the Jewish believers' hanging on to the Temple and the Judaistic system) was rapidly drawing to a close. Paul called to him the responsible Jewish leaders at Rome and told them that he had done nothing against the customs of the forefathers. That was true (though the principles in his teaching would have led Jewish believers to turn from their Judaism -- Rom. 14 for example). What he so mightily, and directly, inveighed against was any effort to bring Gentile believers under the law of Moses. Yes, the practices of the Jewish believers were tolerated; and Paul himself had several lapses in this regard. But the time of the destruction of Jerusalem was rapidly approaching. In view of this, God had over-ruled Paul's course so that he was now at Rome; and arriving there as a consequence of his rejection at Jerusalem, he now renders a final testimony to the Jews. The turning point had arrived, in the ways of God, to apply Isa. 6:9, 10, in fresh, judicial sentence to the Jews; and to announce to them the words of Acts 28:28, which indicate that the work of God in salvation would predominately be a Gentile work -- though myriads (tens of thousands) of Jews had believed in Christ, besides Gentiles who already had believed.

We must bear in mind that God's sanction of Jewish worship had been *spiritually set aside* by the cross, yet God suffered the form of it to continue to AD 70, at which time it was *judicially set aside*, as the Lord Jesus had said (Matt. 22:7). During the interval between the cross and AD 70, myriads of Jews turned to Christ but not away from the Jewish forms. God bore with it in patience and the Apostle of the uncircumcision did not attack that directly, though he strenuously resisted bringing Gentiles into such a course. But the time to end this anomalous state of affairs was fast approaching. The mass of the Jewish people rejected the Lord Jesus. The judicial sentence against Jerusalem was about to be executed. And so we read in Acts 28 of the change taking place. Moreover, before that judicial sentence against Jerusalem was to be executed, God in grace would send an Epistle to the Hebrews, written by Paul in the Roman prison, that the Hebrews were partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), though their practice showed that they neither understood that or walked in the good of it. The Epistle to the Hebrews set before them the superiority of everything Christian compared to Judaism, and then in Heb. 13:13, they were told to go outside the camp -- outside Judaism. Thus, they were to leave Judaism.

The thrust of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that they were not any longer to

walk before God according to Messianic Judaism, or any other form of Judaism. Judaism had in view an earthly calling. That will be made good to the new Israel under the new covenant and the new temple, under the order of a new priesthood, the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ. The Hebrew Christians were partakers of the Heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). Another prison epistle, Ephesians, made plain the participation of both Jewish and Gentile believers in being lifted out of their former spheres into "one new man" (Eph. 2). The worship of all such believers was properly in the *heavenly sanctuary* (Heb. 2:12; 8:2; 10:19-22), not on earth. And, indeed, God removed the *earthly sanctuary* at Jerusalem shortly after the Epistle to the Hebrews was written.

The destruction of Jerusalem has its place in prophecy. But what we are considering here is the moral bearing of it with respect to the work begun at Pentecost. W. Kelly said:

The worst of man, and the best of God, never came clearly out till the crucifixion of the Savior. The cross of the Lord Jesus was morally the end of probation {the end of the testing of the first man to see if he was recoverable}. The whole of the Old Testament had been given long before that; people who alone were familiar with Law, Psalms and Prophets were indifferent learners of the New Testament. They liked the Old better. They said the old wine was good; and they stuck to it, as the Lord told them when their refusal of Himself came out more and more. It was very fate {sic, late?} when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to set those of them who believed on their proper ground intelligently. They had been but partially on Christian ground, pretty much as most professing Christians are now. They had only vague notions about the gospel, Christian walk, worship, and hope. All was indistinct, not to say incorrect; and that is the state not only of Christendom, but of the children of God in it. Believers from among the Jews ought to have been teachers when Paul wrote to them his great Epistle. They had to learn better the very elements, "the word of the beginning of Christ." They had not arrived at "perfection" or full growth, the due and definite truth of Christianity. There was not only a shortcoming, but a veritable muddle in their minds; consequently their conduct as Christians was mixed and vacillating.

Among those who are upright, how much depends upon their real hold of what scripture actually teaches! The Christian Hebrews feebly understood anything distinctive. Without denying that Christ died, rose, and went to heaven, the great truths that came out consequently were not developed as they should be, so characteristically different from what the Old Testament led people to expect. With Christ confessed they looked for everything grand, honored, prosperous, and delightful here below. But how did the cross of Christ and His going away to heaven consist with the expectation of Israel being now at the head of the nations and in the enjoyment of earthly glory? Even believers had that idea still. You will recollect that when the risen Lord was about to go to heaven from the Mount of Olives, they asked, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" They had little idea of the thorough break with Israel; still less that God was bringing in a wholly distinct purpose, and associations

new and heavenly. This is what we find very fully in the Epistle to the Ephesians and elsewhere: an absolutely fresh revelation. The believers in Jerusalem were slow to learn. Nor does the Epistle to the Hebrews rise to the mystery concerning Christ and concerning the church. Even the heavenly calling therein treated was imperfectly known. Yet it was written late, though somewhat before the destruction of Jerusalem. It speaks of Mosaic covenant, ritual, system, tabernacle, altar, priest and offering, superseded by what was far better, earthly shadows by the heavenly realities. This was strange not only to the unbelieving Jews but to the Christian remnant. They thought that the old forms were rather to be filled with new power, and that grace would be given to make them living.²⁶ They had not realized that the old divine service must pass away, and be succeeded by entirely heavenly things in accordance with Christ seated at the right hand of God on high. He is the truth, and must be brought not only into the heart by faith as He is now exalted, but wrought into the worship of God and into the practice of men that believe as a living reality here and now.²⁷

What is helpful to understand is God bringing to pass a two-pronged, outward breach of Christianity with Judaism. One is doctrinal in character, namely, the writing of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the other is the judicial setting aside of the capital seat of Judaism. Moreover, we should observe that God's judicial act against Jerusalem involved the removal of the assembly at Jerusalem. It is true that believers removed from Jerusalem to Pella before the Romans prevented all egress from Jerusalem, but in all such things God was working, and that working of God included that the assembly at Jerusalem should be removed. Concerning this, in introductory thoughts to the book of Revelation J. N. Darby wrote:

The destruction of Jerusalem formed a momentous epoch as to these things, because the Jewish assembly, formed as such at Pentecost, had ceased (nay, it had even before); only the judicial act was then accomplished. Christians had been warned to leave the camp {Heb. 13:13}. The breach of Christianity with Judaism was consummated. Christ could no longer take up the assembly, established in the remnant of the Jews, as His own seat of earthly authority.* But alas! the assembly, as Paul had established it too, had already fallen from its first estate -- could in no sense take up the fallen inheritance of Israel. All seek their own, says Paul, not the things of Jesus Christ. All they of Asia -- Ephesus, the beloved scene where all Asia had heard the word of God -- had forsaken him. They who had been specially brought with full intelligence into the assembly's place could not hold it in the power of faith. Indeed, the mystery of iniquity was at work before this {2 Thess. 2}, and was to go on and grow until the hindrance to the final apostasy was removed.

* This was morally true from Acts 3, where the Jewish leaders refuse the

26. {Is not this the false notion at the heart of Messianic Judaism?}

27. *The Purpose of God for His Sons and Heirs*, Eph. 1: 3-7.

testimony to a glorified Christ who would return, as they had rejected a humbled One. Acts 7, by the mouth of Stephen, closes God's dealings with them in testimony, and the heavenly gathering begins, his spirit being received on high. The destruction of Jerusalem closed Jewish history judicially.²⁸

Commenting on some things in John 21:

In the narrative of the Gospel, we are in connection with the earth (that is, the connection of Jesus with the earth). As planted on earth at Jerusalem, the assembly, as the house of God, is formally recognized as taking the place of the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem. The history of the assembly, as thus formally established as a center on earth, ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. The remnant saved by the Messiah was no longer to be in connection with Jerusalem, the center of the gathering of the Gentiles. In this sense the destruction of Jerusalem put an end judicially to the new system of God upon earth -- a system promulgated by Peter (Acts 3); with regard to which Stephen declared to the Jews their resistance to the Holy Ghost, and was sent, as it were, as a messenger after Him who was gone to receive the kingdom and to return; while Paul -- elected from among those enemies of the good news still addressed to the Jews by the Holy Ghost after the death of Christ, and separated from Jews and Gentiles, in order to be sent to the latter -- performs a new work that was hidden from the prophets of old {Rom. 16:25, 26; Col. 1:24-27; Eph. 3:9, 10}, namely, the gathering out of a heavenly assembly without distinction of Jew or Gentile.

The destruction of Jerusalem put an end to one of these systems {i.e., Judaism}, and to the existence of Judaism according to the law and the promises, leaving only the heavenly assembly. John remained -- the last of the twelve -- until this period, and after Paul, in order to watch over the assembly as established on that footing, that is, as the organized and earthly frame-work (responsible in that character) of the testimony of God, and the subject of His government on the earth.²⁹ But this is not all. In his ministry John went on to the end, to the coming of Christ in judgment to the earth; and he has linked the judgment of the assembly, as the responsible witness on earth, with the judgment of the world, when God shall resume His connection with the earth in government (the testimony of the assembly being finished, and it having been caught up, according to its proper character, to be with the Lord in heaven).³⁰

What we have seen will, of course, be rejected by Messianic Judaism and we may expect distortion of the Epistle to the Hebrews in order to parry its thrust. Be that as it may, we conclude otherwise than the Messianic Judaistic view that the Apostle Paul remained an observant Jew all his life (even a Pharisee) and attended the synagogue on the Sabbath for the Jewish observances.

28. *Synopsis* 5:367, 368 (Stow Hill ed.).

29. {The point is that Rev. 2 and 3 views the church on earth in *responsible testimony*, in a seven-fold character, giving a complete view of its course. Christ is seen as Judge, in keeping with the character of the book of Revelation.}

30. *Synopsis* 3:413, 414 (Stow Hill ed.).

Paul's Inspired Teaching Counts What He Had as a Jew, Loss

None could say of Paul that he was despising the things he did not possess {Phil. 3}: for, in the very form of the words he uses, he asserts his having all the privileges and advantages which made him superior to all these judaizing men -- "dogs, evil workers, the concision" -- if he cared to claim them. He was no mere proselyte, but in regard to circumcision an eighth-day one; of the tribe of Benjamin -- not an Ephraimite; a descendant of Israel -- not an Idumean: a Hebrew, born of Hebrew parents, not one of his ancestors having been other than a Hebrew: therefore of *pure descent*. Then follow what distinguished him in his *personal position*; (1) as regards the law of Moses -- a Pharisee; (2) as concerning zeal persecuting the church; (3) as touching the righteousness which is grounded on the law having become blameless, having carried it so far (Gal. 1:13, 14). But all these things and whatever was gain to him besides -- privileges, attainments and prospects -- these very things, the entire category, in the bloom of youth, he had counted "loss for Christ." It is not the sins of the flesh he here renounces but its righteousness -- its cherished religiousness the last thing a pious and zealous legalist would have parted with. But the secret of his so regarding and renouncing them is thus revealed; he had found --

2. A *new object* at his conversion, to which his language glances back; for he had seen the glorified Son of God in a blaze of light above the brightness of the noonday sun, and he had heard Him challenge his persecution of His saints as if of Himself; and this new object never left his life-long gaze, and when He was revealed, not only to him, but in him, he had no hesitation in cleaving to Him, though this was done at the expense of renouncing all that went to make a man of him in the world, and give him the most superior ground for glorying in the flesh. Saul is no longer the center of his thoughts, or of his pursuit, but the glorified Son of God has become so. His faith in Christ supplanted all confidence in the flesh. This new object so charmed, enchained, and engrossed him, that all the good things to which he is referring were regarded by him as one tremendous loss, positive damage and disadvantage. A career, rich in all sorts of gain, was opened up to him, for which his university course at Tarsus, and his theological training at Jerusalem, under the famous Gamaliel, had eminently fitted him. But, said he, "These I have counted loss *on account of Christ*."

And in verse 8th, by the use of various particles and forms of words, the apostle introduces a supplementary and extended statement, in which the *present* is substituted for the past, an "*these things*" become "*all things*"; and "the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ" is given as the reason for his present decision. What are all gains, attainments, possessions, or prospects in comparison with the surpassing worth of the knowledge of Christ? As in 2 Cor. 3 he contrasts "the ministration of condemnation," and "the ministration of the Spirit," and says, "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth"; so here, the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ" eclipses, darkens, and annihilates "all things" as an object. "All things" in comparison of "Christ Jesus my Lord" are as nothing. For Him I have suffered the loss of all things at my conversion, that I might have Him as a possession, and I have them no more; but I would not have them if I might, for I now count them

but rubbish and refuse. This is my present mind after a life of suffering in His service, that they are refuse and Christ is all. He counts all but refuse that he may gain Christ and enjoy Him as His prize at length in the glory in heaven, and have a spiritual foretaste of it in his daily experience by faith. True, Paul knew Christ and had Him when converted; but, just as his old advantages in the flesh would have led on to more and more gain of all sorts likely to fall to the lot of a strict, religious, capable, and energetic Pharisee, so this gaining Christ (though He will only be really had as his at the end), was enjoyed in the Spirit as he acquired more and more of his object while he went on in the path of faith and experience, and his object became so precious that he spoke of the things he had "in the flesh" with positive scorn and disgust, in comparison of Christ and the joy he found Him even now to be to him. When the things which accredit us "in the flesh," are by faith and grace, counted as the refuse or leavings of a feast, or, as our version has it, "dung," it is not difficult to give them up. The judaizing Christians who boasted of being "the circumcision," regarded the uncircumcised as dogs, as all ritualists, to this day, do those who boast in Christ and "worship by the Spirit of God." But the apostle shows, in his own case, that all those things in which they boasted were regarded by him as mere refuse. Forms, ceremonies, services and legal observances, are looked upon by those who get Christ as the nearest object to their hearts, as nothing better than mere refuse; and when this is so it is not difficult to give them up. But it was not Paul's experience that he gave up all the things that had himself as a center of importance, and then begot Christ; but he first saw the glorified Son of God, and He became so entirely his object that all the things which made something of him were given up as a natural necessity of his new life in Christ; and not only were they parted with on account of Christ, but cast from him with disgust and contempt as filth and refuse.

In "Galatians" he goes fully into the mischief which a mixing of law and gospel, ordinances and the Spirit, would produce; but, here, he contents himself with warning against the instruments of this confusion of "flesh" and "spirit"; and with showing that, in his own case, and at the outset of his Christian course, he had been cleared of all this, as a ground of confidence, by having his confidence placed in Christ alone, and having him as an object before his mind and heart. He says, emphatically, "*we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God; and who glory in Christ Jesus*; and place no confidence in the flesh." The three go together, but our boast in Christ Jesus occupies the central place. "On account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my Lord*," shows how exclusively he rejoiced in the Lord: but he was to him "Christ Jesus my Lord." And no man will rejoice in the Lord until he can say of Him as the object of his supreme affection "*my Lord*."

Extract from, "Our Living Association With Christ in Heaven," *The Bible Herald*, 1878.

Messianic Jews sets up something again of the first man, modified in that they claim to be under the new covenant *now*, in effect refusing "the heavenly calling," to which "my Lord" points (Heb. 3:1), as also the heavenly place (Eph.).

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

The Good Soldier and the Ark that Moses Made

Part 2

Paul wrote to Timothy that he should take his “share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3). But, what makes a soldier a **good** soldier? And what exactly is meant by “suffering” in the case of a soldier?

From the immediate context we may learn that a good soldier is “strong in the grace which [is] in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:1). Let us not confuse this grace with graciousness, a fleshly attribute in which polite people pride themselves. Instead, it is a special resource for the man of God in the last days, to be found “in Christ Jesus,” along with various other resources mentioned in 2 Tim. Second, Paul’s doctrine is known and taught by good soldiers (2 Tim. 2:2). They listen to it, and entrust it to others. Third, good soldiers are not entangled with the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:4). Fourth, good soldiers are motivated to please the Lord Jesus (2 Tim. 2:4).

But the particular point about good soldiers in 2 Tim. 2:3 is that they take their share in the suffering. Paul’s share was taken by Paul, who was in prison for the Lord’s sake (2 Tim. 1:8), and Timothy also was to “suffer evil along with the glad tidings.” This “suffering” was not a common sorrow or pain of life, the kind of thing that might come upon any person in the world. It was connected directly with the glad tidings. No doubt, such sufferings include persecutions, reproaches, and other evils that are endured for Christ’s sake.

Perhaps, it may help to illustrate these sufferings by referring to a good soldier in the OT. Not a good **general**, mind you, but a good **soldier**! There is a difference. Nor is a strong desire for promotion in rank an attribute of a good soldier. So who is the best example of a good soldier in the OT? Samson was strongest. Goliath was big. David won victories. Which was the best example of a good soldier?

How about Uriah the Hittite? Consider his qualifications for being considered the best example of a good soldier in the OT. First, he was a soldier in David’s army. Like Ittai the Gittite and some others, he was not an Israelite. Yet his loyalty and obedience to orders are unquestioned (2 Sam. 11). His prowess as a soldier was such that his assignment to a place where valiant men were assigned caused no suspicions to be raised (2 Sam. 11:15-16). The idea, of course, was that he should be killed without suspicion falling on David or Joab, his murderers. In the siege of Rabbah, while serving with valiant fellow-soldiers, Uriah the Hittite participated in a victorious routing of the enemy that pursued them back “as far as the entrance of the gate” (2 Sam. 11:23). Every one of those valiant soldiers risked his life, as evidenced by the death of some, including Uriah. They all deserved medals. They were, all of them, good soldiers unto death. And we are about to see that there is a reason to suppose that Uriah was worthy of the first

place among them.

In 2 Sam. 23, there is a list of the mighty men that David had. In 2 Sam., these men are viewed as overcoming the works of the flesh, a topic that comes out strongly all through this book. In 1 Chron. 11, a similar but longer list appears, but there the emphasis is on what the grace of God was doing in Israel, a different viewpoint from that of 2 Sam. In looking for good soldiers, it is more appropriate for us to look at the list in 2 Sam., because the character of the enemies as connected with works of the flesh is more in view in 2 Sam. So where is Uriah’s name in 2 Sam. 23? In v. 39, his is the last name of all! So how does being last in the list of David’s mighty men affect our opinion of Uriah as a soldier? Well, first of all, it is evidence that Uriah was a good soldier indeed, better than all those thousands of soldiers whose names are not in the list at all. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, “But many first shall be last, and last first” (Matt. 19:30). So meditating on the position of Uriah’s name in this list along with Matt. 19:30, the thought comes easily that Uriah was a good soldier, and not just barely good but extremely good, perhaps even worth calling him the best example of a good soldier!

So what did Uriah suffer? He was murdered by his commander-in-chief to keep him from finding out about the commander-in-chief’s adultery with his wife. The result of the adultery was conception of a child. Now, adultery was a crime in Israel, punishable by death according to the law, and the commander-in-chief tried to hide the sin. He called Uriah back from the war and sent him home to his wife. If Uriah was with his wife, even once, then the adultery would be hidden from all men because everyone would think Uriah was the father of the child. But Uriah did not go home to his wife. The commander-in-chief asked, “Why didst thou not go down to thy house?” (He meant, “to thy wife”!) And this question became the crucial moment in all of Uriah’s life as a soldier. If he agreed to go to his house, he would have lived. If not, his commander-in-chief would allow the adultery to become common knowledge to all the world except to Uriah because he would murder Uriah. Not knowing that his life was hanging in the balance, Uriah had to answer this question. What did he say?

He said, “The ark . . .” (2 Sam. 11:11). What an amazing way to begin his answer! He could have said, “The kingdom . . .” or “the nation . . .” or “the war . . .” But, instead, he said, “The ark . . .” What was the ark?

Moses made the ark in the wilderness of Sinai according to the pattern details of Ex. 25:1-22. It was the most precious object in Israel because the blood of atonement was sprinkled there on the mercy-seat. And the cherubim of judgment looked down toward the tables of stone on which the ten commandments were written as they lay inside the ark. But the blood came in between, just as the precious blood of Jesus satisfies the glory and majesty of God. And so God is just and the justifier of every one that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, it was that same ark that was the first thing to pop out of Uriah the Hittite’s lips in answer to the most important question of his life.

Now the ark was in Uriah's heart before it appeared in the words of his mouth. "Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Lk. 6:45). And good soldiers are like that. They have hearts that love the Lord Jesus. And their hearts have an abundance of "good treasure" (Luke 6:45) inside. And so it ends up in their mouths. This is like 2 Tim. 2:2 where Timothy is exhorted to have Paul's doctrine in his mouth.

As the ark was made both of wood and of gold, so Paul's doctrine sets forth both the humanity and the deity of Christ, "who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in [the] likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6-7). And as the blood of atonement was sprinkled on the mercy-seat, so Paul wrote of Christ Jesus, "whom God has set forth a mercy-seat" (Rom. 3:25). When Paul wrote that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3), what is it but that the blood satisfied the majesty of God with respect to that which the law condemned. And as the beaten-work cherubim were a proof of unity, so Paul always insisted on the unity of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:4).

But Uriah had more to say. Let us hear it all: "The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in booths; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields: shall I then go into my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? [As] thou livest, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11). In these words another profound thing appears.

To Uriah, the ark outranks Joab! Joab was Uriah's superior officer in the army. But the ark had supreme pre-eminence over all. Now, some, if not most, of the readers of these words will know what it is to be under the command of a Joab. There are many self-important persons almost everywhere in Christendom. Some self-important persons may add a claim to authority based on rank or dignity. Be that as it may, and soldiers of Jesus Christ who are zealous to become good soldiers for Him can learn an important lesson from Uriah: the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of pre-eminence over all others. The flesh in the Joabs of Christendom does not like this point being emphasized anymore than Joab would have liked to hear Uriah's words. But what is due to Christ Himself must take priority over the affairs of this life that have to do with home and family, wife and children, even one's own life itself (Luke 14:26). This is very like 2 Tim. 2:4, is it not? Do you think this means that Uriah did not love his wife? What a foolish thought! Of course, he loved her! But the ark was so precious to him that it eclipsed all else.

So that is how Uriah suffered. He voluntarily refused the comforts of his own home because the ark of God (and others) were on his mind so strongly. To his commander-in-chief he became **by these words** expendable as a soldier, a liability rather than an asset to the army. Be careful to notice the difference: Uriah was not simply murdered, not just persecuted, not just abused or maltreated. Such things happen often in a sinful world. No, but Uriah the Hittite was murdered because the ark that Moses made was the prime motivator of his heart and his life. Yes,

that is the lesson! If you or I have suffered, or suffered much, there may be no difference between us and the ungodly who also suffer in this evil world. But if only we were able to give the Lord Jesus Christ the pre-eminence in all things, we would soon learn the truth of 2 Tim. 3:12 and take our share of the peculiar class of sufferings that are reserved for good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

So what can we conclude about Uriah the Hittite? Is there any profit in being a good soldier? Who would want to end up like him?

Shame on us if Christ be not everything to our souls! Uriah the Hittite lived long enough to earn the highest honor that a good soldier can earn: his name is last (i.e., first in some truly important sense) in the list of David's mighty men. God delivered him once and forever from all his connections with that wicked general, Joab. And God delivered him from the broken relationship that linked him with his adulterous wife. But what about the one thing that Uriah cared about more than anything else in the world?

After David repented, he returned to his earlier desire to build a house for the ark of God so that it would no longer abide in booths (2 Sam. 7:2, 1 Chron. 22:2,14). So God put David to work for the rest of his life to fulfil the desire of the heart of Uriah the Hittite.

Who can deny that Uriah the Hittite was a good soldier? Or, who would dare to say that his life was wasted? He died in the line of duty.

Dennis Ryan, 2003

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On the other hand, Jesus is Son of man, Adam was not; but, at the same time, Jesus was born by divine power, so that that *holy thing* which was *born of Mary* is called Son of God: this is true of none other. He is Christ born of man, but even as man born of God, so that the condition of humanity in Him is not that which Adam was, either before his fall or after his fall.

Letters of J. N. Darby 1:280.

But though Christ be made Lord and Christ as man, yet through His oneness with the Father and His being the true God, it runs up into a divine title; just as in the case with Son. He is in the place of Son as man, or we could not be with Him. "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"; but it cannot be separated from divine and eternal Sonship. As man He becomes and enters into -- is in so far as He is a man in-the relationship with the Father as divine and eternal Son. In all the works of God we find this co-operation of the Persons. The Son wrought; yet He could say, "The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works:" and, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

Letters of J. N. Darby 2:85.

Extract from J, N, Darby --

Doing All in the Name of the Lord Jesus

"Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Here I get the whole course of everyday life. There are constantly difficulties that I find in passing through this world. I say, Ought I to do this thing or that, or not? I am uncertain as to the right course, or I may find great hindrances to doing what I think to be right. Now if ever I find myself in doubt, my eye is not single; my whole body is not full of light, therefore my eye is not single. God brings me into certain circumstances of difficulty until I detect this. It may be something that I never suspected in myself before which hinders me from seeing aright; but it is something between me and Christ; and until that is put away, I shall never have certainty as to my path. Therefore he says, "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." This will settle 999 cases out of 1,000. If you are questioning whether you shall do a thing or not, just ask yourself, Am I going to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? It will settle it at once.

Thus if a person says, What harm is there in my doing such-and-such a thing? I ask, Are you going to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? Perhaps it may be something of which you will answer at once, Of course not. Then it is settled at once. It is the test of the state of the heart. If my eye is single, if the purpose of my heart is all right, I get here what settles every question: it tests my heart. I wanted to know the right path, and it is as simple as ABC. If my heart is not upon Christ, I shall endeavor to do my own will; and this is not God's will. There is the constant uniform rule which clearly judges every path and circumstance: am I simply doing it in the name of the Lord Jesus?

But what do I find with it? "Giving thanks to God and the Father by him." In another place it is said, "In everything give thanks." Where my heart can take Christ with me, my mind is on God, and I can say He is with me, even if it is tribulation. I have got the path of God, I have got Christ with me in my path; and I would rather be there than in what is apparently the fairest and pleasantest thing in the world, as it is said in Psa. 84, "In whose heart are the ways of them."

Thus closes this unfolding of the life of Christ. It begins with the great truth that we are dead and risen with Christ-the judgment of the old man absolutely and completely, and our reckoning it practically to be dead. People have talked about dying to the flesh, and of its being a slow death, etc., which is all nonsense. It is a simple fact that is true already. And if I died with Him, I shall live with Him. It is the power of this that works in my soul. The root of all Paul's doctrine is that we have been crucified with Him, and have died with

Him; and it is not now we who live, but Christ that lives in us. Then Christ becomes the object of this life. Having laid that ground, that the old man is put off and the new man put on, which is Christ, he draws the consequence of the blessing in which we stand, and the fruits which spring from Him; and then there is this simple but blessed rule for him that is in earnest -- I do nothing but what I can do in the name of the Lord Jesus.

One great thing here practically put before us is this Christ is all. He is in all; but this is the great thing we have to look to, Is He practically all? Can you honestly say, Though a poor weak creature, notwithstanding I am not conscious of having a single other object in the world but Christ? You find many difficulties -- you are not watchful enough -- your faith is feeble -- you know your shortcomings; but can you, notwithstanding all this, honestly say, I have no object in the world but Christ?

First, the root of all is Christ as the life. Then, we pass over to the outward conduct in the man's walk. And let me remark that, while a person may be walking outwardly uprightly and blamelessly, it may be very feebly as a Christian and without spirituality. You will find many a true Christian, who has Christ as his life, and with nothing to reproach him as to his walk, and yet has no spirituality whatever. If you talk to him about Christ there is nothing that answers. There is, between the life that is at the bottom and the blamelessness that is at the top, between him and Christ, a whole host of affections and objects that are not Christ at all. How much of the day, or of the practice of your soul, is fined up with Christ? How far is He the one object of your heart? When you come to pray to God, do you never get to a point where you shut the door against Him? where there is some reserve, some single thing in your heart, that you keep back from Him? If we pray for blessing up to a certain point only, there is reserve; Christ is *not* all practically to us.

Collected Writings 16:157, 158.

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I am daily more convinced that evangelicalism with partial truth is the abandonment of what Paul taught.

Letters of J. N. Darby 1:398.