

# **Learning To Rule Is Not Easy**

OR  
(The Glory of a Covenant People)



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This Book is produced by  
**THE OPEN WORD MINISTRY**  
A Ministry of  
**Missoula Landmark Missionary Baptist Church**  
**Missoula, Montana, USA**

#### **FOREWORD --- ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The material in this thesis comes after much prayer and study. Any time one dares to preach or teach something which is not generally understood he lays himself open to criticism. I am willing to face that from my brethren. I am only anxious that what is presented please the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ. If it meets His approval I shall be satisfied.

Several brethren have encouraged me to write this book. It is possible some of those may be disappointed at my treatment of the subject. Several others, upon being told the general nature of the subject, have gravely warned me against saying things which might suggest distinctions in the status of the saved which many are not willing to accept. I fear that the spirit of ecumenism has reached much farther into the lives of most of us than we are willing to believe.

If my general theme is understood and received I shall be happy. Some details, even as the book suggest, are only suggestive conclusions. Give those your prayerful consideration and I shall welcome any suggestions you may have.

My gratitude is extended to a number of brethren. Most will know whom I mean, I want to thank Bro. James A. McCoy, pastor of Lokahi Missionary Baptist Church, Honolulu, Hawaii, who at my request consented to read the manuscript. He made several valuable suggestions which I have noted.

Also, I wish to thank Bro. Lauren L. White, pastor of Mea Hou Missionary Baptist Church, who asked to read the manuscript, for his encouragement in getting it printed. Numerous other brethren have offered suggestions during discussions we have had of different aspects of the subject.

My heart has been warmed because of the reaction of several young brethren who have read the manuscript and found themselves facing challenges they had not even thought of before and who encouraged the publication of the work.

Not only is there a need of brotherliness now but when the Antichrist is ruling and we are cut off from general acceptance in the world we shall especially feel the need of one another. Those who do not anticipate being here during that time will especially feel the need for the comfort of fellowship, though it may only be found in "underground" situations.

God in His mercies has designed his dealings with us so that we are largely dependent upon one another for encouragement and help. The very nature of His body, the church, is such that we are afforded the strength and even a touch of life through the fellowship of the body and with the Father and Son.

The title of the book is designed to suggest that it is now that men must become prepared for the next age. God receives special glory from a people separated to Himself in covenant relationship. That people, in turn, shall be exalted in glory by virtue of that relationship. We commend this work to His hands, trusting Him to use it for His glory or consign it to oblivion as His own wisdom determines best.

— August 1981

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Baptism Just May Be Important**

What you are now considering is not a discussion of baptism itself. Since baptism is, as often considered, "the door of the church," what we are considering is the local church. Why should one, or should one, join a local church? What difference does it make whether or not he unites with a congregation near his home? Is it good? Is it necessary?

Protestant churches have followed fairly close to their mother, Rome, in practices which suggest that salvation is in the church.

Their statements of Faith indicate that one may be saved outside the church, but the strong implication is that unless they are church members and continue the routine of keeping certain Commandments or practices, then professing Christians cannot be finally accepted with God.

Rome teaches that salvation is in the church. Protestants, by "baptizing" infants, imply that salvation is in the church. Further, they're insisting the form of life lived may mean one can lose his salvation also suggests that salvation is in the church.

Some denominations actually insist that without baptism it is impossible to be in the body of Christ (as they say) where salvation is to be found. Thus the "Church of Christ" makes baptism essential to salvation. It is as though salvation, in the sense of redemption or justification or that initial step of deliverance, were located within the membership of those baptized and could not be reached except by becoming a member.

Baptists, on the other hand, have traditionally taught that salvation is before and without baptism, that becoming a church member is for people already saved and has nothing to do with whether or not one shall ultimately be accepted of the Lord.

Church membership is a "work of righteousness," therefore, has nothing to do with being saved (Titus 3:5).

This Biblical emphasis upon a saving grace which is not contingent upon one's manner of living has posed a dilemma for other Christians and is not properly understood by many Bap-

tists.

### **Why be a Baptist?**

If one can be saved without being Baptist, then why be a Baptist? If one does not need to live a righteous life in order to go to heaven, then why be concerned about the way one lives?

So we are dealing with two very important matters:

Being a church member calls first certain forms and acts of obedience pertaining to the present life. Are these valuable?

Does church membership have anything to do with the age to come?

This writer vividly remembers an "experience" which occurred on August 28, 1934. I know that experiences are not dependable unless they are supported by the written Word, for the Bible alone must evaluate our experiences and explain them. Still, at the time, before I had such Bible knowledge, I had assurance in my heart that this experience was of God. Nobody had to explain to me that it was "a salvation, and that of God." I was not a church member and did not receive baptism until October 1, 1934.

So my experience was before baptism -- before church membership. It was as real as any experience since and more meaningful than most which have occurred since that time. I did not understand much about it at the time and what happened has become much more meaningful as the years have past, but I did understand at the time that I had been forgiven, that I was clean from all sin, and that God no longer condemned me.

I had been under a deep sense of guilt for a number of months. Nothing I did or thought could lift the sense of shame and conviction which I felt. Temporary relief would come when I would compare my good morality with that of some of my peers who were less fortunate than I in having strict parents who saw to it that I led a sheltered life, practiced moral principles, and learned obedience at home.

While I claimed credit for this "morality," it, in fact, was not to my credit but to Christian parents'. Nor was I allowed to feel for long that this morality was sufficient.

The conviction continued and the guilt feeling would not stay down. In my heart I knew that I was condemned in the eyes

of God and no amount of reasoning could make the feeling go away. But the moment I honestly admitted that I was guilty and deserving of whatever judgment God said was due me I knew deliverance. It had not been explained to me that I would have such an experience. I had heard preaching which said I must believe in Jesus, I must repent of sins, I must trust God.

I did believe in Jesus (historically), I was sorry for my sins, confessed them, and prayed for forgiveness, and I thought God was trustworthy. Still I was condemned. This only confused me more. I did not realize that my deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9) was deceiving me regarding what faith is, or what it means to trust God, and I did not know that sorrow for sins in the sense of being found out is not the same as repentance (turning from sins). *"Godly sorrow worketh repentance..."* (1 Corinthians 7:10).

Mine, though, was a sorrow of the world which works death, a sorrow of being found out. I did not need a lesson in doctrine. Lost men are in no position to explain or to receive explanations of the meaning of the workings of God's grace. All they need is to be brought up short, to see that they are evading the real issue: their own guiltiness. They must honestly face the fact of their own lost situation. Having admitted that they are guilty and helpless and deserving of judgment they have reached that point at which God can and will step in to do something about it. He did for me.

How much of my thinking was the product of my own reasoning as against how much of it was the result of God's gracious dealings with me are matters that even the theologians do not agree on. No doubt but that God initiates the process and works it through in His own way. Man's blindness, even man's resistance in resentment, may also indicate that God is not being allowed to go on with His gracious work. *"Why will ye die?"* He asks.

I had not changed to my way of life. I was not a church member. I had done nothing at all except admit my position before God and acknowledge that His judgment is just. I was not even thinking of the justice of God except to admit that might own condemnation was just.

Praise God, the saving operation was His. The work was instantaneous. It was efficient, even to an immediate relieving



of my distress of conviction. And it was understandable. I would say (and the Word abundantly confirms this) that God communicates with the heart of the sinner.

He was the One Who had made my heart to know guilt. His Spirit had borne home to my consciousness the fact of my sinfulness -- that in spite of my deceitful heart. He did this through causing my mind to accept the facts of my situation. The lessons concerning the meaning of sin, the reality of judgment, the accountability before God, a moral accounting, were all lessons which my upbringing gave me.

These facts the Holy Spirit impressed upon my mind so that I had to admit their truthfulness. When I did, God delivered me. At the time I knew so little about the Trinity, the substitutionary Atonement, the resurrection of Christ, and all other doctrines as to make those things practically meaningless. I have come to see their real value in some measure since then, but "salvation is not by knowledge" nor by any other human capacity; it is by grace.

My faith in God was born in the sudden consciousness that He was my Savior. I would not attempt to say that faith must precede God's operation in this first step. I know it is by grace, through faith that one is saved (including the deliverance of his life), but this brings up a lesson in doctrine which goes beyond my present purpose.

It seems to me that an explanation is in order which will assist those who now believe to understand just why being baptized is wise and good.

#### **The Spirit of This Age**

The spirit of this age has played down the importance of righteous living. The emphasis upon being saved (born again), of getting others saved, has dimmed the fact of God's original goal. Getting men delivered from sin's bondage is certainly a most important element in God's accomplishing His original purpose.

But when Adam was first made his "getting saved" was not a factor.

You say, "No, he was not lost before the Fall." True, so his redemption was not at that moment a necessity. This does not mean that God did not envision its need, nor that He was not

prepared for meeting that need. It just means that it was not in the original purpose.

Something else filled the picture and I think we need to know what it was, for then we can begin to understand God's dealings with men after they are redeemed.

Man's awareness of his own undone condition, his selfish desire to escape the predicament he is in, together with the evangelistic emphasis in most preaching, has brought men to feel that the escape of impending judgment is the most important consideration of all.

Necessary yes; important, yes! But it is something which entered as an accident, an intrusion, into God's creation. It is something necessary because an intruder would defeat God's original purpose. The serpent did not want God's original purpose for man to be realized. That purpose was there before the Fall of man, and it is still in God's heart. What is it?

When God made man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, He had told him to "*Have dominion*" (Genesis 1:26, 28). "*Subdue*" the earth and all things in it (v. 26).

He made man to be a ruler in the earth. This does not mean that he is to take God's place, but he is made in God's image so he can learn to rule under God and bring all things into submission to the will of God. This is a great goal.

The entrance of sin disqualified the man for this purpose, so His redemptive grace is set in motion to defeat this intrusion of the deceiver and allow His original purpose to prevail. "*All authority is of God*" and "*there is no authority but of God*" (Romans 13:1). Even the authority of Kings, governors, policemen, and parents is God's authority, making each "*the minister of God to thee for good*" (Romans 13:4).

This reflects God's original purpose to exercise His righteous will in the earth by human intermediaries. Sin distorts and corrupts this authority and redemption is essential to set things back into order so God's purpose can be accomplished. Redemption, then, is not merely to engineer man's escape from judgment or wrath; it is not merely for the sake of man. It is that God's purpose may be accomplished as originally designed.

Fear of authority, then, ought not to be merely because of the wrath (the fear of judgment), but "*for conscience*" (Romans

13:5), that is, that God's will may be done. Read on in this remarkable passage and see how that God is to be the center of our thoughts and action; His will and purpose is to be our goal. It is all to be "*unto the Lord*" (Romans 14:8), not to one's self (v. 7). The real goal calls for being "*acceptable to God*" (Romans 14:18).

That you and I escape judgment and gain a great peace and joy are ingredients in this will of God, but the great consideration is God's purpose.

(Let me inject parenthetically this explanation: If there was no sin or disorganization in the world at the first, what was the reason for Adam's having dominion and subduing the earth? That is just the situation.

It appears that the earth had formally been the domain of angels, or one group of them. It appears that Lucifer was the Head Angel over this group. God removed him from this position because of his pride and his desire to have a higher position.

The creation of man supplied one to take charge over the earth. That man was told to dress the Garden and "*keep*" it. This keeping or guarding suggest that an intruder might come in to disrupt God's order now placed in Adam's charge. This certainly adds complications to Adam's sin. Perhaps this is one reason the tempter went to the woman instead of directly to Adam. (cf. Genesis 2:15).

Man's ego is most difficult for him to overcome. It is as though he thought God is there for man's sake and man's rescue from hell were the primary purpose of God. But God's goal for the man He created is far greater than this. *He would make him like Himself*. He would share with him His own honor and power and glory. Such goals lend meaning to His wisdom in establishing the church, as we shall see.

The course of the age reflects the deterioration, a degeneration, in man's understanding of God's purpose. The early church pursued a nobler course. Paul envisioned man's being made into conformity to the Christ. The early church sought to win men away from the clutches of Satan, to be sure, but the New Testament abounds with evidence that God would make them like the Son.

God would purify their lives, exalt their intentions, and enrich

their experiences with joy and fellowship with Himself. It was far more than a "fire insurance policy" against the flames of hell. It was far more than "going to heaven" when one dies. In fact, very, very little is said about such a goal, for that indeed, is only a temporary location for disembodied spirits between death and the resurrection. Paul said this was not what he desired (2 Corinthians 5:4).

#### **A "Universal Church," False**

Then this misunderstanding of God's goal in saving sinners is further compounded by the suggestion that at the new birth one is "baptized into one body" (the church) by the Holy Spirit. This understanding is based on the Authorized Versions rendering of 1 Corinthians 12:13.

The context of this passage concerns the church, with emphasis upon its being composed of many members. This emphasis shows the responsibility for members one for the other and describes a personal, contact relationship which could only exist in a local congregation.

The false assumption that there is a universal body composed of all those born again is inserted at this point. The New Testament does not mention such a body. In fact, the very thought of such a "body" is anomalous. How can a "body" be universal?

The model is the human body in this context. There are many individual human bodies, but it would be foolish to speak of a "universal" human body. The parts of the human body (eyes, nose, mouth, etc.) are analogous to the individual members of the church body, but these "members" cannot exist apart from a uniting, a joining together, such as seen in the local church. A disunited group of parts is not a body. It must be harmoniously joined so as to function.

This language describes a local church. And the baptism mentioned is a prerequisite to such membership. (The baptizing is not "by" the Holy Spirit as the Agent, for Jesus Christ is the Agent, Matthew 3:11). This scripture also suggests that the element for this baptism is Holy Spirit. But this baptism only occurred one time, on the Day of Pentecost next after the resurrection of Christ).

The baptism which has to do with membership in the body is baptism in water. The baptism in water is of those *"in one*

*spirit.*" Because they have been brought to the condition of one mind they are fit members of the one body. So they all were (not "are") baptized into one body and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

This false theory of a universal church has made salvation something different than it was before Christ came. There is a difference between what God's grace provides men for this age, but salvation itself is not different. *"We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they"* (Acts 15:11), for God *"put no difference between us and them* (the fathers), *purifying their hearts by faith"* (vs. 9).

#### **A Baptist Heritage**

Those promises and blessings of this age available to believers now are not a part of the initial salvation, but are received as men walk by faith or meet the conditions, through faith, which provide them.

Our Baptist Heritage has suffered under the influence of the Reformation heritage of a universal church. The reformers (as Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, etc.), coming as they did from Romanism and believing as they did in "Holy Orders" and church salvation, were hard put to vindicate their claims of salvation and of authority for baptizing, so they "invented" the idea of a "mystical body" or universal church to meet this debacle.

## Chapter One

### **GLORY THROUGH FAITH AS THE DETERMINING FACTOR**

#### **In Being Saved**

When one reads the Scriptures he finds much said about obedience, about God's pleasure and displeasure, about salvation from destruction, about the salvation of the life, about prayer, and many other aspects of man's relationship with God.

In every situation -- no exception -- the factor which determines whether the relationship is correct or not is faith. Men may categorize faith on one side and works on the other, but even here the element of faith measures the works and determines whether or not God is pleased.

Bible believers will have no problem in accepting the idea that *"without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Hebrews 11:6).

They know that it is the mark of the man who is honest with God, that man cannot be saved if he does not have faith. Whether that faith was generated through his hearing the Word as a lost sinner, or his hearing as one who has admitted his need, now that he is saved, he knows it was through no merit of his own and not by any works which he himself did.

#### **In the Walk Before God**

Bible believers also realize that they must walk by faith. It is easy to forget this in our zeal to make an impression. But when we are honest with God we must admit that no works that we are able to do can accomplish God's purpose in our lives. *"He doeth the work."* "... *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:12, 13).

Works done in faith please God; works done in self-will are an abomination to God, even when it is works which might have been pleasing if done in faith.

Many outward actions are required by God of those who would honor Him. In this present age there is the matter of open confession (baptism, church membership, giving, witnessing, etc.). These are things to do; they are works. Their being

works does not make them wrong. The thing which determines whether they are right or wrong, acceptable to God or not, is whether they are done in faith.

We often do things, believing that it pleases God, that it will accomplish great good. We are sincere and would say that we "have faith." But we cannot have faith about that which is not prescribed by the Lord. To have faith it is necessary to believe Him --- believe what He has said --- from the heart.

When we are following our own judgment and disallowing God's revealed will (consciously or unconsciously) we may be sincere but we are not acting in faith. This is a delicate area and one which many may challenge, but I pray that each reader will study this thought.

If God did not say it, if it is the product of human wisdom or human judgment, even good judgment which would work in the business world, then when we do it we are not acting in faith. This is not to say that "faith is foolish."

In truth, the real foolishness is to trust our own judgment or strength. It is always folly to work without God's authorization.

This thinking leads us naturally to see the importance of knowing the will of the Lord. We need to read the Bible, pray over its message, and understand what the will of the Lord is. Otherwise we are walking in darkness and any so-called faith would be "blind faith."

Do not allow the logical course to deceive you. Do not heed the logic which says, "God gave us brains and he expects us to use them." Our brains must be used to learn His will. One is not truly using his brains when he is trusting his own judgment, for *"wisdom is justified of her children"* (Matthew 11:19).

The product of human judgment will be "human glory," not God's glory. If it is not God's glory, it is not of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). God gave us the capacity to make decisions so we could decide to give ourselves completely into His hands, not so we could decide what we like.

The religion of secular humanism which claims so many hearts today advocates the doing of whatever pleases you (the man). This makes man his own god and rejects the God of heaven. It requires no faith. That logic which says, "If it makes me happy it must be good," is not of God. *"Whatever is not of faith is*

*sin*" (Romans 14:23). This means faith in God.

Some people think they have faith because they are not plagued with doubts, or because they are confident that what they are thinking represents good judgment or a workable solution. So they feel they can go ahead. But this is not faith. Faith comes from confidence toward God (1 John 3:21; 1 John 5:14), consciousness of His revealed will, and a sincere desire that His will be done.

It is necessary that we know the Lord and recognized the importance of His will in order for us to have faith. Self-confidence may allow one to feel good deep down inside, but then rebellious sinners "feel good down inside" in their doings too, because of the blindness of their hearts and the lust of their flesh.

The careless son who dallies along the way, enjoying his own fun and games, may feel good while he is doing it, but when he remembers the revealed will of his father his good feelings are gone. It is only because men forget God that they feel good in their sins. This cannot be faith.

#### **In Times Past**

The doctrine of faith and of walking by faith is not something which began with the New Testament. It has always been that way. When God told Adam to eat freely of all the trees of the Garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was up to Adam to obey. He was to remain conscious of God's will and act accordingly.

Perhaps when Eve presented the forbidden fruit he remembered the warning, "*thou shalt surely die*," but he did not want to lose his wife. He "used the brains God gave him" to reason that the consequences would not, could not, be so bad as to require him to lose the woman God gave him. She had eaten and was not physically dead, so he would not physically die. I say "perhaps" this is the way he reasoned; the Bible does not tell us. But he certainly could not eat of that fruit in faith. He allowed his feelings to determine his course. One's feelings are not safe unless they are reinforced by the Word of God.

A lot of emotionalism in religion today is justified, even sought, on the grounds that it is pleasing to God. Again, let me say it: It is not our feelings we are to be concerned about; it is God's glory.



Abraham believed God when He promised him a son. But he was not acting in faith when he listened to Sarah's logic. She proposed that he take Hagar, her handmaid, and raise up a son. It sounded as though this might be what God wanted him to do. Had not God quickened his own body, as good as dead, so that he could do such a thing? But Sarah did not yet manifest the same quickening in her ability to bear a son.

Thus he abused God's gracious provision of renewed vigor to his own body and forgot that it was God's promise which would give him a son. This was not faith and did not please God. No matter how logical and right it appears, unless God has revealed it we must not assume it is the will of God.

Later, when God asked Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, and offer him in sacrifice to God, it occurred to him that this son was the seed through whom God had promised to raise up the nation and by whom He would provide the blessing for all the families of the earth. In this case, not only the brains God gave him, but the promise of God attested the fact of a resurrection.

Logic might have argued that a resurrection was not to happen, but this was not God's way. But Abraham had enough understanding of God's power and of God's faithfulness to believe He would do what he had said. So he went with Isaac to the appointed place to make the offering, *"esteeming that God was able to raise him even from the dead."* This is faith and it pleased God and is recorded in the testimony of the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11).

Even under the Law the point of faith determines whether God is being pleased. *"Because ye believed me not..."* God said to Moses when he smote the rock instead of speaking to it as God had commanded (Numbers 20:12).

God's sweeping indictment of that froward generation is manifest in this expression: *"children in whom is no faith"* (Deuteronomy 32:20). It is interesting to note that the word "truth" in Isaiah 26:2 is this same word: faith, the faith, or faithfulness.

For other uses see Proverbs 13:17; Proverbs 14:5; Proverbs 20:6).

Putting faith in God daily is certainly an Old Testament doctrine: *"Put your trust in my shadow"* (Judges 9:15) *"under*

*whose wings thou art come to trust"* (Ruth 2:12); *"God of my rock; in Him will I trust"* (1 Samuel 22:3). A concordance will reveal many, many usages.

It seems almost unnecessary to say it, but the manner in which many preachers deal with the law of Moses suggests that they have missed the element of faith involved in its keeping by Israel of old. Israel was supposed to keep the law and as they believed God they did keep it, insofar as they were able.

The trouble lay in the fact that they were not able to keep it. The very truth lies in this fact: it was not possible for the flesh to keep it, so its purpose was to prove that men could not keep such a standard through their own wills or ability in the flesh. *"Before faith came* (the faith of Christ, E.B.), *we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards the revealed"* (Galatians 3:23).

That expression, *"before faith came"* (Galatians 3:23), must not be understood to mean that there was no faith in Old Testament days; nor does it mean that men lived by law as against living by faith. Joshua lived under the law the day he led Israel around the walls of Jericho, but Israel that day walked by faith and so the walls fell (Hebrews 11:30).

The list of the men and women of faith includes many who were living under the law, but they walked, they acted, they served by faith. The law shut men up to faith that is, "the faith of Christ.

#### **In Our Day**

Our being saved by faith, walking by faith, living by faith, standing by faith, obeying by faith, etc., are all references to a personal trust. It is hearing and accepting in confidence what God has said. No man can be in a right relationship to God who does not have such personal confidence or does not accept His words. We call this "personal faith."

It is the faith of a man in the Person of God. This kind of faith comes by hearing the words of God (Romans 10:17).

This is not the same thing as "the faith of Christ," yet no man can be saved "by the faith of Christ" in the sense that expression is used, unless he has personal faith, his own faith in God.

### **Some Words About "The Faith of Christ"**

The expression is unique. It appears only after the coming of the Christ and evidently describes the personal faith of the Man, Christ Jesus. Thus it is said to be "*the faith which should afterwards be revealed*" (Galatians 3:23).

*"Wist ye not that I must be about my fathers business?"* Why? Because He believed His Father in heaven. *"I do always those things well pleasing in His sight."* His every act and word were a product of implicit trust in God. His whole life was lived by faith. Such is the faith of Christ. His implicit faith, producing perfect obedience, accomplishes for us a salvation in exact accord with the will of God.

It is not surprising then that His Father "*saw the travail of His soul and was satisfied.*" In this man was found the disposition which pleases God perfectly. The reason He can be our Savior is that He obeyed perfectly and wrought an exact obedience and accomplished a perfect redemption. The work is said to be "finished," therefore, the work which the Father has given Him to do. He wrought it by faith.

But now, if we are to enter into that finished work and partake of its full benefits, we must do so by faith. Ours will be a faith which comes by hearing the report. The report is reliable and our hearts are captivated by that report. We look at our own undone condition and we see that perfect obedience and we surrender in faith to Him.

Our faith may be weak and spasmodic. It certainly will be limited by our grasp of the fullness of the work which He has done. It may be limited because of our lack of understanding of the largeness of the heart of God.

But it is our faith generated by His words. Such faith has to begin at a point in time, when we are at someplace. Some of us can remember that time and place.

What a blessing! It is not that we can remember when we were first taught of God as to what his words say. It was not when we first accepted with our minds the record of His birth or life or death or resurrection.

All such "intellectual faith" is not the faith of the Bible. Men believe because of the reliability of the record when it is intellectual faith or historical faith.

But personal faith comes because of the overwhelming import of the message as the Holy Spirit lends it power over our deceitful hearts, convincing them where we have not previously seen what the true facts were.

I can remember believing these records of Christ coming, His birth, His miracles, His compassion, His suffering on the cross. His being buried in Joseph's new tomb, and His resurrection from the dead.

I even believe that He ascended in a cloud to heaven, that He would come back to earth to judge men. I do not remember when I began to believe these things. But this is not faith. Faith is in a Person.

It is committal of one's self to that person. It is not a mere acceptance of a record of facts by the willingness to admit that those facts are necessary expressions of God's own will and reflects His actions, so we surrender ourselves to Him.

Actually, maybe we are not able to surrender ourselves, but we admit the facts and "the face up to" their reality. Then it is that God grants us a heart to submit to Him.

That is the beginning of trusting Him. It is not the end. It is not all that is required. Nor is it all that your heart will be inclined toward at the time. You will desire to serve Him, to obey Him. It will not be difficult to go into the waters of baptism if you have heard that this is something which He might require. You will be specially inclined to want to know what He has to say in the Bible. You will want to know Him better. (If I am not describing the experience of others who have trusted Him, at least I am describing my own experience).

Beginning at that first surrender we start to walk by faith, to live by faith. But our nature being what it is, our hearts being deceitful as they are, and Satan being the cunning deceiver that he is, it will not be long before one will be leaning upon his own judgment to understand what the Bible says and upon his own resolution of purpose and strength of will to do what he thinks is right in order to please this new Savior.

Some seem never to overcome the first waves of defeat which they encounter. The actions which come from habit, from the old nature, will overwhelm and contribute to confusion and even defeat. These temporary setbacks must not be allowed to stop us. We must go on. But how does one go on?

It can only be the same way he began. You admitted God' wisdom and accepted God's mercy. You did not earn it or deserve it. You believed what He said and you committed yourself to Him for whatever His purpose or will might indicate.

If you to go on, this is the way. You had already admitted your helplessness, your ignorance, and your need. God came to your rescue. Do you think that you were suddenly made strong and wise and without further need? Some seem to think so. But it is not so. The walk by faith will have to be a walk in constant dependence upon Him.

As you grow to understand what has happened and why and as your heart continues to yield, the facts of the Word will become more and more meaningful. Your need for his support and strength will be increasingly felt and you will go on depending upon Him. He did the work!

He is able to do the work! It is His desire and will to work! And you are happy to trust Him to do it! No, this will not mean that you will sit back and never do anything. But it will mean that you do not trust your own wisdom or strength to do it. You will approach every move with prayer and surrender in your heart.

This is the way faith responds to God's direction. That direction as to its principles is laid down in the written Word, but you soon find that direction is brought home to your consciousness in sudden and unexpected ways. You are experiencing the leadership of the Holy Spirit. He will grant you discernment of what the Word says. He will point out subjects for prayer. He may call to your attention things which ought to be surrendered in your personal life.

You will be called on to respond to Him positively each time some element of His leadership becomes a matter of awareness in your heart. This will be an increasingly blessed experience. The joy of it will be like that first experience when you originally admitted your need and let God have His way. Whole days of joy will follow each other as you trust the Lord Jesus to will and to work in your life.

This is not the same as trying with all your might to do the right thing. It does not mean praying for "help" to do the Lord's will. The willing and the doing are His work. It is His perfect faith which will please the Father as the work is wrought in you. You are simply the instrument. Christ is the pleasing Performer Who will glorify the Father.

### Serving in the Spirit

Our beginning zeal, even our love for this new Lord we have come to trust, are influenced by a pattern of living which we have known through all our previous life. When Isaac was young and still not able to appreciate fully what it means to obey, his older brother, Ishmael, found occasion to mock him.

The story is told very briefly (Genesis 21:8-11). Isaac had only just been weaned. Perhaps he was four or five years old. At least he was old enough to grasp the significance of his older brother's mockings. The mockings, of course, also came from that older (half-) brother's mother, Hagar. The explanation is found in the New Testament (Galatians 4:29).

He who was born after the flesh (Ishmael) persecuted him that was born after Spirit. That is the way it is still. Ishmael represents the original (flesh) nature. Isaac represents the new (Spirit-born) nature. These two are out of harmony, actually, and are in conflict with each other (Galatians 5:17).

The attacks which the older, first nature (flesh) makes on the newer nature may not always be open and identifiable. As the younger child does not know just how to act, the older, more experienced child demonstrates his wisdom and understanding and leads on in the game. As the younger stumblingly attempts to "keep up," as children will, the older makes fun. His jealousy becomes a sort of contempt and his actions may bring great shame upon the younger. All this is said to be an "allegory." So it is.

If the Christ is to do the willing and the doing of those things which our lives are to accomplish He must be in control. If we listen to the "wisdom" of our older nature, use our experience, our education, and our natural judgment, we may appear very wise and we may "get things done," or as it is said, "get the job done." But it may be done in the wisdom and energy of the flesh, in which case the man gets the glory and not the Christ.

Paul's contrast of the ministering "*in the flesh*" as against that "*in the Spirit*" is discussed in 2 Corinthians 2:14 (see also: 2 Corinthians 6:10). He insists that God always causes us to triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14) and says that, since the goal is to make manifest the sweetness of Christ ( "*the savor of His knowledge*" ), we are not sufficient of ourselves.

The sweetness causes men to come in contact with "life" or it results in a deathliness, in the one case because the message or testimony is received and in the other because it is rejected. The overwhelming challenge of such an influence born upon others causes us to stop and question who is sufficient for such things (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16).

By way of demonstrating that Paul did not feel sufficient himself, and that God was his sufficiency (2 Corinthians 3:5), Paul points to the Corinthians themselves as an example of his labors. The testimony was written for all to read. But it was not in a book or on paper; it was recorded on human hearts. The writing was not by human skill or instrument; it was by "*the Spirit of the living God*" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Then he repeats the proposition: God makes us able ministers. The work is His, both to will and to do (2 Corinthians 3:6). And if He does it the labor will be of the Spirit and not of the flesh; the product will not be death as when the letter is ministered but will be life given by the Spirit. Then Paul goes on to contrast that ministration in Old Testament days with that in our day. One was wrought by the law (2 Corinthians 3:7); the other is wrought by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:8). One wielded condemnation and death; the other wrought righteousness and life.

Have some of my readers given up at this point? Do not despair. The flesh is at work when mere letter is the standard and dependence. What is that letter? It is the mere writing of right and wrong. It comes as doctrine, as program, a keeping men busy in doing things, learning things, performing tasks. Is this not the description which fits so many activities of churches in our day? Not that doing, learning, being busy are not necessary.

The distinction is in whether or not our dependence is upon these things, doing and learning and busyness, to "get the job done." The stirring up of the natural man will mark a ministry "in the flesh," whether it is to educational standards, emotional highs, or make-work performances.

On the other hand, a ministry of the Spirit will have the Christ as the object of its love and attention. A willingness to hear Him, obey Him, and to submit to Him shall characterize such a servant. His heart is turned to Lord, not just to the task, the work, or to people. When these claim the hearts attention it is

likely that it is because that heart is still blinded or veiled.

All of Israel's zeal to carry out the language of Moses only reveals a need for hearts to turn to the Lord. If they will the veil will be taken away (2 Corinthians 3:15, 16). It is "the Lord" who claims the attention. *"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"* (2 Corinthians 3:17).

The last Adam has become a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45). The Christ is the Lord, the Spirit. He is now identified with the Holy Spirit to execute God's purpose to give life to men in this age.

The giving of this life is not merely something accomplished once (when we believe), though of course one cannot be lost after he has been born again. But life must be nourished and cherished day by day. It is that way in this world. Life has been manifested (cf. 1 John 1:1-3) and it is our privilege to live it each day.

But it flourishes and blesses as we regularly feed on Christ and *"grow up unto Him in all things"* (Ephesians 4:15). With *"unveiled face"* we behold Him as in a mirror (2 Corinthians 3:18), as He is reflected to us in the written Word and in the lives of our brethren. Seeing that glorious image without a veil, we are changed by the Spirit into the same image, not all at once, but *"from glory to glory."*

The image of the glory of God which shone in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6) is not being seen as clearly as it ought. Not many know what they are looking for. Too many are looking at human accomplishments: counting heads and dollars and doings. The Christ Who was the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His Person (Hebrews 1:3) is the pattern which lets us know what the glory is. He was "the fullness of Godhood in a body" and it pleased the Father that all should dwell in Him (Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9).

What is this "brightness, fullness, and glory?" What is seen in Jesus which had never been seen in its fullness before? It is called God's glory. It was bright in the face of Moses when he symbolically delivered it to Israel on tables of stone. But it was fading there (2 Corinthians 3:13) because of the weakness of the flesh, or that it was *"weak through the flesh"* (Romans 8:3).



It demanded a righteousness commensurate with the Person of the Lawgiver. Its demand was righteousness and it reflected the glory of its Giver, but that glory was dimmed, even hidden, under the veil (flesh).

It was not dimmed in the Christ but shone in its brightness, in its fullness. And as we allow Him to work in Spirit power in our lives it will shine in its brightness in our own lives, and will fulfill (fill to the full) the righteousness of the law (Romans 8:4). Thus "righteousness" is a part of the "fullness" of glory which shone in its brightness in Christ. But the *"express image of the Father's Person"* suggests that every other attribute of God was reflected in the Christ.

The word "reflected" is propitious. Paul said *"as in a glass,"* that is, a looking-glass or mirror. The total of God's attributes are thus reflected in the Christ. In a dimmer fashion they were reflected in the Law of Moses.

Also, in some measure they are reflected in us. God would have us *"conformed to the image of His Son,"* that is, that the image of God in which man was created and which was lost in the Fall, should be restored in us. Who knows just how God-like Adam was before the Fall?

It is not that we are gods, though in a sense we are charged with being like Him and with doing as He does. This means that His attributes must be allowed back into our lives. Not that we personally have ever had these before the working of His grace. But that is a weak way of setting forth what God has in store for us (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Is it not evident that all the slavish service we can perform in our strength and wisdom is but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) when contrasted with His own sweetness "revealed" in us? (Galatians 1:15, 16).

When it is seen that God's purpose is not merely to rescue us from death or hell, but to make us like Himself, so we can carry out His desire in us, so we can enjoy fellowship with Him, and so He can have the pleasure of His will in our lives, then it can surely be seen that a goal too high for the flesh is before us. Only as we trust Him and live by such faith is it possible for this goal to be attained.

We are saved by grace through faith. This first step was God's doing. We walk or live before Him by faith. This step, too, is

His doing.

In the days before Christ it was this way. Man has not had two plans of salvation, one for this age since Jesus came and another between Adam's Fall and the coming of Christ.

Before the law came we see men pleasing God as they believed Him. Very little is said about the manner of man's initial approach to God, or what we refer to as "being saved." We know that when the rest is pleasing to God the first step must have met His approval.

If Abel could offer an acceptable sacrifice through faith, acting in a manner which shows he already trusted God, then there had to be a beginning point to that faith. He is commended, not for coming to the beginning point, for God must initiate that action, but he is commended for the manner of his sacrifice. Then it is said that by this he obtained witness that he was "already" righteous. To this God bore witness to His own pleasure in Abel's gift (offerings).

And through God's testimony the sacrifice of Abel continues to bear witness to this day (Hebrews 11:4). Again, Enoch is cited for his faith and that by such faith he pleased God. It is not the first moment of his faith which is cited but the fact that he walked with God (Hebrews 11:5; Genesis 5:22, 24).

Again, Noah moved with fear, prepared an ark to this saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Hebrews 11:7).

Now, may we have some sincere and honest consideration of what this verse says:

Noah prepared an ark which God says was a sign of his having faith. This act of faith qualified him to inherit righteousness. He was moved with fear, but this does not suggest that he was afraid as a lost man is afraid: that he must face God in judgment. The fear was because he believed God's words concerning the coming of a flood of waters. Fear and faith may be compatible, then.

This context has nothing to do with the first time Noah believed God, but has to do with his believing God regarding something which was to come to pass.

The faith he had to believe God's warning is no different from

the faith one must have an order to be born again in the first place but this is a picture of that faith measuring up to a situation which came later.

This act of faith automatically judged (condemned) the world, pointing out its wickedness and how it deserved judgment.

It is not said that this faith at first caused him to become an heir of righteousness. But now that it continues to manifest itself in obedience to God it qualifies him to be an heir of righteousness.

What is it to be an heir of righteousness? Evidently it means that one is accorded the status of sharing the righteous authority of the King, Jesus, so that he may reign with Him in the Kingdom. It bespeaks the fear of Him, and awe and respect, which is essential in those who shall reign with Christ.

Again, Abraham is cited for his faith when he obeyed God in leaving the land of his birth and his father's house and going to the land of which he knew nothing, not even what land it was. Such faith is not necessarily filled with knowledge of things ahead, though it is in a Person Whom one knows.

He lived in this land by faith, a land of promise, and thus became an heir of the promise. His eye was upon something which the natural eye could not see (so it must have been an eye of faith), that is, a city which hath foundations.

Again, Sarah was able to conceive seed in her old age, after the time when she should have been able to do so and after her natural strength had passed the years of child-bearing. This was because she judged God faithful.

These all lived and died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. These promises "*persuaded*" them to trust God and to embrace them. These promises made them acknowledge that this world is not our home as it now is, so we "*seek a country.*"

It is not the first believing which is meant in any of these cases, but that living by faith, walking by faith, obeying by faith, looking ahead to the realization of God's faithfulness. They were not mindful of natural losses, of earthly gain, else they could have turned back to these, but they were mindful of a "better country." That better country is the Kingdom ahead. It involves God's purpose to bring to pass the condition in which His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In Old Testament days this walk by faith pleased God. It still does. But then it was prompted by a man's "remembering" God's promises. Today that remembering is accomplished through the Spirit's *"bringing all things to your remembrance."* Today, our responsibility is the same as theirs: to trust God. But we have provided for us *"some better thing"* (Hebrews 11:40).

This does not mean that in the age to come we shall have a better inheritance or reward. It means we have a better provision for obeying God if we will but trust Him. (See Chapter 6, p. 106, for a discussion of the more glorious administration of the Spirit.)

#### **The Promise and a Better Hope**

It may be difficult for us to appreciate just what Abraham and the fathers had in mind when they saw the promises afar off and embraced them. The written revelation (God's Word) at that point was very limited. Many of the promises to Abraham when we see them in Genesis, seemed to apply only to a land, a seed of great numbers, a great nation above other nations, and similar things for the present age. But Hebrews suggest that Abraham, at least looked for a city. Just how clear a concept of a city he had is not said.

A man who lives in a tent, with no foundation, not even a floor, might well yearn for a more permanent home. But could he see *"that holy city"* which was not spoken about in the Bible until much later?

We think that even many Christians in this age are very vague about that city. The writer to the Hebrews suggest that ours is a better hope than theirs. Were they not thinking of many of the same benefits which believers today think of and the life to come?

Just what is better about the promises to us as against those to the fathers? For one, it is said that "perfection" is in the arrangements (Hebrews 7:19), and that this allows a *"drawing nigh"* to God. Peter tells us that this hope is supported by the resurrection (1 Peter 1:3) and our own resurrection and being like Him is involved (1 John 3:1-3).

Now that Christ has risen and, as the Seed promised to Abraham, is able to bless all the families of the earth, we are blessed with a better hope than that which Abraham could see

with his eye of faith.

He could envision a time when Israel would be a great nation, ruled by its own princes, looked up to by the nations around them, occupying their own land. This came to realization in the days of Solomon. But now that the Christ has come we can envision a Kingdom, ruled by Him and shared by those who have been made like Him through grace.

The city promised to Abraham is more than a secured dwelling among men, though it likely was seen by Abraham too, as he saw "*Christ's Day*" and was glad (John 8:56).

The Day of Christ is the kingdom. Sometimes, I think, we sell those old men of faith short in what they understood. God communed with them and they had for more understanding than we may know. Still, the promises to us are said to be better, so the details are given for us and "*some better thing*" is afforded us for remembering and laying claim to those promises, so the "*better hope*" of being like Him is brighter to us than to them.

In order to affect the better promise we have a better priesthood. They had to depend upon men who ministered the righteousness of the law. Or, before the law, they merely ministered the righteousness of God in that limited context which had been revealed to them. But we have the Christ Himself -- the Spirit of Christ -- to enrich our lives with the "things of Christ" today. He is that High Priest who can do far more for us, because He administers a far better sacrifice -- Himself.

Then ours are benefits of the New Covenant. Theirs was not always realized this way. Abraham had been promised certain things by covenant and on its terms He was able to grasp things in the kingdom to come, the Day of Christ, the Kingdom.

Perhaps this is because that covenant with Abraham contained the very same promises which are now confirmed to us in a "*New Covenant*," which is the Abrahamic, the "*Everlasting*" Covenant now renewed and sealed with the blood of Christ.

#### **A Better Expression of Covenant Relationship**

Among the "better things" which are said to be ours is the matter of new covenant privileges. Jeremiah had prophesied the making of a new covenant with the house of Israel and

with the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31).

Not many Christians seem to appreciate this position which believers may enjoy today. Jesus the Christ, having sealed the covenant with His blood, brought in advantages for those in the relationship which were not enjoyed by men before.

It should be understood that the promises were made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Later, to the same people, God made a covenant at Sinai and in the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy 29). We call the first (at Sinai) the Law.

Some call those things spoken forty years later "the Palestinian Covenant," thinking of it as providing the conditions for their living peacefully in the land of Canaan. That language (Deuteronomy 29) which differentiates between what was spoken at Sinai and what was spoken in Moab points out that by their giving heed to the Lord's words they would enter into covenant "this day" and into the oath which God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deuteronomy 29:12). This is necessarily a reference to the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It cannot apply to the Law from Sinai, for no oath on God's part was made there. But were not these natural descendants of Abraham already in covenant relationship with God by the terms of the covenant with Abraham? No, for relationship with God calls for personal responsibility. And if the individuals present to hear Moses that day were to reap the benefits of that covenant then they must enter in that day. Only so might they be "established" that day for a people to God (Deuteronomy 29:13). And the same would apply to succeeding generations (vs. 14, 15).

Now, among those succeeding generations there must be considered those from among the nations who are grafted into the "tame olive" (Romans 11) so as to partake of the root and fitness of the olive. Gentiles may come in by faith and they "stand" by faith (Romans 11:20). If they do not live by faith they may be broken off (vs. 20-22) and lose covenant relationship. (This matter of covenant relationship will be dealt with in chapter 3).

The covenant we are speaking of is that with Abraham. So the promises are those promises regarding a name, blessings, a kingdom, kings, rulership, inheritance (which are the obvious things in the early statements). But in the renewing of the

covenant when the original Seed should come (Christ) -- for that is the meaning of "a new covenant (i.e., new, like the new moon, not another, but the renewing, enlarging, extending, and confirming) -- we begin to realize certain spiritual benefits afforded to those in the relationship. Jeremiah had said that knowing the Lord would be one of those benefits (Jeremiah 31:34).

Also, forgiveness of sins and a permanent relationship unmarred by iniquity would exist. God would gather them from the countries where they would be scattered because of their sins (Jeremiah 32:37). They would dwell safely in their land and be His people and He should be their God (Jeremiah 32:37, 38).

They should be knit together and to Him by having "*one heart*," and they would all walk in one way (Jeremiah 32:39). God even says He would implant the fear of Him in their hearts that they would never turn away again and His covenant with them would be everlasting. The original covenant is also called everlasting (Genesis 17:7,13,19; Jeremiah 32:40).

Since it is specified that this covenant is "*with the house of Israel and the house of Judah*" many do not realize that it is for certain believers today (including Gentile believers), even though Jesus pointed out that the "*blood*" which is symbolized in the Lord's Supper is new covenant blood (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20).

And it is further taught to believers (Hebrews 8) that Christ has obtained a better ministry than that of the Levitical priesthood (under the law). This ministry is by virtue a better Mediator (Christ), established upon better promises. Then this is specifically called a "*new covenant*" (Hebrews 8:8) in contrast with the covenant at Sinai.

The writer to these Hebrew Christians then enlarges upon the (better things) by quoting Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:33) who says that God would put His laws in their minds, write them upon their hearts, and be a God to them while they should be His people.

Further, there would not have to be that constant ministry of human prophets to remind men to know the Lord, for all should know Him. How should this be? Evidently that the Spirit should "*take the things of Christ and show them*" to men (John 16:15).

Then follow those assurances of God's mercy and forgiveness and the statement that the bringing in of such a new covenant promises and the making old of the Sinaitic (law) should go together. If the law is fulfilled and done away than the new covenant is in force (cf. Hebrews 8:10-13).

Then on through chapters nine and ten the writer explains how the new covenant is better and the means of appropriating its blessings. The new covenant is for men today. The conditions of receiving its benefits, however, are there presented to be met by those who would have them.

It is conditional and the condition is faith, a faith which will respond every day to God's mercies. It is required that men simply *"draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith"* (Hebrews 10:22), and *"hold fast the profession of faith without wavering"* (vs. 23).

Now I could not say that this means that your drawing near and your holding fast are the reasons for God's faithfulness and His providing the benefits of the covenant. There is nothing which men can do to inherit the promises of God, either to deserve them or to keep them.

But since God is faithful to His promises we are challenged to come, to heed, to draw near, and to hold fast, plus many other things: *"considering one another to provoke to love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... But exhorting one another"* (Hebrews 10:24, 25).

There is more. These are not means to the qualifying of men for the promises. These are evidences that one has entered into the covenant. He has honestly considered the facts as to his own position and God's grace. When he has allowed God's Word to so inform his heart God receives him into covenant relationship and He is faithful so that such belongs to Him and He belongs to them.

Whereas being a covenant people formerly seemed to men to stem from the accident of their birth, though this was never true with God, it now stands from their entering today into the covenant by keeping God's words.

This keeping (cf. Deuteronomy 29:9) suggest a willingness to let God speak to the heart. Moses rebuked Israel for being able to see all of God's outward benefits, yet not allowing Him to give them a heart to perceive, eyes to see, and ears to hear



(Deuteronomy 29:2-4).

No specific external commandment is there suggested as the thing to "keep"; only that they should enter into covenant so that God might "established them" as a people to Himself and be their God.

Oh, to grace, how great a debtor each of us is! Heeding God's voice in all that He says with all of the heart and all of the soul is what He required of them (Deuteronomy 30:2) and the promise that he would circumcise their hearts to love the Lord with all of the heart and soul was made back there, though it is implied that the fulfilling of this would not come until the end of the age in which we now live, at least insofar as Israel is concerned.

## Chapter Two

### **GLORY THROUGH OBEDIENCE OR ALLEGIANCE**

It is always wise that we understand the terms we are using. Usually obedience is thought of as a slavish performing of what one is ordered to do or not do. The word for obedience in the New Testament is *hupakoe*, and its meaning is to listen submissively ("to hear under").

Thus the idea is to heed, pay attention. When I was a boy and my dad told me to do something, if I hesitated or delayed in doing it, he might be heard to say, "Hear me, now." I knew the meaning of that language. The frequent excuse of children for not minding is, "I forgot." Why did they forget, if they did, indeed? Because they did not heed. They were not much interested in the task or the requirement being given to them.

When it is said that "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17), the meaning is clear. It is heeding what God has to say. It is being mindful of Him and His will. His words and ways must capture our hearts. A man is a sinner because he is a rebel, not just because he has done things which are wrong. Instead, he has done the wrong things because he is a rebel against God. When the power of the message lays hold of us we will obey.

#### **By Hearing, Not Doing**

This heeding may not require any special performance. Never does God tell us something which is out of our capacity to perform or heed, except as He makes promises which He Himself will perform.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam was told that he might freely eat of the trees of the Garden with one exception. He could even eat of the tree of life which was in the midst of the garden. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he was not to eat.

The consequences of such eating would be death in that very day - a separation from God's fellowship and communion and, alternately, a physical dying of his body. He heard the words by means of his sense of picking up sounds, or if God were communicating directly through spiritual input (which is the

way I believe He did it at that time), then he learned God's will in the matter.

But a series of circumstances weighed on him to influence his judgment. He disobeyed. The Fall was the consequence: the death of which God had warned him, plus all of the pain and disappointment, the toil and heartache of the curse. He had not heeded. There was nothing for him to do. Rather, God had told him just one thing he must NOT do. But he did it because he did not want to heed the voice of God. He disobeyed. He became a rebel.

True, heeding God sometimes calls for doing something. Noah was told of a coming flood of waters and that he should build an ark for the saving of his house. He obeyed by faith because he believed God (Hebrews 11:7).

We are not told that Enoch was required to do anything in particular but he believed God's voice. It is suggested that when his son, Methuselah, was born that God had told him (Enoch) of the coming flood. Some interpreters tell us that Methuselah's name has this meaning: "at his death, flood waters."

This revelation may, indeed, have been given to him. What an incentive to remember God's words! In any case Enoch walked with God for 300 years, for Enoch was born to him when he was sixty-five and he was 365 when "God took him." He was translated that he should not see death.

A benefit of heeding God is deliverance from death. The consequence of disobedience is: DEATH. When Moses struck the rock (Num. 20) instead of speaking to it as God had said, death intervened to prevent his going into Canaan. "*Because ye believed to me not...*" (vs. 12), God said to Moses and Aaron.

#### **Hearing Under the Law**

God's desire is that men pay attention. How many times does the Word admonish, "*Hear...*"? How many times does it say, "*Remember...*"? "*Incline your ear... hear...*" (Isaiah 55:3). This is all that God asks.

This has always been the case. Even when God gave His law at Sinai it was not that men might begin to do certain things or leave undone other things and, thereby gain life or gain some help alongside their flesh, so they might be saved.

Paul tells us that the law served to make sin appear as transgression. "*For the sake of transgressions*" (Galatians 3:9).

Had this service of the law been allowed or accepted it should never have become "*the yoke of bondage*" to Israel that it became.

It was not God's purpose that its function should be to assist the flesh to be better, and that men accumulate righteousness so they might be acceptable. Men changed the function of the law and thus that which was "*ordained to life, (is) found to be unto death*" (Romans 7:10).

This is because sin (the sin nature in us which would build itself up) has taken occasion by the commandment of the law and thus wrought all manner of lust in men (Romans 7:8). This illustrates the changing of the law's function.

God simply desired that men become willing to heed His voice, to accept His mercies, to be willing to submit to Him.

The law, according to its rightful purpose, was designed to show men that they were helplessly and hopelessly lost apart from God's mercies and grace.

It "*shut men up*" to the faith which should be revealed (Galatians 3:23). We are presumptuous; we do not hearken. In self-will we dare suppose we have some worth and we presume that we can align our energies and our abilities into the pattern which will please God and cause Him to except us. This is what Israel did under the law.

#### **Hearing Since the Law**

Since the law was fulfilled in Christ and it has been "*taken out of the way,*" a better revelation of God's will and purpose is seen in the Christ. He is a more glorious manifestation of God's glory. He becomes the measure of that which pleases God.

At least three times in the New Testament God speaks out from heaven to announce that this is His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; cf. Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; John 12:28-30).

Thus was Jesus the perfect example of one who always heeded the voice of His Father. He did this though His nature was like ours (Hebrews 2:16), yet without sin. He was tempted but He never did sin.

How did He overcome every temptation? We are not asking how God avoids sin; we are asking how the Man, Christ Jesus, avoided sin. It was because he constantly sought His Father's will and prayed so as to be yielded, always, to Him.

#### **This Hearing is Demonstrated in the Christ**

This obedience took Jesus to the cross where He pleased the Father by submitting to the bruising in our place; He satisfied the Father by becoming our substitute (Isaiah 53:10, 11). Because of this "heeding" by Him in this perfect submission God has highly exalted Him.

The Man now has a name above every name and all creatures in earth, heaven and hell must submit to Him and acknowledge His Lordship (Philippians 2:9-11).

What does this have to do with our heeding the voice of God today? God has made a Man Lord. In this Man was made evident the fullness of God: the brightness of His glory, the express image of the Person of God. We can see in Him what God desires in men. It is not, simply, that God would have us imitate this Man.

If we read the New Testament Gospels about Him it is apparent that no man could measure up to that standard. Still, that is the standard which God wants us to meet. He wants us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Do we dare presume that Jesus was sent only to be an example for us to imitate in order to have life? If so why did He go to the cross? He not only judged (condemned) sin in the flesh but He makes it possible for the righteousness which the law set as a standard to be met ("fulfilled") in us today.

He is the standard and He is the One Who has satisfied God as to that message on behalf of all of us who believe. What a message to hear, to heed, to obey!

We could not do it, so He showed His love and compassion by doing it for us. This is not simply a letting of us off the hook so we can "sin all we please." Paul: *"How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Romans 6:2). But how are we "dead to sin"? Our Lord, who is our substitute, *"died unto sin"* (Romans 6:10).

He took our nature; God judged that nature irremediable, and

sentenced it to death. Jesus bore that execution on Calvary. The "old man" has thus been crucified (Romans 6:6) *"that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin"* (Romans 6:6, 7).

So how do we "get in on" this gracious work? By heeding. It is an obeying. But it is not something assigned to our flesh to perform. It is not something which we must learn to do, must give up, or take on, or be like. It is simply H-E-A-R-I-N-G, for *"faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17).

How simple! But it is not easy. For the old man does not simply lie down and die. But we reckon it dead (Romans 6:11) because it has, indeed, been crucified at the cross.

***"Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, ...." (Hebrews 3:7, 8).***

***"While it is said, 'Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,....' (v. 15).***

***"For some, when they had heard, did provoke:...." (v. 16).***

This tells us that one may hear the sounds with the natural ear, or receive them with the mind, but then harden his heart so that he does not heed. Many in Israel did this, so they fell in the wilderness and could not enter into the land to inherit the promises.

The plain reason given: *"they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief"* (Hebrews 4:6). Why did they not believe? They did not hear with their hearts. Faith comes by hearing and their hearts were not willing to heed.

Then the writer makes the application to men in this age. *"Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus (Joshua in Canaan) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God"* (Hebrews 4:7-9).

It occurs to me to note that the great sin of a man, whether in this age or before Christ came, is the hardening of the heart. God may harden a man's heart, as He did Pharaoh's in Egypt, but before God did that it was Pharaoh who hardened his own heart against the words and will of God as expressed by Moses

and Aaron.

God will not harden a heart which is not willfully hard already. One may not be able to believe God's promises. They may appear to be unreasonable, illogical, or unnecessary, as viewed by the natural mind.

But when we harden our hearts against God's expressed will it means we are presuming to pass judgment on what God has said. We trust self instead of God. There is no greater insult to the Divine veracity. And because God makes His Person and ways very evident, so that "simple" men may hear and heed, the "wise and prudent" set themselves up against God and "harden" their hearts. (It is not our present purpose to say just how far this may go before God "gives up" a man, but there is a limit to His mercies in the sense that men may so harden themselves as to be "*turned over to a reprobate mind.*" (Romans 1:28).

It was a limited knowledge of the glory of God, for they became "*vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart (is) darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God...into "a representation of something corruptible"* (Romans 1:21-23).

This is why God gives them up in their own ways (v. 24). They "*changed the truth of God into a lie,...*" (Romans 1:25), and made God out a liar (1 John 5:10).

This explains the vileness of man in any age, and our own age manifests this tendency in proportions perhaps never seen to such degree before. The description of their own ways to which they go is seen in Romans 1:25-32.

This passage suggests (v. 32) that it is because they know God is a judge before whom they must give account, but they do not want to retain this knowledge, that they go to such links to prostrate and debauch themselves.

In summary we would say that God desires a simple heeding. This heeding is not once done and over with, else it does not please Him. That emphasis which allows men to feel they have a right to many or more of God's promises through one act of faith when they trusted God to save them, does not take into consideration what it is that God desires.

He demands an allegiance, a loyalty, from every man. He is a righteous King, a worthy Lord, so His subjects must be loyal to

Him always. If they are not they do not qualify to inherit His promises.



## Chapter Three

### **GLORY FROM A COVENANT PEOPLE**

Not many people seem to get acquainted with the Scriptures so as to grasp the general tenor of what is said. They read by chapters, at best, if they read at all. They view what is said only from a simple, personal application.

Thus they arrive at a feeling that religion is something very private. In fact, we have come to a manner of thinking in these days which suggests that it is insulting for anyone to speak to us about faith, our walk, or our relationship to God.

We let the preacher tell us whatever he wants to in the pulpit, but we take only what feels right to us, or just what we feel applies to us individually. Men of the world resent the "witness" of Christians as an intrusion into their lives. What they earn, how they vote, and what their religious beliefs and feelings are, they feel, are strictly private matters.

But even believers carry this feeling of the world about religion over into their practice of Christianity. Not all do, of course, but even those who testify to others, those who praise God publicly, still restrict their concepts of their relationship to God to a matter of One-on-one. They seem to feel that even in eternity their place will be determined by how each, individually, has responded to God.

There is a sense in which this is true. But our relationship to God is very definitely influenced by our relationship to other men. When it is said, *"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lords"* (Romans 14:7, 8), that the meaning is that the Lord is to be taken into accounting at all times. This is true, but this statement does not cover the whole truth.

The context has to do with the effect of our doing or not doing as it applies to other men. Judging other men and being responsible for what other men think is the obvious theme of the context (cf. Romans 14:1-23). Whether other men speak evil of our good, or whether we are "approved of men" (vv. 16, 18), is a definite consideration in our relationship to God.

There can be no full execution of our responsibility to God in the exercise of a private religion.

#### **Glorifying God in Solidarity**

This brings us to a theme purposely exposed in God's dealing with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. He insists that He is no respecter of persons (2 Chronicles 19:7; Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; 2 Samuel 14:14; 1 Peter 1:17).

Yet, God separated Abraham and raised up Israel and called them a people for Himself and Himself He called their God (Exodus 19:5, 6; Deuteronomy 7:6; Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135:4; Malachi 3:17; Exodus 6:7; Exodus 7:4, Exodus 16; 8:1; et al.).

This theme is continued of others (than Israel) in the New Testament (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18; Revelation 21:3, 7).

It is easily established that God claims a people as His own. This is not simply a collection of individuals. They are viewed as a unit. The Jewish mind was taught to think in terms of the solidarity of the nation. Even in their rebellion against God to this day they still think of themselves in terms of the solidarity. There is a mind to lose one's self in the whole of the nation.

There is a reason for this type of thinking. God made man as an individual, but He "*setteth the solidarity in families*" (Psalm 68:6). Just as it was not good for man to dwell alone (Genesis 2:18), so He made Eve, thus has He established the home as a Divine institution. In the family unit is provided the necessary ingredients of a man's being able to render glory to God in the greatest degree. It affords him incentives, encouragements, comforts, and strengths which he could not have alone.

Perhaps the family unit would have been sufficient for all of God's purposes, at least for many centuries, had it not been for the failings of individual men. Even the raising up of individual prophets, as Enoch, and of priests, as Melchisedek, to serve the faith needs of men, did not seem enough. Thus, in time, God raised up a family which He enlarged into a special nation, separated and supported in special ways: Abraham's seed. But there, too, the unit broke down. Men pursuing their own selfish ways destroyed the usefulness of the unit and im-

pugned its testimony, so God had to cut them off.

A picture of what they were supposed to be is seen in Psalm 78:2-8:

*"I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God."*

Their captivities did not bring them back. God sent His Son to call them back, but they would not come. Worse, they crucified Him. Then God turned to the nations to take out of them a people for His name (Acts 15:14).

Note here that it is still *"a people."* The collective unit was needed. There was the need for such a unit and He would use this unit for a testimony in this age.

It is in the separating of the collective unit that the need for this book is found. Individual believers are not enough. God cannot manifest His glory and all of its fullness in individual, failing, sinning men. He could and did so in the Perfect Man, Christ Jesus.

But His glory must be manifested today and the Man is not here in His virgin-born body today. The church is here and has the promise that it will remain till the end of the age (Matthew 28:20; Ephesians 3:21).

In this "unit" or "solidarity" idea lies the meaning of *"A Covenant People."*

#### **God's Purpose for Man**

It has been suggested a number of times in these pages that God has a purpose for men. He is not made merely that God made prove His ability to save him or to manipulate him. That purpose is suggested in the commission to Adam in the beginning (Genesis 1:28):

1. Fill the earth;

2. Subdue it; and
3. Have dominion over it.

Adam was made to be a ruler under God. He was to be God's instrument in raising up a people, perhaps in His mind designedly then, a composite people, who should bring all things which God had made on earth into subjection to the mind of God and then to exercise God's authority under Him in such a manner as to give Him glory.

This is what may be called "A Kingdom Purpose." It suggests the need for a people, a people qualified to rule, a people who would see that God's order prevails under Him for His own glory (Cf. Hebrews 2:5-8; Psalm 8:4-6).

It will be readily admitted that man in his fallen state is not capable of doing this. Sin has disrupted the beauty of the original order and the curse which God necessarily allowed "*in hope*" (Romans 8:20) of man's seeing and admitting his blunder, so that he might turn back to God. This has made man's task the more difficult. But God's grace is sufficient. Man's failure has not changed God's purpose. He must still "*subdue the earth*" and "*have dominion over it.*"

This rulership by man is built into God's creative purpose. This makes the kingdom the central theme of the Scriptures. Redemption has as its purpose the restoration of man's capability and even a restoration of the creation itself so that God may bring to pass that which He had in mind from the foundation of the world.

Those on His right hand when the Christ sits on the throne of His glory and calls all nations before Him, dividing them as a Shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, are told to "*inherit the kingdom prepared for (them) from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:34).

#### **The Meaning of "Covenant"**

A covenant is "a declaration of purpose." When one signs a contract, whether for marriage, for a loan, for a service, or any other kind, he is declaring it to be his purpose to do certain things specified in the contract.

Usually, there is an agreement between two or more, and usually each has certain conditions to meet. When God makes a covenant He does not ask whether men are willing to meet

conditions, but He declares what His own purpose is. He chooses the party (or parties) according to His purpose and His own knowledge of each.

He said of Abraham, *"I know him, that he will..."* (Genesis 18:17-19). Perhaps this tells us something about why God chose Abram. It may also tell us something about why men in our day are said to be chosen (elected) *"in Christ"* (Ephesians 1:3, 4).

He wants a people qualified to fulfill His original purpose for them. They must be able to subdue the earth and have dominion over it.

He has found The Man qualified to be such a Ruler, the Lord Jesus Christ. That Man has determined to raise up the people with whom He may share His power, authority, and glory.

#### **Election is to "Covenant Relationship"**

Is it not evident by now that a man's escaping torment is not the major consideration in God's providing redemption? Can we not see that He desires a people whose heart and will are turned to God? He wants a people who desire His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

It seems to me that whatever God has done for man is designed to carry out His own will to have a righteous kingdom in which He is glorified by all living. A man's personal safety or escape from punishment for his sins is only incidental to that purpose.

Naturally, it is necessary for the man who is corrupted by sin and sins to be saved -- delivered from his sins -- so that he can be restored to God's original intent for him. With this in view, I say again, every thing which God does to him and for him has the original purpose in view.

If God calls the man -- and He certainly does -- it is not merely an invitation to trust Jesus to save him. It is that he might have an ear to hear and yield his life to God so that he might be conformed to the image of the Son Who perfectly pleased His Father, and thus be made capable of *"having dominion"* as God intended.

If he is chosen ("elected"), as he certainly is, it is not merely *"unto salvation"* in that initial sense in which the man escapes the consequences of his sins, but it is *"because God hath from*

*the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14).*

Or, perhaps more clearly:

*"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10).*

When we are *"called unto glory"* (2 Peter 1:3),  
appointed *"to obtain salvation"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9),  
*"chosen...to salvation"* (2 Thessalonians 2:13),

or any of those workings of God's grace before we consciously responded to Him it was with a view to our being rescued for Him and qualified by Him to do that which God originally purposed.

Man's responsibility in all of this is to heed, as indicated earlier, so that God can change him and make him into the instrument He desires. This is called by many names or described by many words.

Peter spoke of it as our need to *"give diligence to make (our) calling and election sure"* (2 Peter 1:10). Moses described Israel's responsibility in this regard: *"Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them"* (Deuteronomy 29:9) and, further,

*"enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee today for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Deuteronomy 29:12, 13).*

The opposite of this *"entering into covenant"* and this *"keeping the words of the covenant"* is described as having a heart that *"turneth away from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and worm wood"* (v. 18).

It is further described as blessing one's self in his heart by saying that everything is all right even if I walk in the imagination of my own heart (v. 19).

The performing of rituals, the offering of sacrifices, the keep-

ing of specific commandments which the flesh might perform are things not mentioned as necessary to one's being in the covenant and gaining its blessings.

#### **The Intent of the Law**

The law of Moses is also called a covenant. Why God give it? Were not His promises in the earlier covenant, sworn to by the Lord, just as certain whether they had a law or not? Yes. But Israel took too much for granted.

God knew Abraham and said that he would order his children after him. No doubt he did. But in a very few generations this people began to "bless themselves in their hearts" and did not order their ways as did Abraham. This prompted God to fill a need which their lives demonstrated was necessary. He gave them *"the lively oracles."* They consented to receive them at Sinai (Exodus 19:8).

As indicated in this writing, the law was designed to label sin, to point out the standard, so that men might qualify for carrying our God's will on earth. It showed them in a glorious way just how holy is God and how high are His standards. This should have sent them to their knees and humbled them before Him as they realized how limited was their strength and how helpless they were to meet God's standard.

They claimed the promise of God to make them a peculiar people above all nations, but they did not allow Him to do this. They believed them, and most of them believe today, that they have a destiny to be the greatest nation on earth -- *"the head and not the tail"* (Deuteronomy 28:13).

But not hearkening to the voice of the Lord their God to observe to do all his Commandments and his statutes..., they have become the tail and not the head (Deuteronomy 28:15, 44).

Israel changed the function of the law in not hearkening to what is actually said. It pointed out a standard of righteousness for a people of God and it promised grace to that people. But they presumed that by hearing only its requirements and applying those to their flesh they could gradually acquire enough righteousness to please God. When they could not measure up to the standard they decided that God only meant for them to stretch as high as they could and let it go that.

"Surely God does not expect us to do the impossible." How many people there are today who have similarly made themselves believe that they qualify for God's promises. As simple as God's requirements are they have changed the purpose of the function of God's Words and have injected their flesh into prominence and are transgressing or making void the Commandments of God by their traditions (cf. Matthew 15:2, 3).

Perhaps this is most often done by restricting the scope of God's language, making it apply to one circumstance or one feature of God's plan as when the word "salvation" is limited to that which occurs when men believe.

The same goes for "justification." Or the word "election" is restricted to a man's being chosen to be saved from perdition instead, as God intended, allowing it to apply to the choice of a covenant people.

The Law has come in for this misapplication, likewise. How many think that the way men were saved in the Old Testament days was through the keeping of the law! Even Baptists, who insist that salvation is by grace through faith and has always been, tend to restrict the testimony of the law to lost sinners. They think of it as teaching lost men they cannot be saved except by grace and through faith, limiting the application of the law to a dealing with initial salvation.

It should be remembered that this sharp distinction which men make between "saved" and "lost" men is not so distinct in the Bible. There men who may have trusted the Lord are sometimes referred to as "lost," not because they are in danger of eternal perdition, but because they have strayed from God's purpose to raise up a godly people. (See, for example, Matthew 16:24-26).

Be sure to note that Jesus is teaching His disciples, vv. 21, 24. Note also that the subject is the saving of the life v. 25, and the receiving of rewards according to one's works, v. 27).

They forget that "sheep" sometimes get "lost." They do not become goats. They are determined to believe that soul and spirit are the same, so they will not believe that the saving of the soul is anything but what happens when one first believes.

When we read of the Old Testament and note that the law was given to God's people this thought of what the law was designed to do can be easily seen. God's people Israel stand in



the place of people already "saved."

This is not to say that every individual had trusted the Lord. Possibly even a majority of them had not at the time of the Exodus. But they were delivered from Egypt by God's miraculous hand; they were led by the Lord (Exodus 13:21, 22), and they were "*baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*" (1 Corinthians 10:2).

This tells us, at least in type, that this people were "saved" and led by the Lord. Do not forget the "solidarity" idea presented earlier. It is in the solidarity position, and community of people, that men are viewed as "saved" and "baptized" and "led."

Individuals, of course, must trust the Lord for themselves before they can claim God's promises to the "unit."

**The Law of Moses was Exclusively To  
"A Covenant People"**

So to the group the law was given. We must conclude that it was given to God's people. Representatively, this is a saved and baptized people. We must not conclude then, that it was given as a means of saving them from their sins or bringing them to know the Lord -- expressions we used in describing what happens to an alien sinner when he believes and is born again. So what was the purpose of the law? At the time they consented to receive the law it was told them that it was designed to do several things, if they would obey the voice of the Lord, indeed, and keep the covenant:

1. They should be "a peculiar people (treasure) unto the Lord above all the people of the earth."
2. They should be "a kingdom of priests."
3. They should be a holy nation.

These ideas (Exodus 19:5, 6) had been given in promise in the covenant with Abraham, but now God indicates directly that there is more required than that they have Abraham as their progenitor. They must hear God's voice indeed and keep His covenant.

No, this does not mean that they must work in order to be saved or in order to stay saved. But it means that if they are truly to be God's Covenant nation they must heed His voice

and keep His covenant. Their observance of the commandments of the law from the heart would indicate whether they were truly listening to God.

Each time God proposed that they listen He reminded them that they had seen what He had done for them previously (cf. Exodus 19:4).

We see this again (Deuteronomy 29:2, 3, 7, 8) forty years after the law was given, at Horeb. They still had not listened. They were still thinking of their comforts and their denied privileges. They should have noted God's care for them: the shoes which did not wear out, the clothing which did not get old, the food (Manna) which God gave (Deuteronomy 29:5).

All this was that they might know the Lord, that He was truly their God (v. 6). But their minds ran to their own feelings and their own taste (Numbers 21:5) and they loathed God's provision. So God did not give them hearts to understand, eyes to see, nor ears to hear. Why?

Because they would not listen. So, gracious as He is, God appeals to them by Moses thus further: *"Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all ye do"* (Deuteronomy 29:9).

Then He appeals to them man by man, woman by woman, and strangers:

*"Enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee TODAY for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Deuteronomy 29:12, 13).*

There is just one conclusion that we may draw: Though they were descendants of the Fathers (Abraham and Isaac and Jacob) with whom God made a covenant and sworn to it by oath, they were not "IN" this covenant by natural birth but needed to "enter" that very day.

Being established in covenant relationship, which is a position of solidarity (community), embracing all the people as a unit, required that each man for himself heed God and "enter" TODAY into that relationship.

The covenant had been given 470 years before (430 + 40, cf. Galatians 3:17), approximately, but these men were not IN on

the promises because they had not listened. They were in the position but they were not truly the people. They were all "of Israel" but they were not all "Israel" (Romans 9:6, 7).

May we digress at this point to say this is the way it is with many who belong to churches today. They are all of the church, but they are not all "the church." We shall see that being "in covenant relationship" today requires that we be truly a part of the Lord's true church.

So the law was designed to this end. And the covenant given later in Moab (Deuteronomy 29) had the same purpose. Every man was challenged to enter into covenant relationship and the meaning of the covenant was "The Abrahamic covenant."

That is the one to which God had sworn, not the one at Horeb or in Moab. Its function was to bring man to see that they must heed the voice of the Lord TODAY and keep His covenant TODAY if they were to be established for a people to the Lord and have Him for their God.

Then it is said that this was spoken to all those standing there that day AND ALSO with those not standing there that day (Deuteronomy 29:15, 16). How could those not standing there enter TODAY into covenant? The time when God gave the covenant and swore to His promises is not the issue, as we have seen. And those generations not yet born, of course, could not enter in the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, nor at Horeb, nor even in Moab. They must come later.

So we understand "this day" to mean any "today" when men hear God's voice. When God comes through to their heart's consciousness, right then is the time to heed and enter into covenant. This is the meaning of those passages which tell us that *"today is the day of salvation;" NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME.*

This principle applies in any day, but for any individual man it must be "today." When we come to consider God's covenant people today, this application to "today" as the *"day of salvation"* should be particularly meaningful.

#### **The Church A Covenant People**

The reader is invited to read with an open mind as we attempt to show who are God's Special or Covenant People in this dispensation. When the nation of Israel refused their Messiah and

crucified Him instead of receiving Him as their Lord, God "*laid the ax to the root of the tree.*" John the Baptist had announced that this was to be done (Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9).

He warned Israel not to say that Abraham was their father (Luke 3:8) because God was able of the stones to raise the seed to Abraham. This is a veiled referenced to the fact that God would turn other men into Abraham's seed than the natural descendants if they refused Him and did not repent.

The criterion as to whether the tree should be allowed to live was whether or not it should bring forth good fruit, "fruits worthy of repentance" (vv. 8, 9). This caused some of the people to ask what they should do, then, and John said they should practice the principles of righteousness which God would be pleased with -- the very principles, indeed, which Jesus had presented in the Sermon on the Mount (vv. 10-14).

Many began to wonder if, indeed, the Christ were about to appear on the scene (v. 15). Then John pointed out that the Christ was about to appear and He should "*make a difference*" between men bearing fruit and those who did not (vv. 16, 17); He would separate the wheat from the chaff.

In this manner did John prepared a people for the Lord. Such a people must repent and identify with the remnant who were willing to turn from the old ways and walk.

This they should do by repentance and by being baptized as evidence that it was more than mere outward profession. Baptism, according to God's prescribed order, must be subsequent to repentance, as manifest that one is dead to that from which he turned in repentance and thus does it show forth the genuineness of his repentance.

Since John comes at a time when Old Testament prophets had not been on the scene for nearly four hundred years, and since he announces a radically new order, we classify him as the last of the Old Testament prophets and the first of the New. His mission was "*to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*" (Luke 1:17). This he did (Luke 3:3-6).

His pointing to God's salvation and his announcing the Kingdom of heaven at hand are both indications that his ministry is an extension of the promises made in the Old Testament. This is why it was not necessary for him to explain what he meant by the terms "*salvation*" and "*Kingdom.*"

The meanings were the same as what the people should have known from the covenants and the prophets. The tree John speaks of is the olive, God's figure for His covenant people. It was his *"tame"* tree but it was not fruitful. Under another metaphor Israel is a vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7) which God had set, fenced, tended.

But it did not bear the luscious grapes it should have. It bore the small, sour, wild grapes. What else could God do? (v. 4). He would lay it waste. So with the olive. He would cut off the branches, right down almost to the ground. And the ground is left very dry (Isaiah 53:2).

What a dim prospect for any further fruitfulness. But look! A *"rod"* ! A tender shoot! *"Out of the stem of Jesse" ! " A Branch shall grow out of his roots."* (Isaiah 11:1). God had preserved the root alive so that it could grow again and produced the *"fatness of the olive"* (Romans 11:17). That *"fatness"* is not borne by the natural people.

For the most part it is not borne by any of the *"natural branches."* These were cut off, all but a tiny remnant, because they were unfruitful. God began with a small remnant and, after His resurrection, He began to graft in among them some *"wild olive branches"* to *"partake of the root and fatness of the olive."*

Paul had a delightful way of mixing his metaphors. Men take a sturdy root or stock of the *"wild"* or undesirable fruit-type and graft in the shoots or buds from the improved variety. But it was the root which God desired to bear the fruit in its fatness. So He cuts the wild branches and grafts them in among the remaining tame ones so that they may partake of the *"root and fatness of the olive."*

Who are these wild branches? We know the tame branches cut off were Israelites, the natural seed, and this because of their blindness (Roman 11:25). The same verse names the Gentiles as those who are to produce the *"fulness"* which God desired, and it is to Gentiles that the apostle speaks these words (v. 13).

By this lesson he hoped to provoke some who were Israelites to believe (v. 14). In any case they would be *"cast away"* (v. 15). But Paul rejoiced that if they remained not in unbelief God could and would graft them in again (v. 23). This tells us that it was their unbelief which brought about the cutting off

of the natural branches (Israel). We also learned that it is believing or faith which brings about the grafting in of the wild olive branches (Gentiles).

Mention of the key words, "*belief*" or "*faith*" has caused some to presume that the subject here is initial salvation or being born again. This is NOT the subject (else cutting off would mean being lost again) and could only be incidental to the principal subject. The subject is the placing of Gentiles into a position which Gentiles had never held before and the removing of Israelites from that position, with the suggestion that they may be allowed to come back to that position later on. Gentiles have never been forbidden to trust God for salvation.

Salvation is not different for men in one age and another. Israelites are not forbidden to be saved in this age. What a shame that even Baptists should presume that the new birth is the subject in this passage. We are reading (Romans 11) about covenant relationship.

Paul began the chapter with a query about whether or not God had cast away His people. Then he dogmatically answers that question: "*God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew*" (v. 2).

He then points out that there has always been a covenant people (remnant) (v. 5). This remnant is said to be "*by the election of grace.*" Perhaps we need a lengthy discussion of election, but suffice it to say that election has to do with a covenant people -- not with whether or not men have been born again.

Nowhere is it ever indicated that being born again is the result of election. The salvation which stems from election is a salvation of the life and is "*with eternal glory.*"

Thus, it is not for those "*saved yet so as by fire.*" But such were born again (though some will question this observation.)

May we not lose the thought: God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. He still claims them. They are still His. But nearly all Israelites are NOT among them. We can almost say that there are none at all today. Who are these people then? They are believing Gentiles, men of faith "*chosen in Him* (Christ)."

Please do not think we are saying that all saved are such a people, any more than that all saved were God's elect whom

He foreknew in Old Testament times. God chose Abraham and his seed. That people became the people of God, a peculiar people, the people for His name. There were saved Gentiles back there but they were not part of that nation. There was, however, some provision by which a Gentile could become a part of the nation.

If a "stranger" would submit himself to the Lord after the pattern required of Israel he, too, could enter into covenant with them (Deuteronomy 29:10-12). There is good reason to believe that Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenazite, was a Gentile who had become a proselyte to what is later called "Judaism." This would mean that he was either of that tribe mentioned in the days of Abraham (Genesis 15:19) or he was of those descended from Kenaz, the grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:11, 15).

In any case, Caleb represented the tribe of Judah when the spies went into the land of Canaan (Joshua 14:6, 14).

This would suggest that God has long had a special people and men of faith can identify with the community of such men.

At least since the days of Abraham we know that His promises to this community have included all the essential ingredients for the kingdom which has not yet been established. The Seed of Abraham will bring this to pass when He returns.

#### **Covenant Expressions Applicable to the Church**

The new Testament has many other references to this community of people. Usually, in the New Testament, the people of God -- the Special People of whom we speak -- is the church per se. But this community of people are also called by certain other references which identify them with the nation of Special or Covenant People in the Old Testament.

1. They are called "*the Israel of God*" (Galatians 6:16). Some will question whether this applies to the church, but it certainly does not apply to Israel in the flesh. It applies to a people who are "*a new creation*," who are "*in Christ*," a phrase not used of Israel, and who set no value upon circumcision nor uncircumcision.

They also glory in the cross by which the world is crucified to them and they to the world (Galatians 6:14, 15).

Further, the New Covenant under which the church lives

today was said to be made "*with the house of Israel*" (Hebrews 8:8, 10).

2. They are called "*children of Abraham*" (Romans 4: 6-17; cf. Matthew 3:9; Galatians 3:7; spec. Galatians 3:14; Galatians 3:16, 29).

Just how this can be is suggested in the fact that the promises (of the covenant) are to Abraham and his seed, and that Seed is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Through identification with Him men are made heirs of the promises, even though they be Gentiles and have no lineal connection with Abraham. Some are still insisting that this is speaking of all the saved being children of Abraham because of the fact that all are related to Christ.

I might ask: Were not men saved in Old Testament days through the merits of the Christ just as men are saved today? Then were all saved in Old Testament days thereby children of Abraham?

To ask the question seems rather foolish. For of course they were not children of Abraham. Not even all those who descended from Abraham were his children in the sense of being his heirs (cf. John 8:39).

All of the language in the New Testament which makes Gentiles Abraham's children or Abraham's seed is language which refers to covenant relationship. The context which each requires for our understanding will show a walking by faith, a relationship to Christ the Seed, and a standard of looking to Christ.

3. They are the circumcision (Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:11; Romans 2:28-29).

This language is a takeoff on the meaning of the covenant sign to Abraham. Circumcision was a sign to both sexes of the promise in the covenant that God should give a seed (the Seed, Christ, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed). It identified one who felt the responsibility of being in a relationship with God and personally responsible.

There is nothing specially indicated regarding the cleanliness feature of circumcision, but it is associated with the thought of "*heart circumcision*" (Deuteronomy 30:6; Leviti-



cus 26:41; Ezekiel 44:7; Jeremiah 9:25, 26).

Paul refers to that circumcision which was merely outward as *"the concision"* (Philippians 3:2). There is no question but that whether we speak of Abraham's natural seed, or those spiritual seed today, one requirement is that the heart be circumcised. Descriptive language speaks of such a heart as loving the Lord God, worshiping God in the Spirit, rejoicing in Jesus Christ, and having no confidence in the flesh. This latter is explained as a *"putting off of the body of sins of the flesh"* (Colossians 2:11).

It is also enjoined with being *"buried with him in baptism"* and *"risen with him through the faith of the operation of God"* (Colossians 2:11, 12).

4. They are ministers of the New Testament (2 Corinthians 3:6). The context of this passage addressed to the church of God at Corinth very certainly establishes the idea that it is church members who are such ministers and their ministry is to reveal Christ (cf. Galatians 1:15, 16) and all of His sweetness, making manifest the savor of His knowledge...in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14, 15).

This is the church's commission. It was *"the house of Israel and the house of Judah"* with whom the new covenant was to be made (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:8-12).

This "New covenant" shall be the instrument of Israel's ultimate regathering and renewing (Jeremiah 32:37-40). This is the *"everlasting covenant"* of which the *"blood"* of the Lords supper is named and identified (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; 1 Corinthians 11:25).

It is called the *"blood of the everlasting covenant"* (Hebrews 13:20). It is the covenant which pertains to Israel (Romans 9:4). It is the covenant under which the church lives today.

We conclude that the church is God's covenant people today. Though it is not made up of all the saved it is identified by its *"circumcised heart."* Its walk and its worship are right. Its promises are Israel's. Its inheritance is that which was promised to Abraham.

Its salvation is *"today"* (2 Corinthians 6:2) just as God told Israel's Messiah by Isaiah (Isaiah 49:8). It is the salvation to be claimed today as David said, limiting a certain day

(Psalm 95:7, 8), but extending it beyond what might have been expected because Joshua was not able to give the "rest" to the natural seed.

Their entering Canaan was called a "rest." That rest is a type of the rest which awaits the people of God. All the admonitions to our heeding "today" to the salvation of the Lord apply to God's covenant people today. We sincerely believe that the local church, the only kind mentioned in the Bible, is that covenant people. They are the same people whom God has foreknown and whom He has not cast away.

5. They are called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9). These terms are exact duplicates of language in the Old Testament of God's covenant nation, Israel. But they are not addressed to Israel.

Peter may, indeed, have some scattered Jewish believers in mind; this epistle definitely comprehends Gentile believers "which in time past were not a people." (v. 10).

This means they were not a covenant people. But they are "now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:10).

Does this mean that Peter is speaking of any or all saved man? No, for He refers to them as "built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 5).

Further, they are the "chosen of God" (v. 4). Neither Peter nor Paul has any hesitancy to apply to this people the promises which the prophets spoke to Israel in the Old Testament. But that they are in church relationship is further indicated by the reference to baptism (1 Peter 3:21).

To the same people Peter, in his second letter, gives admonition that they should supply in their faith the evidences of God at work to produce the qualities which would sustain them in their position. For faith to be such as indicates that men are heeding God TODAY it must have supplied in it a succession of graces: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity (2 Peter 1:5-7).

These make man "fruitful in Christ's knowledge" (v. 8). A

lack of these things do not necessarily prove one was never saved but it does show that he is near-sighted, and may even result in his forgetting he was once purged from his old sins. So a man is called on to give diligence to "*make (his) calling and election sure*" so that he will never fall. (vv. 9, 10).

Thus will an abundant entrance be granted him into the everlasting kingdom. These admonitions reinforce the need to give heed TODAY so that one may be established in covenant position (cf. Deuteronomy 29:13 & context). Otherwise he may be "*cut off*" whether he be a Jew (Romans 11:19) or Gentile (vv. 20, 21).

May we have one thing straight: We are speaking of something or position which may be lost. It is covenant relationship. One does not lose initial salvation, though he may be saved "*yet so as by fire*" (1 Corinthians 3:15).

In this he is secure. But in that relationship which determines inheritance in reward one may lose out. He may even lose what he has wrought (2 John 8).

In this situation we need to be sure we are straight on another matter. It is not how many works we do, nor the works at all, which determines whether we are established in covenant position.

True, Israel's failure to produce the expected fruit caused them alternately to be cut off. Some brethren will have difficulty with this for they seem determined to believe that we are saying that it is by works that we are saved.

In the first place, we are not discussing whether or not one is saved in the initial sense. In the next place, if we do speak of the saving of our lives, which is the subject at this point, we are not saying that the doing of works is what does it. Nor do we say that even rewards are gained because one does works.

This may be a little surprising. It is not because one works, works diligently, does the right works the best he can, or works, as we say, "faithfully," that he gains a reward. It is rather because he listens to the voice of the Lord. It is "*the obedience of faith*" which God honors.

Working diligently looks good to man, specially when it is such works as man have learned to approve and for which

they feel they find scriptural instructions. But doing a thing which we know to be right is not necessarily doing by faith.

Moving the "*Ark of God*" to Jerusalem in David's day was a right thing but God made a breach upon Israel and slew a man because of it.

The people were not heeding the voice of the Lord, which had been spoken many years before (cf. 1 Chronicles 15:12-14).

The Lord's work cannot be entered into by man because they are sincere or because they have knowledge or because they are efficient. The work is the Lord's and He must be left "*both to will and to do of his good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:12, 13).

We keep repeating, because it is that important, that God desires that we pay attention to Him. "*Look unto me.*" It is all He asks. But He asks that it be today, each day, every day. It may be simply to wait, but "*waiting on the Lord*" is honored where zeal and effort may not be. One is an evidence of faith; the other may be "in the flesh."

## Chapter Four

### **ROBBING GOD OF HIS GLORY**

To speak of robbing God of His glory, or of anything, is like saying that a child can overcome an adult. But robbing God does not prove prowess; it only shows a wrong heart. A weakling may hold up a bank and get away with it.

Men may deprive God temporarily of that which is His due, but they do not get away with it permanently. God rebuked Israel for robbing Him of tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8, 9).

The way they did it was not in refusing to bring an offering or to give their money, but it was in bringing that which was not acceptable (because it was sick or blind or lame) and in misrepresenting what was the *"firstfruits"* and what was God's.

He challenged them: *"Return unto me, and I will return unto you"* (v. 7). But they pretended innocence, asking, *"Wherein shall we return?"*

They had *"gone away from (God's) ordinances"* but had made themselves believe they were remembering them. People still are doing this today. By changing, perverting, or corrupting God's ways they presume to keep them and feign surprise when it is called to their attention.

The word *"glory"* is not mentioned in this complaint from the Lord. We can deduce that it belongs in the consideration. The people of Israel had denied God's love, one of His most observable attributes (Malachi 1:2).

They knew God was to be magnified, but they failed to glorify Him, that is, to magnify Him (Malachi 1:5). A son or a servant honors his father or his master, yet Israel was both and failed to honor God; they robbed Him of His honor; they even despised His name, an odious thing for a people of God to do. They said the table of the Lord was contemptible (Malachi 1:6,7). They profaned God's name (Malachi 1:12).

While God's name was dreadful (to be revered) and was so revered among the Gentiles (Malachi 1:14), Israel presumed to deceive God. Then God nails down the indictment: "And now, O ye priest, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not lay it to heart, TO GIVE GLORY UNTO

MY NAME, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: Yea, I have cursed them already, BECAUSE YE DO NOT LAY IT TO HEART" (Malachi 2:1, 2).

#### **Religious "Doings" May Not Please God**

It should be obvious that the offence in God's eyes was not that they did not go through religious motions. They did perform the rituals, offer the sacrifices, and outwardly appear to worship. But they did not take to heart the real purpose. They forgot the glory of God.

Remember that God's glory is a term which embraces all of His attributes. His love, His righteousness, His holiness, His authority, His wisdom, His power, and all the rest, taken together, comprise His glory. It was in not respecting, or taking to heart, these attributes, that Israel was sinning against God.

*"Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned THE HOLINESS OF THE LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange God" (Malachi 2:11).*

They had wept over the fact that God was not accepting their offerings and His blessings did not come and they kept asking, "Why?" They were blind to the fact that *"taking to heart"* what God said is more important than all of the outward performing of works and sacrifices.

By way of correction this heinous sin of adultery which God said He hated (Malachi 2:16), God said, *"Take heed to your spirit."*

May we say again, it is far more important that we listen, take heed, pay attention to God in the light of TO SEE IS than that we zealously work. For the offerings of the people to be pleasant they must be refined and purified (Malachi 3:3).

For this reason God would send His *"Messenger"* -- *"the messenger of the covenant"* (3:1).

Two things are to be noted here: The Messiah is the one meant who would be sent. And it is a matter of *"covenant relationship"* which was violated and must be corrected.

Israel felt they had kept God's ordinances to no profit (Malachi 3:14) but God insisted that, though they were going through the motions of keeping them, they had actually *"gone*

away" (Malachi 3:7) and must return and *"lay it to heart."*

A very vital lesson appears at this point. God is paying close attention to the hearts of His people. He knows who is laying it to heart and who are religious for what there is in it for them, even who complain at the *"trouble"* it is to obey.

These are disqualified as God's covenant people and a description of some whom the Lord calls "mine" and "my jewels" is given: *"they that fear the Lord," "them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name"* (Malachi 3:16).

Of these God says He notes that they speak often one to another (doubtless about Him and His ways), and that He will hearken to this speaking, and *"a book of remembrance"* for them was written before Him. When God makes up His jewels, doubtless at His return, many will then take note and be able to tell the difference between who is righteous and who is wicked, who serves the Lord and who does not (Malachi 3:18).

The *"Sun of righteousness"* (the Christ) shall rise in the morning of the Day of the Lord *"with healing in his wings (rays)"* (Malachi 4:2). Then the righteous who have feared the Lord shall be given God's authority to tread down the wicked. I understand this to mean that these shall have ruling authority with Christ in the Kingdom (millennium).

Thus, again, have we seen God making a difference between men who outwardly are "covenant people" -- some of them qualified and accepted; others not qualified and rejected. It does not pay to attempt to rob God.

It has ever been like this. When Satan (the Serpent) persuaded the woman to eat the forbidden fruit his appeal was on the basis that man should become "as god's" or like God. This suggests that when one takes his life into his own hands and shows his prowess and ability he can gain great benefits. It is a lie. God had made Adam and given him the task of ruling, of subduing and having dominion in the earth.

In this responsibility he needed only to heed God, take to heart this privilege, and God would have afforded him all the understanding and all the power to do the job and do it well. But the temptation would circumvent God's design.

This completely disqualified Adam for subduing or having dominion. God did not change His goal, but Adam was disqualified and so were his seed. But God in His mercy offers an op-

portunity to those who will heed Him -- *"take it to heart"* -- to "return" and become acceptable rulers with Him, or, if you prefer under Him. Robbing God of His glory is only temporary.

The havoc wrought in the Fall extended itself until the days of Noah. By then *"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Genesis 6:5).

Being grieved He destroyed all the earth and the people in it except eight souls who would listen to Him. With this attitude God qualified him to take care of the original purpose (Genesis 9:2). He *"established"* His covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:11). But it was not long until the subtlety of Satan had injected further disruptions to rob God of His glory (Genesis 9:21).

It was not long until terrific confusion reigned in the earth (Genesis 11). It was then that God stepped into separate a people to Himself by covenant (Genesis 12). Thus He called and made a covenant with Abram. The man was not perfect, nor was he very righteous, but God knew he had a heart to listen to Him (Genesis 18:17-19).

#### **An Outline of God's Dealing with His People**

In a few generations the children of Abraham had become slaves in the land of Egypt. God thus providentially arranged for them to see His hand in their lives so they would be persuaded to listen to him. This business of covenant relationship involves several very important elements.

It is a community of people which God is separating to Himself, blessing them and making them a blessing.

His blessing them by supernaturally providing for their needs, protecting them against their enemies, even miraculously delivering them when necessary, all was designed to make them listen, heed, and fear God.

He makes His appeal upon the basis of what He had done for them, together with the kind of Person this dealing proved Him to be.

They were thus obligated to heed Him and when they did God would continue to bless, even to the granting of receptive hearts of understanding, ears to hear and eyes to see (Deuteronomy 29:4 and context).

Failure to heed meant that they would become an object of His



curses instead of His blessings (Deuteronomy 29:21-29).

The responsibility for entering the covenant relationship so as to partake of its blessings and enjoy its oath-bound benefits was a personal matter for each individual (Deuteronomy 29:10-13).

This responsibility was not something which could be discharged and then ignored, but must be heeded -- *"taken to heart"* -- daily, in any day (Deuteronomy 29:10, 14,15). Those not there would be generations to come, and would include any engrafting which God had added (Romans 11:17-21; Isaiah 49:8-12; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 4:6-10 with Psalm 95:7-11).

#### **What the Law Could Not Do**

Almost immediately following the giving of the Law at the Sinai the children of Israel began to violate its commandments. This was not a deliberate denial of its application, but was because of their being occupied with their own problems and a desire to enjoy the world. While Moses, with Joshua, was gone up into the Mount, and God was giving the Law, because the people had felt they could not hear the voice of God directly, they turned aside to eating and drinking and playing (Exodus 32:6; 1 Corinthians 10:7).

The examples we have seen in the Old Testament -- during the wilderness wandering, while they were in the land both before and after they had a king, during the captivity (see Esther), and after they returned to the land (see Malachi) -- all demonstrate the Law's ineffectiveness to make the people what they ought to be. This is explained in the New Testament, specially in Romans and in Galatians.

In Romans (8:3-4) it is summarized thus:

*"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own SON IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH, AND FOR SIN, CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*

Further, *"Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone"* (Romans 9:31, 32).

It seems that the law's pointing them to the Christ who should be their righteousness was the real problem. They wanted the law to prescribe for their flesh; they did not want to be shut up to the faith of Christ. As it is put in Galatians, the law was added till He should come (the Christ) "*to whom the promise was made*" (Romans 3:19).

There was always that futility which the law put the flesh under. It led them to the Christ but they wanted it to hold up their flesh. By men's subjecting the flesh to commandments the law becomes a death-dealing taskmaster or yoke (Acts 15:10), adverse, like Ishmael who opposed Isaac.

By an allegory the law was represented by Hagar, a slave woman who gendered only slaves. Hence, her son, Ishmael, represents the flesh and when these two work together they violently oppose the spiritual man in believers (Galatians 4:29; 5:17).

The law, that is, the letter, produces only death because it is "*not of faith*" (Galatians 3:12), rather making its appeal to the flesh (Romans 8:3; 2 Corinthians 3:6). But when the Law is viewed as pointing men to Christ, as a schoolmaster or child-conductor (Galatians 3:24), it effectively requires that men heed God from the heart, by faith.

This gives us two functions of the law, one of which God intended, the other one misapplication of it. When Paul speaks of finding that to be unto death which was ordained to life (Romans 7:10) he poses a problem. How could God's holy, just, and good law, "*ordained unto life,*" become a death-dealing taskmaster, a yoke impossible to be borne?

It is because the people turned it "upside-down," as it were. It made its contact through the flesh for it was designed to label sin (Galatians 3:10), thus proving that the flesh, helpless to measure up and thus causing men to turn to God in repentance, asking for mercy and trusting Him.

This was its true intent -- that for which it was "ordained." But men took it as though it were possible for their flesh to keep it, believing that those occasions or times when they succeeded for moments or days that righteousness accrued to themselves thereby, and that, when they failed, the animal sacrifices it prescribed would in some way mitigate the guilt. This called upon the law for a work it could not do and for which it was not intended.

This same error follows when men apply the terms of new covenant living in the same way. The letter killeth (2 Corinthians 3:6), no matter what covenant is meant. When men take the symbols as reality, or assumed the ordinances which the flesh can keep outwardly can supply righteousness in any way, they are corrupting the function of that language. Baptism is a symbol which marks and identifies a new covenant people in this age. It prescribes an outward act which the flesh can perform.

The dependence upon it not only will not cause righteousness to accrue, will not assist in saving the individual, and will not even help to save his life. On the other hand, dependence upon it in any of these areas rather contributes to a spiritual death. If seeking to be "*justified by the law*" caused a severing from Christ, likewise will "*seeking to be justified by baptism*" cause a severing from Christ (Galatians 5:4; see the Amp. Bible, RSV, NEB, Philips, etc.).

By these terms we do not imply that one who is born again can ever lose his salvation. We understand that being justified is a term applicable to one's position as reckoned by God when one trust Him and acts accordingly. It occurs when one trusts Him the first time and is born again. It also occurs on any and every occasion in which a man believes God and is moved to outward response because of that faith (cf. James 2:22-24). Thus is a man justified by his works. So if a man obeys the Lord in any manner which is Scripturally enjoined he is thereby justified.

A man is justified in baptism when he believes God would have him thus submit himself. He is also justified in open identification with the church in this age. He is justified when he partakes of the table of the Lord (the Lord's Supper). He is justified when he gives of his money to support the work which God has enjoined. And on and on we may go.

But let us get this matter clearly in mind: was Abraham justified at the moment he was circumcised, or at the moment he offered Isaac, for the Scriptures tell us he was justified when he believed God's promise of Isaac and that Scripture was fulfilled when he offered Isaac, years later?

The first occasion was when God promised Isaac to be born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age (Genesis 15:1-6). (The promise also included a great multitude of seed to come from

Abraham.) Paul explains later that this "seed" should include "many nations" or many "of the nations," men who were not a part of the nation of Israel, the circumcision. (Romans 4:17 quoting Genesis 17:5).

At the time of this promise neither Ishmael nor Isaac had been borne. Abraham believed the promise and God counted it to him for righteousness. The apostle makes an argument on this circumstance. He was counted righteous when he believed God and this was "in uncircumcision" (Romans 4:10).

It was years later before Ishmael was born to Abraham and Hagar and God had him circumcise him and all the males of his house, including himself. This was a sign to him of God's promise of a seed to come and served to confirm the previously existing faith.

But when Abraham first believed the promise (Genesis 15:6) he had been in the land of Canaan some time, had encountered a drought, had gone for a time in Egypt, had returned to the land and prospered greatly so that a dividing of the way between Lot and himself became necessary.

As God had promised the seed in Ur before Abraham moved to Canaan, He now repeated his promise of the seed (Genesis 13:16 with 12:3). More time past during which Abraham rescued Lot from captivity (Genesis 14) and gave tithes to Melchisedek.

Abram had left Ur of the Chaldees by faith (Hebrews 11:8) and had lived in the land by faith (Hebrews 11:9). This establishes the fact that Abraham was a believer, a saved man, long before Isaac was born and before he believed the promise of the coming Seed, at which faith God counted him righteous.

There is nothing to indicate whether God had counted him righteous sooner -- perhaps He had, and our understanding would insist that he had -- but the language puts it at a time later when he believed the promise about Isaac and the many seed, in a day when he despaired of ever having a son at all and thought of Eliezer as his heir.

Abraham's circumcision comes still later, when he was 99 years old (Genesis 17:24) and Ishmael was 13 years old. He was 86 when Ishmael was born and they had been in the land 10 years before he had been conceived (Genesis 16:3, 16).

It was during these 10 years that he believed God, some time after Abraham was 75, his age when he had left Haran (Genesis 12:4). These figures all may seem incidental, but they establish Abraham's eligibility to become the *"father of many nations."* He is not just the father of those natural seed, all of whom had to be circumcised. But he has qualified to become the father of the uncircumcised believers in Jesus, those who are of faith (Romans 4:16-18).

It is interesting to note that Abraham's faith was not a mere onetime acceptance of God's word, but a faith which went on day after day, noting the deadness of his own body, noting the age and the deadness of Sarah, his wife, and continuing until he was *"about an hundred years old"* (having heard the promise before he was eighty) and the child not yet born.

This faith, of course, did not cease with the birth of Isaac, for it was a faith which claimed the promise of a multitude of nations and it was *"that he might become the Father of many nations"* that he *"against hope believed in hope"* (Romans 4:18,19). Possibly Abraham thought of all those seed as being *"natural,"* but at least he knew that *"many nations"* were involved. This could have been the several tribes of Israel, but Paul explains that it is to include Gentile nations (Romans 4:11), basing his reasoning on the fact it is believers among those who are not circumcised.

#### **A Remnant Preserved**

The numbers of the natural seed usually increased. There were perhaps two and a half million at the time of the Exodus, some six hundred thousand men above age twenty. Many died in the wilderness but many also were born during that time. It would be difficult to ascertain just how many there were by the time they entered into the land.

And counting was something God did not want done. David got into serious trouble for counting. One might wonder just why this was. I suggest that it is because it places dependence upon the outward man. It assumes that all that the eye sees belongs in the number. It was Satan who promoted the numbering of Israel in the days of David (1 Chronicles 21:1; 2 Samuel 24:1).

There were one million three hundred thousand men able to bear swords at that time. These were what the eyes could see

(2 Samuel 24:3). But God never has been able to go by that which man's eyes can see (cf. Romans 11:2-5). God convicted David of the sin of his act (2 Samuel 24:10) and great suffering followed, and many deaths.

We are instructed in this to realize that God does not see as man does. Man may count the circumcised. Man may count the baptized. Man may even say that all those baptized make up the bride of Christ and shall reign with Him, but God does not see that way. He is looking at hearts.

A close look at the cases in Scripture will show that it is not just a matter of including all those who are born and circumcised, or all those who are born again and baptized. God is considering the attitude of heart among those *"in the number."* True, men cannot always tell. We have to judge as we see, in some measure. But circumstances of which we know nothing may be weighed by the Lord. Elijah came to feel that everybody had departed from the Lord and he was the only one faithful (1 Kings 19:10,14), but God said there were seven thousand who had not bowed down to the image of Baal nor kissed it (v. 18).

Paul calls this *"a remnant according to the election of grace"* (Romans 11:5). He then points out that *"the election"* is not the same as *"the rest"* of the nation (Romans 11:7). The *"election"* was God's chosen people, those whom He foreknew (Romans 11:1, 2).

When the ax was laid to the root of the tree and only a very small remnant was left, those cut off were from *"the rest of the nation"* but *"the election"* whom God *"foreknew"* were left. Into this number were added believing Gentiles so that the tree might grow and bear fruit, all partaking of the *"root and fatness"* of the tree (the promises of the covenant).

In this connection Gentile believers are warned that they were grafted in for God's purposes but they must not be boastful as though God had favored them over the natural seed. They were grafted in because of their faith but they could be cut off if they did not continue in that faith (cf. Romans 11:19-23).

Many Christians from among the Gentiles do not understand this principle today. They seemed to feel that because they have been saved and baptized that they have some sort of "right" to the promises (an inheritance, a kingdom, rulership

with Christ, etc.). All of these promises belong to *"the Seed"* which is Christ (Galatians 3:16). This is why there are so many admonitions to *"abide in Him"* and to continue in the faith.

In the nation of Israel the very strictest of men, those holding the narrowest views of the Word, those who might be called "fundamentalists," were the ones who became the Pharisees. Their satisfaction with themselves because of their strict adherence to the letter of the law is what we call hypocrisy.

Being right and knowing you are right is a most dangerous position to be in. For unless one practices a consecrated devotion to the Lord, recognizing Him personally, not merely His words, he becomes proud of what he believes. He becomes boastful of how right his doctrines are and that no one else knows or believes the Truth as he does. This is most dangerous. Jesus pointed out that those Pharisees, as strict as they were, did not have God's word abiding in them. They taught for commandments the traditions of men (John 5:38; Galatians 1:14; Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7).

Jesus summed up their error in these words: You are searching *"the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that he might have life"* (John 5:39,40).

The Pharisees found their satisfaction in the scriptures, that is, the letter, making of those something other than what God had said because they supplied their own doctrines or interpretations and did not allow God's word to abide in their hearts. Thus they thought that life was in the letter and did not see that life was in the son. They would not come to Him.

How many Christians make this mistake in greater or lesser degree! They talk of the Word, they give lip service to it. They debate and argue and interpret. They explain almost with perfection. But they turn the function upside down, if not for themselves, then for others who do not hear quite right. So others presume that they were taught that baptism is necessary to salvation, or in some way helps to save or saves the life. The letter is ministered and Christ is left out.

Nearly all sweeping movements make this mistake. For several years I followed so as to examine the teachings of Armstrongites. I was not led astray by these suave and efficient

interpreters, but I noted their points of emphasis and noted their appeal:

- ☑ *Their speakers were efficient*
- ☑ *Their scholarship was very exact*
- ☑ *Their use of the Scriptures was very meticulous*

But their allegiance to the Christ was sadly lacking. They were legalists — insisting on the Old Testament law. They keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days prescribed in the Pentateuch. They talk of grace and of salvation by grace, but they ridicule those who say they are of Christ.

They have an interpretation of the prophecy of Jesus regarding false Christs and false prophets in the last days which brands all Christendom, almost, as being the false one prophesied. Jesus had said that there would be those who say, "I am Christ; and shall deceive many." (Matthew 24:5).

They explain this to mean that there will be many teachers who say that Jesus is Christ but who deceive because they do not follow the line which the Armstrongs teach. Thousands have sent them millions of dollars to promote this "legal" system on radio and television and in Saturday gatherings all over the land.

Their sun has declined in recent years because some of their leaders have been accused of adultery and others are charged with fraud and deception, so they are torn from the inside. It is almost inevitable that the more legalistic a people are, the greater the likelihood that they shall run into such discord and strife.

To avoid such "hard-line" legalism others, just as wrong, become liberal (as the Sadducees) and do not stand for anything.

There is nothing wrong with the letter which God gave us in His Word. It is the twisting of its function, as Israel did the law, and as Judaizing Christians treat it, which makes for legalism and error. When the word abides in us it makes us to honor the Christ and to look to Him and not to our own letter observance. He must have the glory or there is none for us.

If we seek the glory here, as the Pharisees did in making long public prayers, with disfigured faces and special garments,



then we have received all the glory we shall ever have. If we would give God all the glory and allow Him to determine whether or not we inherit the promises, He will share His glory with us, even allowing us to rule with Him in the kingdom.

Of course, all men disavow any intent to seek the glory here and now. And only God knows men's hearts. It is not for us to say what their motives may be. One rule of thumb may be pretty accurate, though: those most quick to brand another man as unrighteous or heretical are most likely the ones whose practices followed the error they purport to condemn.

Because they are such strict adherents to a "hard-line," they quickly condemn others who follow a different "hard-line." And strangely, they are always quick to see that evil or sin of some sort in others and will label it, even when it may not be there.

So they did Jesus. His life was without sin but He was crucified as a dangerous sinner who ought to not to live. Who did this? The very strict Pharisees and the very liberal Sadducees. They had no good words for each other but they could agree together against Jesus and His disciples.

The one claimed to honor the words of Moses; the other gave lip service to Moses but denied those words in a different way. Neither of them let them abide in their hearts. This is the problem today. Men do not listen. They do not "lay to heart" the words of God. In fact, their hearts are not in it. Such cannot be a part of God's covenant people, no matter the outward position.

The remnant, by the time of Jesus, was very small. A few names are called of men and women whom we could identify with God's covenant, who believed its promises and waited for the "*hope of salvation*," the Lord's Christ. Among these were Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, and the shepherds who went to the stable to see the newborn King.

Doubtless there were many others, but they were behind the scenes. They did not attract a lot of public attention. From among these John baptized a number and some few who were rank sinners doubtless joined in following. The "letter knowledge" was there in many, so that it was easy to tell the wise men where the Messiah should be born (Matthew 2:2-8), but nobody became curious and no one followed to worship Him.

When the wise men did not come to report on their "find"

Herod was angry and sent orders to Bethlehem to kill all the boy babies in Bethlehem. Do we believe, wicked as Herod was, that he would have done such a thing if all those wise men who knew what the prophets had said about the coming Christ, including His birthplace, had showed humble and heart-felt interest and had gone themselves to determine if He had come? I think not.

Yes, the Scriptures must be fulfilled and it had been prophesied that all those babies would die (Jeremiah 31:15). But this does not mean that any particular man had to do it or that any heart was hardened by God to make it come to pass. God simply knows all things and recorded what would certainly come to pass.

Jesus' ministry began with this little remnant who had heeded the message of John the Baptist. They were the ones He taught His ways. Of such a nucleus He would prepare a kingdom people, a people worthy of the promises in the covenants who might inherit the kingdom.

The remnant never grew very large during His lifetime on earth. Not much more than five hundred brethren are ever mentioned as having heeded Him or followed Him. We know there were great multitudes who followed for the bread and fishes, who followed for a literal King to throw off the Roman yoke.

But not many followed for the moral principles, the righteous standards of the kingdom. But only such were qualified and the others fell by the wayside. These were men of faith. They came to see beyond the present time. They learned true holiness as the Lord would require. Most men will not!

#### **Always by Faith**

Again we want to impress upon our readers that if men are to glorify God it must be on His terms. Neither in Old Covenant days nor in New Covenant days have men been expected to do more than trust God. When we speak of hearing, heeding, listening, coming, being willing, obeying, yielding, or any other thing described by any term whatsoever, it is always a matter of faith which determines whether or not God is pleased.

We do not ask men to do what they cannot do. It is not the disposition of the flesh to trust or yield. It neither has the wisdom or the strength to come, to perform, to obey.

But we believe that it is within man's natural capacity to think. Because of the blindness brought on by Satan's wiles (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4) he may not be able to understand. He may listen to the wrong voice, move in the wrong direction, attempt the wrong things. But God, in His providences, will constantly bring back to his attention that he is wrong. Though he is dead in trespasses and in sins he is not unconscious. He has the capacity to hear words, to think about them, and to realize the consequences of his condition.

All he need do is admit the facts which are brought home to his heart. Once that much response to truth is allowed, God steps in to quicken the spirit of the man and grant him the ability to hear, and to obey. All this is mysterious, but there is no question but that a man is responsible to respond to the God who manifests Himself in His creation and "in" the human being (Romans 1:18).

Once the man has honestly consented to the direction he is headed and to the fact that a Power beyond himself is suggesting that he allow himself to be taken in tow by that Power, God will move to change his heart.

Once the individual is changed, quickened and, regenerated, he can then hear the Lord more clearly and is granted such discernment as he needs to please the Lord, if he is willing to have it. God told Israel that they had seen all the evidence of His power, His love, and His grace in Egypt, in the exodus, and in the wilderness.

They had seen his mercies extended and had heard the words of His law at Sinai. But after nearly forty years God had not given them a heart to perceive, eyes to see, nor ears to hear. Why? (Cf. Deuteronomy 29:4). Evidently, because they were anxious to hear other things and go a different direction.

So again, He challenges them to listen, to heed, and to obey. Possibly a few did. There has always been a remnant -- men who believe God and humble themselves before Him. But the majority seem more drawn to lust after the onions, leeks, garlics, fish, fleshpots, and melons of Egypt. Their souls loathe the manna which God provides and which they called "*light bread*" (Numbers 21:5). It has ever been so.

Men say, "It is so difficult to have faith; I just seem not to be able to believe. I want to, but something always keeps me

from it." Does this sound like your own heart responding to a plea to be faithful?

Let us take a closer look at your "excuses," for that is what it is. Why is it difficult to believe? Is it because God is so unreasonable? Is He inconsistent, never responding when you need Him? Or have you really sought Him?

You say you trusted Him once, that you know His Word is correct, and you know that you must face the consequences of your indifference. Where does this place you? I would suggest that it leaves you on the spot plainly marked "G-U-I-L-T-Y"!

It need not have been this way. *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17). If you do not have faith in God it is because you have not heard His words. You do not know His promises; you are not acquainted with His mercies.

You are not familiar with His Person in all His love, tenderness, goodness, longsuffering. Nor do you realize His yearning over you, His righteousness, His holiness, His wrath, and His certain justice. Why cannot you believe Him? He has never misrepresented anything to you. He calls Himself *"Faithful and True."*

Why cannot you believe him? You do not listen? You are interested in the strong flavors (onions, leeks, garlic, fish, etc.) which please the natural man. You are dominated by the lusts of the flesh. But so are we all. You are not different from the rest of us. How do we get away with the strong desires? We have to want to escape. We must desire to have God take control of our lives. We must frankly confess our own helplessness.

If there is shame in this, so be it. If it says we do not have control of our own lives, so be it. If it makes us dependent upon Someone else, so be it. That Someone is the God who made us, who loves us, who calls us, and who asks us to come.

There can be no excuse when one faces Him in the judgment. And if you once trusted Him to save you there is all the more reason why you will be *"speechless"* (Matthew 22:12) when you stand before Him.

#### **A Study of "Justification by Faith" - Romans Chapter 4**

Now may we give express attention to a passage of scripture

which deals with the subject of justification by Faith (Romans, chapter 4). Suppose I gave you a book entitled Finding a Marriage Partner.

You take the book and open it and begin to read. From the first page, it speaks of rearing children -- their health, their discipline, their education. Would you not suppose the book was mis-titled? This is the way I feel about Romans 4 when I am told that it deals with justification by faith and then it is explained to me that this is telling men how to be saved. The discussion is directed towards the New Birth and what happens and why it happens when one first trusted the Lord.

But as I read Romans 4, as well as those matters preceding in chapter 3, I am definitely impressed with a matter which is set in contradistinction to the law. The law of Moses was never intended as a Savior and it certainly deals with matters covering more of one's life than an incident which happens in a moment.

The law covers all of one's life. And it is not finished with its work when one trusts of the Lord and is born again. It is designed to show that the natural man is helpless in matters of morals and righteousness. He cannot lift himself out of the mire of sin to get a fresh start.

And he is helpless to keep himself out of sins. As an incidental, then, we must conclude that no man can be saved through any efforts of his own. But, more than this, he cannot live a righteous life through any efforts which his flesh is capable of performing.

Since the purpose of the law was to mark off the helplessness of the sin nature and point one to Christ as the means of righteousness before God, it is obvious that a walk of faith is necessary. This is illustrated by Abraham in Romans 4.

We ought not attempt to limit the lesson which Abraham learned to the idea that he came to know that salvation is by grace, in the sense one is born again only by grace.

*"What shall we say then that Abraham our Father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:1-4).*

Does this sound as though Abraham learned that the way to be born again was through faith and not by works? Only one word is used which could be construed to have this sense and that is "justified." This is "counted unto him for righteousness" further on in the same verse. But in the next verse the same thing is "reward," and it is said that it is "reckoned of grace," not works. Such a sudden change of sense, if the meaning has been the New Birth!

But the meaning is not the New Birth, or how to be saved. The passage is discussing how Abraham discovered that one may be righteous before God. If one could be righteous through works of his own (which take time to perform), then might he glory. But Abraham simply believed God's words of promise concerning a seed to be given him and God counted his faith for righteousness (cf. Genesis 15:6).

So Abraham became a righteous man in God's sight by believing God's words. Were these the words as to how to become born again? No, they were words of promise concerning a seed to be given him. Would that Bible readers, and specially Bible teachers, could allow the scriptures to explain their own sense!

True, one enters into the way of righteousness through faith. That first step cannot be hurdled through any works of the man. He is justified in that first step when he admits God's indictment and God's mercies (believes). As regards that act he is justified by faith. But the example of Abraham has no reference in this passage to his believing God's words regarding how to get saved. God's words which Abraham believed had to do with his becoming the Father of a multitude. He had no children, but he believed God would give him children. God blessed that faith. The key is that word "reward." He was rewarded with a righteous standing because he believed God's words and will receive a reward in the next age because of that faith.

Continuing the study into verses 5-8, we see that the key word is "blessed" or "blessedness." No one questions that these words are applicable to the first or immediate benefit of being born again.

But that is not the theme here. David is the teacher in this instance and he is quoted as saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is

the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

If one will turn to Psalm 32 and read the whole Psalm it certainly is not necessary to limit this wonderful "blessedness" to a moment when one is first saved. Certainly David has no reference to that moment. Sin had come into his life. He bottled it up inside (v. 3) and the pain was like a roaring cataract. It went on "day and night" and God's hand upon him made him feel parched like the land during the "drought of summer." How many of God's people have experienced this pain unnecessarily!

Then David confessed his sin and the Lord immediately forgave the iniquity (v. 5). Sinners are often told that if they will confess their sins God will forgive and 1 John 1:9 is quoted as proof. But can we not all remember when we were lost and confessed again and again to no avail. What is wrong?

Confession is for God's people who came under the blood earlier. Confessing does not get forgiveness for the alien sinner. He must honestly admit, not only his own undone condition, but his helplessness and God's mercy and grace.

Further, David instructs us as to the need to pray when things are right, speaking to the godly, for when the troubles overwhelm us it may be difficult to discover God's smile (v. 6). So we ought to seek God and enjoy Him as our hiding place and listen to His songs of deliverance before ever the dark days come. Then can we claim God's guidance (v. 7, 8).

We must not be like a horse or mule who has to be held in with bit and bridle at all times. We should trust daily. The whole psalm is an instruction as to the "blessedness" of having the Lord in our lives. It is so applied in Romans 4. Let us not limit it, or twist it, to apply only to the first step of faith.

Then the writer to the Romans goes on to apply this principle of "blessedness" further, using Abraham as the illustration. The question is raised as to just when this blessedness came into his life. It is insisted that it was his faith which was reckoned to him for righteousness and this was the cause for blessedness. But when did this happen? Was it before he was circumcised or later?

The answer (v. 10): "Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision." So it was before Abraham received the sign of circumcision that he knew this blessedness, because it came when his

faith was counted to him for righteousness. This assurance (Genesis 15:6) had come to him shortly after he entered the land, perhaps, and certainly before Ishmael was born.

Abraham was saved before he left Ur of Chaldees.

He entered the land when he was 75 (Genesis 12:4) and was already a saved man, for he had left Ur by faith.

Nothing is said at that point about his faith being counted for righteousness, but knowing God's grace we believe it was.

Still, it was not till the promise regarding a seed, which Abraham believed, that it is said "his faith was counted to him for righteousness."

But it is in plenty of time, long before the birth of Ishmael, which was fourteen years before the birth of Isaac, the promised seed and the first in line of seed promised. He was 86 when Ishmael was born and 100 when Isaac was born, but he was 99 when he was circumcised and Ishmael was 13 at the time (Genesis 17:24, 25).

So Abraham was counted righteous, and knew the blessedness of such a faith as takes God at His Word, long before he obeyed in taking the sign which demonstrated that he was to be the Father of a number of seed. He believed the promise first; he took the sign as a reminder of the promise later, and then the promise was fulfilled still later.

The Apostle Paul, inspired to do so, makes this order of events symbolic of a notable promise: That Abraham should become the Father of a multitude (many nations). The promise was of a seed so great in number as to be represented by the stars of heaven and the sands by the sea (Genesis 22:17).

At first, though, only the stars are mentioned (Genesis 15:5). Later the sand is mentioned (Genesis 32:12). I suggest that the sand bespeaks a natural people -- Israelites in the flesh -- and stars bespeaks a spiritual people -- men of faith in Israel and later including engrafted Gentiles. (More on this later).

Back to the symbolism of Abraham's being counted righteous while he was in uncircumcision. Circumcision became the mark of God's covenant nation (Genesis 17).

Every male was to receive this mark at eight days of age. Any man who did not receive it was to be cut off from that nation. Even the stranger (Gentile) living with them must receive this



mark.

In time, the nation, because of this peculiar identification, came to be known as "the circumcision," and Gentiles (generally speaking) came to be known as "the uncircumcision."

This sign was supposed to have real significance, so that Paul explains (Romans 2:28, 29) that one is only a true Jew if the circumcision is inward, in the heart, and not just outward, in the flesh. But Paul makes the specific point that it was in "uncircumcision" that Abraham was accounted righteous, and that this bespeaks the fact that he should become the father of nations yet in "uncircumcision," that is, of people who did not practice this outward mark.

He was to be the Father of Gentiles. The "circumcision" (Jews) were "of the law" because they had been given the law and had identified with it, though they distorted its true function. Those of the "circumcision" were "seed of Abraham" but not in God's sight unless they had the circumcision inwardly, that is, were "of the faith of Abraham" (Romans 4:16).

Many, however, who were not natural seed were "of the faith of Abraham" and made heirs of the promise, though they were not "of the law" and not even natural descendants, for the promise is "of faith" (v. 16), explained as "the faith of Abraham."

Then it is said he is "the father of us all" and Genesis 17:5 is quoted as a prophetic promise that Gentiles should be included. (Paul was writing to a Gentile church.) That Abraham had righteousness imputed to him because of his faith is not written for Abraham's sake alone (Romans 4:23), but it was written for the sake of any of us who believe in the resurrected Lord (v. 24).

When one first trusts Jesus he knows little or nothing about the significance of Christ's resurrection. The scriptures teach that it is upon the basis of his resurrection that we are saved or that we are justified (Romans 4:25; Romans 5:9,10).

It is through the resurrection that Jesus has become Lord, that He makes his priestly work effective, and that He becomes the head of the church. Because He is alive we can expect to live. It is not merely that we can expect to be born again, but we can "live" (John 14:19; cf. John 6:57).

As the Lord, the Spirit, He preserves our lives, gives us daily victory, makes us "his people, and He becomes our Lord" by virtue of His resurrection. His death delivers us from our offenses, but our justification hinges upon His resurrection. We are "justified by His blood" in the sense that blood cleanses us daily. But this is only true because He "ever lives to make intercession for us."

When it was promised that Abraham should become the father of "many nations," and he became "the father of us all" (Romans 4:16), it does not mean that God had decided to allow Gentiles to get born again. That there are "Jews" and "Gentiles" at all is a matter distinct from whether or not men are born again.

"Gentiles" means "nations" and these began far back in human history, specially after the confusing of tongues at Babel. Then God called Abraham and separated him and his seed from all the other nations.

Israel came to be God's people and the other "nations" (Gentiles) were not His people, "not a people" (Loammi).

This does not mean that others were not able to be saved nor that many of them were not saved. Many were saved. That God decided to save Gentiles after He cut Israel off (as suggested from Romans 11) is a false doctrine.

Gentiles have always been saved and, as always, it was in the same manner as an Israelite was saved: by trusting in God. But God wants than that step when men trust Him to save them. He wants them to walk by faith. He wants them to become like Himself. So He separated a nation, gave them His "lively oracles" and made them a peculiar people unto Himself.

This was a covenant people. Men among the nations (Gentiles) could and were still saved as before. But Israel became His holy and peculiar people. However, when they failed God by becoming like the nations around them, God dispersed them in the captivities.

When they crucified the Messiah the dispersion became complete. They were cut off from something: from being "His people." He was no longer "their God." Now we know that He is "the God of all the earth," but there is a peculiar sense in which He is "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." In

this sense He is not the "God of the nations."

But now God, through Paul, would provoke the Jews to jealousy by "turning to the Gentiles." In time it is plainly said that this turning was "to take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14).

Then the prophets were quoted to show that God had anticipated this necessity:

*"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build the ruins thereof, and I will set it up (a manifest reference to the Second Coming and the establishment of the throne of the kingdom): That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:16-18).*

So God had known and purposed to extend His grace to "the residue of men" (Gentiles outside Israel), and doubtless intended this for the Millennium when His words and ways would pervade all humanity in a kingdom of righteousness.

But Israel's manifest failure and their rebellion which brought about the crucifixion prompted Him to turn to the Gentiles even in this age, so that a people might be raised up to His name.

Paul quotes a number of passages to support his ministry to Gentiles as being consistent with God's purpose and to vindicate his turning to them to take out a special, covenant people (Romans 15:4-13).

## Chapter Five

### **HEAVEN'S WISDOM IN THE CHRIST**

In the parable of the householder (Matthew 21:33-43) demanding the fruit from his vineyard we see a situation more instructive.

The owner of the vineyard is God. The vineyard is the nation of Israel (Isaiah 5). God is due reverence from His people. He sent servants to "collect" his rents: prophets and righteous men to admonish them to their duty.

But Israel rejected their message and stoned and slew the prophets. God sent still others and they treated them in the same way.

At last He determined to send His son, saying, "*They will reverence Him.*" But they seized the Son and slew Him (crucified Him), saying that they would thereby receive the vineyard for their own inheritance. This last portion is the hardest part of the parable. How can men think that they can receive any good at all while rejecting the Master's messengers and, specially, His own Son?

This tells us how that sin can blind men's eyes. It says that man has great confidence in his own judgment and ingenuity. No, the parable does not say that God was surprised at the thing they did. Instead, His mercies are so great, His offers bona fide, that He acts as though He does not know that men have all the opportunity they need. And then their wickedness will receive its just judgment in the end of the age.

God's language that they would reverence His Son is a real challenge to our blindness. Speaking as a man (anthropomorphically) God says that in view of the worthiness and dignity of the Son, bearing as He does the relationship of heir to the Father, men surely would heed Him. All reasons says they will. Experience teaches us that they will not.

Ought Christ to be heard and heeded, submitted to and obeyed? His identity was so obvious that even the lowest peasant in Israel could tell who He was. Men frequently raised the question as to whether this were the Christ. The details which made His identity easy and a certainty are to be found

all through the record. He was born of a virgin, in Bethlehem. He came out of Egypt (as prophesied) and lived in Nazareth. His life was without sin. His entrance upon His ministry was properly announced by the Forerunner, John the Baptist, as had been prophesied. The manner of it was in every detail as God had said it would be.

Men of that day, longing as they were for evidence of God's favors toward them after such a prolonged "famine" of "vision" (since Malachi), scrutinized everything, but in their blindness did not see it.

They were close to the events. We are far away. But in the inspired record we see those marks which seem to us to have certainly been obvious then. Well, a remnant did see.

#### **Christ Was a Man with Adam's Nature**

We are told that He came as a man, having partaken of flesh and blood, even the very same nature (seed) of Abraham (Hebrews 2:14-16). But another way, He came in the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man (Philippians 2:7).

The record tells us of his hunger, thirst, tiredness, suffering, and death. His sighing, His compassion, His yearnings, His patience, His meekness, His humility -- all were manifested as the feelings of a man. There were also many more. Yet in it all He was *"the brightness of (God's) glory, and the express image of his person,"* the One who upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3).

Made a little lower than the angels, He is so much better than the angels. That baby born to Mary was little, weak, helpless, just as any other baby. He had to learn to sit up, to walk, and to talk. *"He grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and men"* (Luke 2:52). Nothing short of real humanity here. All of its limitations are shown. He was even tempted as other men, yet He did not yield (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 4:15).

At the same time there is evident all the glory of God, including His power to create and to sustain the universe, all of His holiness and righteousness, even His justice. No wonder we called the incarnation a great mystery (1 Timothy 3:16). God became flesh (John 1:14) and we be held His glory, the very brightness of His glory. In Him dwelt the fullness of the God-

hood, bodily (Colossians 2:9), for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell (Colossians 1:19).

This "*fulness*" suggest "*all the fulness of God.*" God and all of Himself includes everyone of His attributes. These all were so clearly shown in the Man, Christ Jesus, that He reflected the perfect brightness of the fathers glory, the express image of the Father's Person. He was able to claim, at will, the prerogatives of God, such as the forgiveness of the sins of others.

At the same time, He disclaimed absolute knowledge of some things, such as the time of His return (Matthew 24:36). He could speak, act, and feel in the strict limitations of a man. Thus did He need to pray, to humble Himself, to live by faith in His father and cry out to Him for strength, for wisdom, and all else needed. And always these were supplied Him according to the Fathers love and purposes Cf. Isaiah 50:4, 5.

Christians ought to spend many hours meditating on the life of the Man, Christ Jesus. He did begin without the sin which others of us have by birth, but He had the nature we have, just as Adam had it, yet Adam sinned. Jesus did not! He became the perfect expression of what God had intended Adam to be. It was not His being God which afforded Him strength or the will to be what God intended; it was His submission to the Father and His dependence upon the Father.

Having been cleansed by His blood any of us might expect to receive the same kind of grace He did. I fear we excuse ourselves from the kind of obedience He exemplified on the ground that He was God and we are not. But He was able to manifest the fullness of God because of His submission. So can we under proper circumstances. Not that our nature is able; it is not. We are not to call upon the nature we have, and which Jesus had, for anything.

We are only to reckon it dead (Romans 6:11). And we can so reckon it because God executed it in the person of Him who bore it to the cross in our stead. Thus has he made provision for the destruction of the body of sin (Romans 6:6), that we might live unto God.

It is the ideal Manhood of Christ to which I direct attention. He is exactly what God the Father desires. He purposed it in the creation of the first Adam. The race failed, both because of Adam's sin and because of the nature we all have. Jesus

came, taking that same nature, and demonstrated what God's grace can do, even in a world filled with sin, when a man's will is completely surrendered to God. It is God's goal to bring a whole race or creation to this stature.

#### **How Did Jesus Always Gain the Victory Over Sin?**

It is not, as we said, because He was God. He was a man and it is the man who gained the victory. It is not God who was tempted. God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13). Since it was not God in the flesh who was tempted; it was not God in the flesh who gained the victory. It was the Man with Abraham's nature who was tempted and it was that Man who gained the victory.

How did He gain that victory, every time, always, ultimately, and completely?

We are told early in His ministry that He was "*anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*" (Hebrews 1:9). He told us that God had anointed Him (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1). Peter and John preached that God anointed Him as a child (Acts 4:27) for the work He came to do. The prophets tell us that the ultimate victory of God's covenant people (especially Israel) over the antichrist will be because of the anointing (Isaiah 10:27).

All of the anointings of prophets, priests, and kings in the Old Testament are pictures of One anointed as Prophet, Priest, and King: The Anointed One. That is the meaning of the Hebrew word, Messiah, and of the Greek word, Christ. Jesus is the Christ.

The anointing in the prophetic symbolism was always with oil. The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. As God came upon Him in mighty power through the Spirit He was enabled to act as the perfect Man whom God had in mind. He made man to be like Jesus. He made him to exercise Divine prerogatives of rulership and authority. His sin and rebellion disqualified him for any of this.

But God provided a Redeemer and purposes to restore any man who is willing to be what He first intended. He would conform him to the Image of His Son, Christ Jesus.

Redemption is not merely that man may be delivered from a deserved punishment in hell; it is that he might be made like

Christ so that he can share the same *"fulness"* and reflect the same glory of God which the Christ did. Not only is redemption provided to this end, but also an *"anointing"* (1 John 2:27).

Men receive these through faith, when they are willing to become what God purposed for him to be. And in these are supplied all that is necessary to make man what God intended.

#### **Sin is Dealt with At the Cross**

The same question is provided for in something which appears to be the working of sin rather than a remedy. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

The death of the cross is the product of sin at work. But in the case of the Christ it is not His own sins, but ours which He bore there. It was His obedience to that shameful death which pleased the Father and which dealt with the nature which is tempted and can sin.

Thus was our redemption effected. That story has never been adequately told. It is not to be viewed merely as an escape route from perdition which all men deserved. There is much more.

Jesus taught His disciples to *"take up the cross"* and to *"bear the cross."* This also is to be done *"daily"* (Luke 9:23; 14:27). What can this mean? Did not Jesus' suffering on the cross satisfy God and *"finish"* the work? Yes, insofar as affecting redemption the work was complete. But there is a work which is *"behind"* of the sufferings of Christ (Colossians 1:24).

Paul rejoiced to participate in this and spoke of it as *"bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus"* (2 Corinthians 4:10).

This comes in the form of trouble on every side, persecution, perplexity and rejection (2 Corinthians 4:8, 9). What is the purpose. That the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our dying flesh (v. 11). These things are construed as the work of the cross effecting the destruction of the flesh in us. Only so can His life be evident in us.

So the cross serves the double purpose: It redeems us from all sin and provides the blood for cleansing all through our lifetime; and it provides the means for putting down the nature to sin which so frequently rises up in us to oppose the new life of Christ within.



### "Complete in Him"

When suggesting that Christ was the fulness of Godhood, Paul goes right on to tell us that we are complete in Him. That measure of fulness which was evident in Him is supposed to be evident in us (Cf. Colossians 2:9,10).

Since the fulness of God in Christ came by virtue of His anointing, then we, too, need that anointing. When and how do we receive it?

Here we run into many difficulties: human traditions, failure to understand the meaning of terms, specially the symbols of scripture, and prejudices of generations of men.

Among those prejudices is the idea that salvation is God's benefit to men by which they escape the consequences of their sins and without any consideration that God has other purposes in mind than merely man's benefit.

Most men will agree that God's grace is appropriated by faith, though most insist that this has to be assisted by man's works and that unless the works are forthcoming the faith aspect becomes null and void. This is taught in the kind of "*falling from grace*" which allows a man once "*saved*" to be finally lost in hell. This, too, is false.

Then there is a prejudice and it has become a tradition -- which insists that once a man has saving faith he is always a man of faith. Once he believes he is always a believer. This may need a little study.

When you and I first believed on the Lord after a saving fashion it was with a simple yieldedness which God could honor, so He stepped in to lift our sin burden, grant us peace, and give us eternal life and salvation. I think we are safe in these claims. But such faith as we had was very limited. It dealt with the fact of our own need in that moment and God's willingness to meet that need.

It did not comprehend all of those needs which were to arise. Indeed, we had no idea what needs would arise. It would have overwhelmed us that the time to be told that within a few hours, or a few days at most, we would again find ourselves the victim of sins which created disturbances in our conscience and doubts deep down as to our very salvation. (This is not necessarily true of every believer, nor need it be of any.)

But it is true of very many, possibly of most believers.) And sometimes such doubts pile up, for various reasons, so as to cause one to wonder if he were ever saved, or, depending on the instruction he is given, if maybe he has lost what he received in that first moment.

Again, depending on the instruction given, men come to view their position in various ways. Some stand in jeopardy all their lives, feeling that they might lose their salvation. Others, no matter how careless, or even rebellious their lives become, seem to feel they are in a position just as good as anyone else. In this, of course, they could be mistaken.

The Bible teaches that God rewards men for their works. This is an incomplete statement. It should be taught that God rewards men for works which He has required, when they are engaged in by faith.

And it should not be assumed that because one trusted the Lord to save him back yonder somewhere that whatever he does is "*by faith*." Men do all sorts of religious works and then suppose that God will honor them for it. They are saved and believe what they do is pleasing.

They interpret this "*believing*" as faith. It may be a kind of faith, but it is not faith in God. Faith which God honors is the kind which comes by hearing His Word (Romans 10:17).

If His Word did not tell us to do it, or if it is something for which there is no Scriptural instruction, then it is not done in faith. No matter how sincere we are, it is not of faith, hence it is sin (Romans 14:23). "Programs" for promoting God's work are often zealously pursued by conscientious people, but God has not asked it, nor will He honor it. He may overrule in it and some may be brought to trust God, in which case He gets the glory in their salvation, but those doing the works will not be honored for it.

This explains why great denominational activities may not get the same applause at the judgment seat of Christ as some suppose they will. Sermons preached may contain the truth. God always blesses His truth, even when it is preached by men with wrong motives (Philippians 1:15-19).

But the one doing the preaching will not get the blessing for it. When we use our own wisdom, studying and working, to devise a sound, appealing message, but have not humbled our-

selves, prayed for the Spirit's anointing upon it, and trusted Him to get the glory, we have no cause to expect God to reward us for our efforts in the flesh.

This same principle applies to teaching, singing, praying, giving, visiting, or anything else that is done. It is not enough to do things *"in the name of the Lord."* They must be done in faith and according to His will and direction (cf. Matthew 7:21-23).

Even that meek servant, Moses, ran out of patience and acted without faith when he smote the rock after God had said to speak to it (Numbers 20:8-12). God said he did not believe Him and the price was that he was not allowed to go in with Israel into the promised land (v. 12).

When other events of the wilderness are interpreted in Hebrews 3-4, it is seen that many fell in the wilderness and did not enter into the land because of *"unbelief."* Does this include Moses? We know he was saved. But his unbelief had a high price tag. It will be found the same with many others who trusted to be saved and then did not live by faith.

When a thorough study of the situation is made, as to its typical application in the Book of Hebrews, we find that the challenge is to a people who were God's covenant people. They were in the position of chosen men. The lesson is not one of whether they had ever trusted God for anything; all of them had come out of Egypt by His grace. All of them had crossed the Red Sea and thus were all *"baptized unto Moses,"* a picture, certainly, of our baptism into Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 10).

At the moment of leaving Egypt, they possibly were thinking of themselves and of being freed from the bondage there. No one blames them for this. When we are first saved we were thinking of ourselves and we are sincerely grateful.

We are ready to follow the Lord in cloud or fire. And then we are baptized and become part of the congregation known as the church. Before long, though, it is evident that we are *"in the wilderness."* Did you notice it is a *"wilderness of Sin"* ? (Exodus 16:1).

This is coincidental, of course, as the name was Hebrew and has no reference to our word *"sin"* but it certainly falls into the picture at a point which forms a pattern for most of us.

First we are saved (delivered from bondage from the world as they from Egypt). Then we are baptized (as they were "*baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*"). Then they went under the Lord's direction (Exodus 13:21, 22) on into the necessary discipline of the wilderness. So it is with us.

How many fail to measure up to the requirements of this discipline, just as Israel failed to be taught, that is, failed to learn! They could not follow the pillar of fire and of cloud for thinking of what they had left in Egypt and what they were having to put up with in the wilderness. So it is with many who start out to follow the Lord today. We do not know the way to go (but the cloud and pillar are there).

We are on a different diet (and it does not appeal to our flesh, but why should it?). There are enemies and difficulties we would not have, had we not started to follow the Lord (but we would still be in bondage). It is certain we cannot go back to Egypt (the type of the world) in the same situation (but our heart can go back there, creating difficulties for those who would lead us). We become leaders (as Joshua and Caleb) or followers (as some of them), or we become a part of the problem (partaking of the new temptations along the way).

When we listen to Joshua and Caleb we see clearly that victory was all in a point of view. It was the view taken with the eye of faith. It did not take the grasshopper position, down, humiliated by the giants in the land, nor did it look down on God's people as would the giants in the land (Numbers 13:33). It was a looking to God whose word they had. He would give them the land and they would be able to take it. They had listened to God and had assurance that He would give them what He had promised. This is the attitude God seeks in His own people. This is true faith.

#### **The Faith of Christ for Us**

While looking at the Man, Christ Jesus, and noting that He is the ideal and that in Him God has found exactly the kind of man He had intended, the kind He desires all of us to be, and the kind which He purposes to make us "in Him," we ought to take special notice of one feature of His life which explains all of the idealism of His Person: His faith.

Men do not think much of Christ's having faith, for they are thinking of Him as God, so why should He have faith? Inciden-

tally, the Bible speaks of *"the Faith of God"* (Romans 3:3), but when it does it is describing one of His attributes which we might call *"faithfulness;"* that is, He is true to Himself, to His own nature. He never changes nor varies. *"With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,"* (James 1:17).

Such faith men can hardly understand, but it is characteristic of God that He is *"the same yesterday, today, and forever."*

In the sense Jesus is spoken of as *"a faithful and true witness"* (Revelation 3:14; 19:11; 1:5),

*"He is faithful that promised"* (Hebrews 10:23; 11:11), a *"faithful Creator"* (1 Peter 4:19),

*"faithful who calls us"* (1 Thessalonians 5:24), a *"faithful high Priest"* (Hebrews 2:17), *"faithful to God"* (Hebrews 3:2), *"faithful and righteous to forgive"* (1 John 1:9).

Perhaps the greatest attestation to His faith is found in His words at the tomb of Lazarus when He asked His father concerning those who stood by and witnessed His authority in raising Him: *"Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. AND I KNEW THAT THOU HEARS ME ALWAYS: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me"* (John 11:41, 42).

Nothing bespeaks a greater faith than to know that God hears us. Not just to know it as a teaching, but to know it in the heart and with assurance (cf. 1 John 3:18-24). This was the knowledge of the Lord.

It is not said in the Gospels that Jesus had faith in the Father, but it is everywhere evident. He simply spoke the Truth as He knew it. He also manifested His unquestioning confidence in what the Scriptures said on all subjects, quoting them freely to establish His claims and to teach.

It is not said that "he believed" or that His faith was directed towards God. But His prayers prove it. His teaching proves it. His whole life proves it. Not until we come to the epistles later is this point made with special emphasis. There, specially in Paul's writings, the Faith of Christ, both by inference and by designation, becomes the ground for our salvation.

Because many men do not understand this teaching they have missed it entirely. This is evident in a number of the recent translations, where the wording is changed to make it man's

faith instead of Christ's which enables us to live the Christ-life.

This is seen in The Revised Standard Version, where it might be expected, as also in the New English Bible. But it is also seen in the Amplified Bible, and in the new American Standard, as also in the Philips Translation.

It appears that a man's scholarship is bypassed in favor of his prejudices and opinions. All of the texts tell us in Galatians 2:16, 20 that it is "the faith of Christ" or "of Jesus Christ" by which men are justified.

The former referenced even brings out that it is the Christ living His life in us which makes it possible for us to live, in the body, a victorious or overcoming life. Why should it be modified to say that it is by "faith IN Christ"?

Had the inspired writer desired to say that, he could well have done so, as he did in many other places. In fact, it is said in Galatians 2:16:

*"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."*

Their believing IN Jesus Christ is mentioned as Paul's part. Then the work is done on the basis of the faith OF Christ, so Paul had believed IN Christ because He knew about the faith OF Jesus Christ.

When we know how faithful He is then we have incentive to believe in Him. It is "by the faith OF Him" that we are assured of access to God. His faith gives us faith (confidence). His faith and our confidence are mentioned in the same verse. Our confidence becomes "boldness" by virtue of its view of His faith. Praise God for such a "faithful" Savior!

Our faith is simply a personal belief and trust. It came by our hearing the word (Romans 10: 17). It increases or diminishes according as we allow the word to speak to our hearts and we enter into the experience of its Truth.

As this personal trust is moved to obedience (called "the hearing of faith" Galatians 3:2, 5, and "the obedience of faith" Romans 16:26) we become the participants in Christ's faith.

It then is called "the faith of God's elect" (Titus 1:1). These

"elect" are "the household of (the) faith" (Galatians 6:10) or "the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

The "household" are the members of the "house," a term always applicable to the Lord's true church (1 Timothy 3:15).

Give serious consideration to the idea that the "elect," the "household" and the "members" of Christ, of His body, of the church, are all designations of the same people. This is a people of faith. Not only do they have personal faith in God, but they have come so to commit themselves to the Christ as to appropriate His faith as their only means of victory.

Personal faith is that response to the word which an honest heart grants. It varies, increasing or decreasing, according as men are willing to hear. It is an immediate response in a man's heart when he honestly admits his need and God's ability and willingness to meet that need.

It is at this moment when he is born again. But as one goes on to contemplate this work of God and begins to understand something of the means of it as God has wrought it in His son, this Truth has a weight upon the honest heart and he fastens upon this as an evidence of God's grace.

He begins to see that this Jesus is not only Savior, but He is Lord. It is a true faith in Jesus as Lord which brings one to possess "the faith of Christ." It is not that a mere man can exercise Christ's faith, for only He can do that, but being moved to this kind of trust in the Lordship of Christ he appropriates to himself a new position. He becomes identified with the Christ, putting off the old man and putting on Christ. When this is done in the heart that man is "*one new man*" (cf. Ephesians 2:15; 4:13) with Christ.

Much discussion has been engaged in by some who see this in the Word, and our tendency being somewhat legalistic and desiring to present this blessed truth to others, we tend to locate the time when and the means by which one may enter into this position.

All of the outward marks of such a people will be found among those who are a part of the Lord's true church in this age. We know that all of the saved are not a part of that body. We understand that one is "baptized" into the body and there drinks of the one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

But we also know that a mere submission to this ordinance is

not enough. It takes a proper heart. Relationship with God is always dependent upon a condition of heart. He knows what heart is willing to obey, that is, were there is "*obedience of faith*," and His reckonings are based upon that rather than upon the actual manifestation.

In analyzing this fact in Abraham's case, note these points:

- Abraham had come to have faith before he left Ur of the Chaldees (Hebrews 11:8). This was at the time of his call and he was still in the land of his nativity.
- He arrived in Canaan after he was 75 (Genesis 12:4).
- He believed God's promise that he should have a seed sometime before his son Ishmael was conceived (at age 85, Genesis 16:16) when God consoled Him over his fears that Eliezer should be his heir (Genesis 15:1-6), and his faith was reckoned to him for righteousness (v. 6).
- He received the sign of the covenant, which God announced He had made with him, when He counted him righteous (Genesis 15:18), when he was 99 years old (Genesis 17:24).

God had again announced when instructing him regarding this sign that He would make His covenant with him (Genesis 17:1), and that He would establish that covenant with him and with his seed (Genesis 17:7).

It would not seem right to think that God made the covenant several different times, so we understand that He is merely confirming the covenant when he announces some new promise or purpose. Very likely the date of the covenant should go back to Abraham's birth.

How could Abraham be a party to a covenant made before he was born? We make no arbitrary contention that this is true, but we do not see it as inconsistent with God's way of doing things. He tells that He knew Abraham (Genesis 18:17-19) and "*known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world*" (Acts 15:18).

Time is not a factor in God's doings, though at times He does accommodate to man's limitations (cf. Genesis 22:15-18). Peter tells us that God's election is "*according to the foreknowl-*



*edge of God*" (1 Peter 1:2) and Paul tells us it is "*before the foundation of the world*" (Ephesians 1:4).

Even so, the individual must come into that position through faith and must learn of it in time. For example, Paul says that certain of his relatives were "*in Christ*" before he was (Romans 16:7), and he also says that those so foreknown and called according to God's purpose are predestinated, justified and glorified (Romans 8:28-30).

Then Peter tells us that we must "*make (our) calling and election sure*" (2 Peter 1:10) and indicates the way this is done is by supplying in our faith the evidences of an increasing trust: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love. These will assure an abundant entrance into the kingdom which is covenanted and will also assure one against falling. (Read 2 Peter 1:5-12).

The only alternative which appears possible, to "*the faith of Christ*" as the means for victorious living, of not falling, and of making our calling and election sure, would be "the Christ-kind of faith."

This is not what is actually said, but some might presume that "*the faith of Christ*" means "the kind of faith which Christ had." But we do not suggest that God has prescribed something for us in order to attain to kingdom blessings and covenant privileges which it might not be possible for any of us to attain.

We believe in Him because we believe He is faithful to accomplish for us, in us, and through us, all that the Father desires for any of us. So we believe it is by a personal faith which we have because of a willingness to heed His words that any of God's promises are claimed by men today.

## Chapter Six

### **HEAVEN'S WISDOM EXTENDED TO OUR DAY**

"Unto him (God) be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21).

Here we have a favorite text of all Missionary Baptists. We do not believe it has received a misplaced emphasis. Doubtless it does please God to receive glory in the church throughout this present age. And when we see just what is meant this becomes glorious truth, indeed.

First, the church is that local body of dedicated and identified believers, covenanted together for the preaching of the Gospel. That old language, "covenanted together," is most apt. Saved people ought to come together in a body. They ought to be willing to be openly identified as believers, dead to sin and alive to God by Jesus Christ.

Most believers do "join some church," as often as not, "the church of their choice." But do men who have surrendered to God have a choice in this matter? They do, indeed, in that there is no compulsion, but they ought not to feel that this permits their joining just any group and they ought not to feel that they are free to unite or not, as they feel like it.

Second, it should be specially noted that being saved, which is a genuine and memorable experience, is not the same as being part of the church. Protestantism, since the days of its beginning (the Reformation), has taught that the body of Christ is universal (includes all of the saved).

God's word has no such teaching. It is not our goal to prove this point in this work, but it should be easy to see that no passage of Scripture can be used to prove positively that all the saved are in the church.

In fact, this would give two definitions to the word church, for all admit that there are local churches, both in the Scriptures and in the world today. To get in any of these local churches requires an outward act, a sort of mark of identification: baptism. They may not agree as to what it takes to be scriptural baptism, but they are agreed that all must be baptized to be a

part of the local church. And most all agree that such local assemblies are necessary to the furtherance of the Gospel message and work.

Because there is such variance of opinion as to what is correct practice, the idea of a local body becomes both the necessary convenience for carrying on the Lord's work, and an embarrassment. There is a tendency to apologize for that which creates division or differences.

And the distinctive doctrines of various denominations definitely do that. And it does not solve the dilemma merely to say that they are agreed on essentials while differing on non-essentials. In matters of Truth and eternity there are no non-essentials.

The generic use of the word church is found several times, as God's word speaks of his covenant people generally. But always the church is local: at Corinth, of Ephesus, of Judea, in Rome, etc.

The church can always be photographed. It is never some nebulous, imaginary composite of many disjointed parts. Such would not be a body at all.

The very word body means "outward," visible, able to communicate. Of what earthly use would be an "invisible" church.

#### **Christ Left His Body Here**

The coming of the Christ to earth is a revelation of God incarnate. This revealing of the attributes of God to the eyes of men by means of a body is a great ministry (1 Timothy 3:16).

It enabled men to see the glory of God in its brightness (Hebrews 1:3). His very Person was shown to men in all the fulness of Godhood (AV "godhead").

This means that God's attributes were made to appear so that men could grasp them with their understanding. His holiness, His righteousness, His power, His love, His mercy, His forgiveness, His wisdom, His compassion, etc., were all manifested to the eyes of men in the body of the Man, Christ Jesus so that there intended influence upon the consciences of men were brought to bear directly. Is there any wonder that men were convicted of their sins?

Is it any wonder that men were attracted to Him, that they fell

down and worshipped Him? Where law could only reprove and show them guilty and could be ignored when men turned their backs, it was not possible to ignore Jesus. Perhaps this helps us to understand why He was dealt with in such extreme ways, including His crucifixion.

But that body of His, born of the virgin, has ascended to His Father. Men no longer see Him in the way they could then. He had said,

*"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7).*

This raises the question: Why was it expedient? Because the Comforter will not come unless He should go. But why not stay Himself? Was He not their Comforter already? (John 14:16).

Yes, but He could be in only one place at a time and His contact with men, therefore, was very limited. It was the essential that He die and rise from the dead in order to provide for man's redemption. But could He not have stayed with them?

There is a better way than for Him to stay in that physical body. That better way is the coming of another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth.

#### **He Would Not leave the Disciples Alone**

He told the sorrowing disciples, *"I will not leave you orphans"* (John 14:18). He promised to come to them. We are confident that this is a reaffirmation of the earlier statement that He would prepare a place and come again and receive the disciples to Himself.

This is an opinion, to be sure, and in no way would we detract from the fact of the literal, physical return of the Christ at the end of this age.

But we believe that *"the Father's house"* which has *"many mansions"* (dwelling places) is the church. John (Revelation 1) saw Him walking in the midst of the candlesticks (churches, Revelation 1:20), and so that is His position now, through the Spirit.

He dwells in His churches. He is the Head of the churches. And he lives to administer their affairs right down to the minutest detail according to His purposes.

Every consecrated Christian must admit the presence of His Lord in the assembly of the saints (Matthew 18:20). He promised to be with them *"all the days to the consummation of the age"* (Matthew 28:20).

How can He do this? Is it not in the body that He is with them, but in Spirit. We are told that *"the last Adam became a quickening spirit"* (1 Corinthians 15:45). See the context and note that He is *"the Lord from heaven."*

*"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18), or "by the Lord, the Spirit."*

Since His resurrection our Lord, the resurrected Christ, is *"the Lord, the Spirit."* He has become "a life-giving Spirit." As God identifies with the Spirit in the Old Testament in all His actions, so in the new Testament the Christ identifies with the Spirit.

The coming of the *"promise of the Father"* on that next Pentecost after His resurrection, was the coming of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and that was the coming of the Christ to dwell with His church.

#### **The Coming of the Comforter**

There are few things in the Scriptures more misunderstood than the descent of this Spirit upon the day of Pentecost. It has become a major doctrine of some and from there a whole system of spiritual confusion extends, giving room for the various charismatic ideas.

I would suggest that Satan is not much concerned with what form of error men are deceived, as long as they do not realize the Lordship of Christ and do not submit to His authority.

Jesus had taken the baptized material which John had prepared, had taught and prepared those disciples for a world-evangelizing and teaching ministry, and now was about to go away from them in body.

Those chapters and John's Gospel from twelve through seventeen show His concern for their welfare while He should be physically absent. Physically, he is still absent (2 Corinthians

5:6).

So He taught them regarding a means by which He should be with them *"in spirit."* He told those disciples who had heeded Him while He was here, who believed that He was the Messiah, and who formed the company (called a church, Matthew 18:17), that He would pray the Father and He would send another Comforter to them.

We believe this company was the church, formed during His personal ministry. They were told to tarry at Jerusalem and pray until they should be endued with power from on high, and then they should be His witnesses to the ends of the earth.

The Commission was delivered to them, not as individuals, for they could not continue to the end of the age, but as an institution with which He would continue all those days. The promise of the Spirit was to the church.

It was the church who should receive that promise and be *"baptized"* in Holy Spirit. It was not a baptizing of individuals in Holy Spirit, nor is it now administered over and over to individuals.

If so, there would be two baptisms instead of the one mentioned (Ephesians 4:5), one of the individuals in water and one of the individuals in Spirit.

But there are not two. There is one baptism in water which admits one to the church which was baptized on that Pentecost in the Spirit which filled the room that day, submerging all those there. This was never repeated, though an incident in Samaria (Acts 8:14-17) and another Caesarea (Acts 10:44, 45) give us some special circumstances designed to show that men other than Jews could receive this promise which at first seemed designated only for them.

Since the church was composed entirely of Jews at first, a little remnant of those who did receive the Messiah, and this faithful remnant was God's covenant people, they were the ones to receive the promise.

If a people involving Gentile blood (the Samaritans), or Gentile's themselves (the household of the Roman Centurian, Cornelius) were to receive a promise which belonged to the covenant people, some special evidence was needed. Hence a special demonstration of the Spirit in these two cases was pro-

vided.

In both these cases a "covenant" connection is indicated by the presence of the apostles, Peter and John, sent by the church at Jerusalem, to confirm the work in Samaria. Then there is the presence of "*certain brethren from Joppa*," who accompanied Peter to Caesarea (Acts 10:3), who were called on to attest the matter (v. 47), before the men (Romans) were baptized.

The theme throughout this latter passage is whether or not God would admit Gentiles to covenant privileges. There is no question as to whether or not God would save Gentiles, for He had been doing that all through the centuries.

The "new thing" which Jews had difficulty understanding, and which created controversy in many areas all through the New Testament, was that Gentiles might be admitted to "covenant position" and "covenant" privileges.

It became the special mission of the Apostle Paul to establish this principle in the minds and hearts of Jewish brethren. This is the subject in Acts, chapter fifteen. It becomes the theme of the Book of Galatians, of the Book of Romans and, particularly, the Book of Hebrews.

The Apostle Peter had problems with his feelings in the matter, though he was sure in his heart that God meant for Gentiles to have the same benefits as Israel (cf. Acts 10:34, 35; 15:7-11).

#### **The Covenant Blessings to Gentiles**

Any reader of the Bible knows that Gentiles were saved in all ages. The word means "nations" and God has never been a respecter of persons. It matters not to Him what race, color, or nation a man identifies with. If he will come honestly to Him he can have life through faith. The Ethiopian eunuch illustrates this principle (Acts 8:27-40).

Even after God had separated Abraham and begun to raise up a covenant community there is mention of others who received God's mercies.

Some were even priests of God: Melchisedek, Jethro, for example. Job was such a man, not an Israelite. Good reason is given for believing that Caleb was a Gentile, but he identified with the Hebrews because he had a heart to see where God

was at work.

Israel was meant to be only an instrument. They were the instrument for providing the world with a Savior, to be sure, but during the time God waited for the development of events they were to be a witness to the Gentiles around them.

When the number in the remnant of that nation who would accept the Messiah was so small that not enough men were available to fulfill God's purposes, He determined to turn to the Gentiles and *"take out of them a people for his name"* (Acts 15:14).

Paul explains it as a taking of *"wild olive branches"* and grafting them into the stock of Israel, so they may partake of the root and fatness of the olive (Romans 11:17). The olive is a symbol for the nation of Israel.

Its root suggest Abraham. Its fatness (fruit) suggest the blessings upon Abraham. Jesus' work on the cross for all men included the benefit of affording the blessing of Abraham to all men.

*"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14).*

Therefore, in our day, the local, visible church, with individual congregations scattered throughout the world, is the covenant people of God. The membership of those churches are *"the seed of Abraham"* and can claim the promises made to Abraham.

Whether men individually be Gentile or Jew, they become one in Christ Jesus, actually losing their differences as regards their position in Christ or in the covenant (Galatians 3:27-29).

Each man's putting on Christ identifies him with that people (Colossians 3:10-12). This *"putting on"* is something men are commanded to do. Baptism is an outward symbol for putting Him on (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3, 4). The reality of putting Him on is done by faith as we are daily *"renewed in the spirit of our mind"* (Ephesians 4:23) and as we *"put off...the old man"* (v. 22).

Thus are men constantly called upon to renounce the old and claim the new, to put away the old life, the old nature, the old, corrupt ways, and to live unto Christ. This is a life or walk of



faith. Thus does one make his calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). Failure here could result in the same loss of covenant position suffered by Jews in their rejection of the Messiah.

May I insist that no amount of disciplining of the old man can enable one to live the Christ-life. No amount of works done because they are "good" or because Christ has taught they should be done, can fulfill the requirement that we renounce the old man and his deeds and show forth the fruits of righteousness in our lives. This last can only be done as the Christ living in us by faith shows Himself.

This is an essential truth. Since a "*body*" is needed to show God's glory to men who are able to receive communication only through their senses, it is necessary that we be available to Him as instruments in this task.

His body the church, composed of many members all of whom have bodies of flesh, affords Him such an instrument. When "quickened" by the Lord who is the Spirit she is a living organism able to manifest the same glory which was revealed in His face when He was here in the body (2 Corinthians 4:6). Just as He manifested the fullness of God then (Colossians 2:9; 1:19), so the body can now manifest that fullness in that measure she allows herself to be filled with the same fullness (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

Perhaps we would be straining the language to think of this as an extension of the incarnation. But the principle is there. God manifested Himself in the physical body born of the virgin. And as the church allows it He manifests Himself in the body (physical bodies composing it) of the church. His glory was revealed in Christ.

His glory is to be revealed in the church. He received the glory by the manner of Christ's reflecting His glory. He desires to receive the glory by having His church reflect that same glory today.

#### **A Confusion of things That Are Different**

Again and again we are confronted with the difficulty of meeting those claims of men who would make the saving act, the New Birth, all-inclusive.

If all the benefits of grace are appropriated because of one act

of faith at the point of our surrender, then the walk of faith is left with only one motive; that we might have a reward.

But God does not save us for ourselves; He saves us for Himself. Promises and blessings which have been added during this age cannot be a part of God's plan of salvation of the spirit which men have been experiencing since the earliest times.

The "*promise of the Spirit*" which was fulfilled on Pentecost cannot be a part of the blessing of initial salvation. If it were, then salvation now includes something which it did not include before. It did not come to the Apostles when they first believed. It did not come to any believer before that Pentecost next after Christ's ascension.

So, is it a part of salvation? If so, salvation itself is not the same. Merrill F. Unger (N.T. Teachings on Tongues, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, pp. 18-19) suggests that salvation has the added benefits of the Spirit since Pentecost. This presumption that this benefit has been added to salvation, doubtless arises from the idea that all the saved make up the body of Christ. There is no body of Christ until Pentecost, so it is presumed that salvation is different since that time.

In truth, the church goes back before Pentecost to Christ's personal ministry, but the term "body" in this sense is not found until after Pentecost. Pentecost is when the promise of the Spirit came.

We suggest that it is nothing but presumption that the promise came upon all the saved then, or that the promise is enjoyed by all the saved now. This is not to say that the "*fullness*" of the Spirit is denied to any of the saved.

What we would convey is that the indwelling Spirit is not a benefit of salvation, as such, else salvation is not the same in this age as before Pentecost.

The indwelling belongs to a covenant people and is designed to be the efficient means of causing the community of God's people to manifest God's glory in its greatest way. It is not that God is not glorified in men who are not in the church, for He is, and He is also glorified in the men of the world, though not by their design. But He desires the glory "in the church."

What we have said will give difficulties to many who have different ideas about the indwelling Spirit. May we insist that we

believe that the Holy Spirit works outside the body, but only dwells in the body, the church. This is a new "Office" according to which the Christ makes the church His habitation during this age (Ephesians 2:21-22).

The spirit convicts loss sinners and regenerates them. After they are saved He deals with them, moving upon their hearts to act obediently. If they yield themselves to Christ, the Spirit will take up His abode with a man as a part of the body and he will outwardly manifest his submission through baptism.

If he has not been taught or learned of baptism this may be delayed, but when that truth is brought to his consciousness he will submit to it. Resistance to baptism, or to any of the truths of God, may jeopardize a man's relationship to the Christ (cf. Galatians 5:4).

Submission to the Spirit in these matters is submission to the Lord, the Spirit, that is, to the Christ. That individual becomes "Christ's" in a special sense, as one's betrothed becomes his even before marriage.

He belongs to Christ as one belongs to the family or "household" of another. He becomes a "member of Christ" (1 Corinthians 6:15-17) as a hand or eye or ear or mouth is a member of the physical human body. (See this discussion in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and note specially vv. 12, 13.)

The body may lose such members but would suffer in doing so. Each one is needful; each has a different function; and each must submit to the Head.

#### **Facing Up to the Difficulties**

A characteristic of our God, a feature noted in the Bible, and an attitude seen repeatedly in the Lord Jesus Christ, is an apparent indifference to the objections of men. God never defends Himself for taking the positions He does in the Bible. He seems completely unmoved by the fact that men do not see things His way.

By this I mean to say, He assumes a nonnegotiable position. Men would like to put God on a human level and work out with Him such arrangements as, they feel, might be mutually advantageous. But God is God. He does not change. Being holy and perfectly righteous there is no reason for Him to change.

Jesus also manifested this unbending attitude towards the

opinions of men. This does not mean that He was indifferent in the sense of being harsh or unloving. By no means! But there was no compromise with sin.

When He appeared not to condemn the woman who had been charged with adultery (John 8:1-11), He had not changed God's position regarding this sin as the Pharisees, her accusers, had quoted from Moses. He told the woman to go and sin no more. The passage is questioned by some critics as genuine, but doubtless He not condemning her means He had compassion in contrast with her accusers.

The truth of God is not reasonable to the human mind. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts and His ways are not as our ways (Isaiah 55:7-11).

His words shall always prove true (v. 11), though men may not fit them into the mold of human logic. As more and more of the tenor of the word is seen, measured by an understanding of broader segments of it, it will be seen that God is consistent and His position is always correct.

Never should we presume to judge God or His word; He judges us, and by the Word (John 12:48), and that is the way it should be.

Let us glance at a few of the difficulties sincerely:

1. We have pointed out the "changed salvation" idea. Since God is no respecter of persons —

- since salvation is always by grace, through faith, and upon the merits of the Christ -- even in the Old Testament times
- since there is another explanation presented in the word, we believe it unnecessary to claim that salvation is any different in its first step today than it has ever been.

True, men's understanding of what has happened is better today or can be. It is in this area of understanding, made possible by the finished work of Christ and a completed revelation in the New Testament, that this book suggests the benefits of a covenant relationship.

2. We have attempted to deal with the fallacy of a "universal" church. Calling the church "*the body of Christ*" is not the problem, but there are those who feel the body is different

from the local congregation.

When the community was young in its blessed position of receiving the promise of the Father (the Holy Spirit), it was one. There were not many congregations. Two one congregation was the commission given.

But as the Gospel spread and distance made it difficult or impossible for all the brethren to get together in one place new congregations were formed. No specific details are given that might appear to deal with the question of whether or not they had the authority to do this or whether they were a part of the same entity as the original.

Those new congregations considered that they were the same people, recognizing the same Head, operating under the same Commission as the original congregation. This is how it had been with the synagogues.

There was one nation of Israel but it had difficulty assembling regularly, so peoples met in their respective communities. They did not consider themselves as a branch of the nation, nor did they look to an earthly head other than the local leadership.

They felt that all of the responsibilities given to the nation were theirs to regard to the extent of their ability.

This is the way with local congregations. Christ is the Head of the local congregation. It is the body of Christ in that place. It is not that He has many bodies, but for a people in scattered localities to be responsible to Him each congregation must be responsible to Him as though they were all the people He has.

Thus they can discipline, instruct, evangelize, and increase without consulting others in other places, Christ being their Head.

3. But this view that the church is universal tends to creep over into man's practices. So is born the idea of a denomination made up of different congregations.

The evil of this is a drift toward carelessness (others will do it; we are only a few), for a hierarchy (outspoken characters assume authority beyond their own congregations), and specially is the tendency to dilute the position of the church.

That is, privileges, blessings, responsibilities, and obligations which belong to a church alone are presumed to belong to all who have had an experience of grace. Being a part of the Bride of Christ is a benefit belonging to a covenant people, not just to those who have been saved.

The practice of the ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are church privileges which do not belong to all the saved.

It may be found that even the First Resurrection belongs to God's Covenant People and not to all the saved. In fact, it is taught in Revelations 20:4, 5 that those raised will sit on thrones and reign for a thousand years while the *"rest of the dead, lived not again until the thousand years for finished."*

Our feeling about this will not remove the difficulty that is here presented. But it behooves us to submit ourselves to God in those requirements for covenant position.

4. The variations in manuscripts of the original text pose a real problem to some of us. Those of us who believe the Textus Receptus is the Word of God and any problems seemingly introduced must be left to the grace of God to solve, are sometimes viewed as unscholarly.

For years I heeded the winds of scholarship, listening to Westcott and Hort and other manuscript editors. I have come to believe that the same God who gave the Word in the beginning, and Who providentially brought it together in its canon, is able to direct our hearts into its Truth.

Versions and text only reflect the prejudices of men. We have enough of these already. We acknowledge the difficulties with various passages, and even with some passages which appear to indict our narrow views.

But we have much more difficulty trying to harmonize the ideas of the universal church with the Word of God.

5. The cultic possibilities in the doctrine of a local church as the only kind of church are tremendous. If we measured this doctrine by whether it seems kind or generous rather than by God's Word, we would throw it out immediately. We know that God is no respecter of persons, so this assures us that God is not unkind in restricting the reach of

His covenant people.

6. We do not believe He mistreated Gentiles when He called out Abraham and raised up the Hebrew nation. We believe He went right on saving men of the nations in those days and even allowing men of the nations to become "Jews," as we say today (proselytes to the covenant relationship), and we also believe that the promises and benefits afforded the Hebrews were not offered to individuals apart from them.

We look at Israel and see them becoming proud of being God's chosen people and viewing Gentiles as "dogs," despising them. We know this was wrong and only reflects their own lack of qualification for being a part of the covenant people and explains their being cut off. So with a "one true church" idea, the local church.

When this idea is infected with enough "universalism" to create a denominational spirit, and when men become ministers of the "letter" and not of the "spirit" (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:6), then Pharisee-ism flourishes again.

This is not the fault of God's election, nor of the letter regarding a covenant people, but it is the fault of men who change the function of God's Truth as Israel did the law, making it a yoke of bondage when God ordained it for life.

Are not strict baptism and closed communion hateful doctrines to most professing Christians? Yes, and the idea of God's stooping to deal with one local congregation seems to most men to cramp God's style. They think of him as the God of all the earth, of all men and of all religions.

He is the God of all men, but He had nothing to do with the many ideas which have grown up as a result of man's effort to accommodate his own thinking to the record of the Bible.

## Chapter Seven

### **THE HOPE OF THE GLORY**

All through this thesis we have been considering what it takes to qualify for covenant relationship. But what is the advantage of being in a covenant relationship?

It was pointed out that God intended that man should subdue the earth, bringing it into subjection according to the will of God. If for no other reason, then, man should do just that.

Because the race after the fall was not able to do this, and because even the provided redemption has not caused many men to assume this responsibility, it became necessary for God to separate the people to Himself and instruct them through His oracles and by His Providences to learn obedience and come to such a position as to be willing to do God's will as originally intended.

Such a separated people is the result of His covenants. Not all men and not all who have believed to escape perdition, are such men.

#### **"The Blessed Hope," (1 John 3:1-3)**

This hope, simply stated, is that men should be like Christ, conformed to His image. When such hope becomes supreme in his heart it is said that he "purifies himself" just as Christ is pure. This is far more than the attitude of so many who profess to have been saved.

If one has been delivered from his sins because he has trusted Jesus and been "born again," then he certainly escapes the torment which was prepared for the devil and his angels and which shall be the lot of men who do not believe.

Also, he shall live in all eternity in the blessedness of the kingdom of righteousness where peace and prosperity prevail. But it does not follow that he has attained to the goal for which God made man.

Because he has not gone on to know the Lord in the intimacy of holiness he comes in a category of men who have limited joys and satisfactions in the ages to come. Just how blessed this is we dare not speculate on, and we certainly do not in-



tend to disparage the provisions of God's grace, nor the extent of His mercies even toward the least of his redeemed. We believe these are *"the nations of the saved (who) shall walk in the light of the (City)"* (Revelation 21:24).

That light is the truth and the manifest attributes of God as were seen in Christ and shall shine out from the city into all of the earth during the kingdom (cf. Isaiah 2:2, 3; Revelation 21:23, 24; Isaiah 11:9).

Men of all the earth shall desire to know these things and see their beauty -- the beauties of holiness -- in that day, and shall desire to walk in His paths and be taught His ways. It is not so in this age, but rebels against God's Truth shall have no place in the Kingdom.

Doubtless there shall be men born late in this age and in that age who have not been changed as to body. These, living in natural bodies, shall propagate the earth with children and all must learn to live as God intended.

The desire of men out to get rid of this old body of clay is spoken as though they felt it impossible to honor God and live righteously while in the body, but God will demonstrate through physical men in the Millennial age that such is possible, by His grace. (Cf. Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 11:6-9).

What a wondrous prospect: that men shall live together in peace and obey the Lord, raising their families, working in cooperation and subduing the earth according to the will of God.

It is my considered opinion that man's ingenuity shall be put to use in that age. True, God will be the Teacher. That is, the Christ shall be the Instructor. But it will not be a vassal system where every move awaits the word of the Master. Men shall seek to know the will of the Lord and shall come to learn that will.

The earth which man has corrupted with his waste and greed will be restored to its Edenic beauty and productiveness (Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35).

Man shall tackle the problems of energy, of ecology, of material provisions, and shall wondrously solve these problems. The capacities of men, unencumbered by greed, hatred, jealousy, and other forms of selfishness, shall be seen to reach beyond anything imagined to date.

A trip to the moon will appear as nothing beside the technology that day.

But we are not just speaking of a materialistic prosperity. When men know and love righteousness and all seek to learn the Lord's ways than the full potential of being made in the image of God will begin to appear.

So much of satisfaction lies before the least believer. But for those who sought the King's will while in this life and who denied themselves, listening to Him from their hearts, much more is in store.

This means that no mere outward effort to qualify, such as joining a certain church, or performing certain deeds, will suffice. But, as we have set forth in preceding chapters, those qualifying for covenant relationship shall be exalted along with the Christ.

He alone will be the King. But He is a King of kings. He alone is Lord, but He is Lord of lords. These Kings and lords shall be granted a place with Him in His throne (Revelation 3:21). This means that they shall share the authority of that throne and shall be granted its honor in some measure.

Those Christians who have thought of the future life only in terms of going to some "heaven" and having a "mansion" instead of the humble home they had in this life are far short in their understanding. The music and worship, the beauty and richness, the peace and joy, are all terms describing satisfactions.

But these satisfactions beyond the mere expression of these experiences. Many other figures of speech are used to further enhance the blessedness of God's provision which has been revealed to us in the Word, and which man's mind could not have otherwise imagined (1 Corinthians 2:9).

For example, it is said that the Christ shall rule with a rod of iron, meaning it shall be strict, unbending and uncompromising. But His power He shares with those who overcome, (Revelation 2:26, 27). He describes this bestowing of benefits upon the faithful as "*a feast of fat things*" (Isaiah 25:6).

In the New Testament this is called a "*marriage feast*" in the parables (Matthew 22:1-14; Matthew 25:10; Revelation 19:7-9). This latter passage is the real "*marriage*," not a parable, but its symbolism still holds.

### **All Peoples to Benefit**

While only those "in covenant" shall constitute the "Bride of the Lamb" all those living in the age to come shall enjoy the feast and certain other benefits of that age. The feast is "for all peoples" in the sense that all shall reap of its joys (Isaiah 25:6).

The "covering" which is over all people, the veil, as it is called in 2 Corinthians 3:13-18, is to be removed. It can be escaped now if one is willing to turn to the Lord with all his heart, but in that day every heart shall so turn. Death will be swallowed up in victory and sorrow shall be removed (Isaiah 25:7, 8).

A perfect government shall prevail over all nations. The kings (lords) under Christ shall be the kings of the nations and shall rule equitably and righteously.

That all of these benefits are on this earth then restored to its Edenic beauty in no wise detracts from its blessedness. The fact that God shall come down and dwell with men (Revelation 21:3) shall make it all that men could desire.

If one cares to call this "heaven" we do not strive with him, though that word in the Bible is reserved for other areas. It is the present location of the throne of the Father (2 Corinthians 12).

It is never said to be the eternal abode of the redeemed. When the kingdom on earth is called "*the Kingdom of heaven*" it is because heaven shall rule of the earth then and not Satan, as now.

God only rules where He is welcomed, so He rules now in the hearts of His people who desire. This is why the church is called "*a habitation of God through the Spirit*" (Ephesians 2:22).

When Christ returns to the earth and claims the earth as His kingdom, because it has been given to Him by the Father, His rule shall continue forever (Luke 1:33).

After one thousand years of such rule He brings everything into subjection to the Father's will and presents the kingdom to the Father as being what He had originally purposed (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Putting this passage with others concerning the duration of the kingdom (cf. Hebrews 12:28) we conclude that the Father al-

lows Him to have permanent authority as King and it shall never cease.

Meantime, those whose hope rests in Him can go through this life with growing anticipation of His return to reign. If he should taste death before Jesus returns he can do it in peace, knowing that at his departure he is allowed to "*be with Christ*" (Philippians 1:23).

The apostle Paul indicated that it is not a believer's desire to die, that is, to lay down this "*house*" (or body) and thus be "*unclothed*" (2 Corinthians 5:1, 3, 4).

He rather desires to receive a new body (2 Corinthians 5:4), "*clothed upon*." This "*body of glory*" is fashioned like Christ (Philippians 3:21) and shall be ours because of "*the adoption*" or "*the redemption of our body*" (Romans 8:23).

How blessed is that hope: to be like Him! But if our hope is merely to escape the limitations we are now under and to "fly away" to some "heaven" we may have our eyes set on what is not promised.

## **SUMMARY:**

### **"ONE SHALL CHASE ONE THOUSAND: TWO SHALL PUT TEN THOUSAND TO FLIGHT"**

"One man of you shall chase a thousand; for the Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you" (Joshua 23:10).

It is not just any man who can chase a thousand. It must be the man for whom God fights. We need to know just when and why God would fight for one and how He has purposed to work His will.

1. We note that God created man to have dominion under Him over all the earth and to rule for Him (Genesis 1:28).
2. In time this rulership began to distinguish man and man, so that some men were to wield this rulership power over other men (cf. the covenant with Noah, Genesis 9:5, 6). This lets us know that while God is no respecter of persons, there is a difference in persons in His eyes. It behooves us to learn just what it is which causes Him to fight for one and not for the one thousand.
3. In the earliest instructions to Adam is the direction to multiply and fill the earth. He meant to have a race of men to rule the earth. He instituted the family to produce such a race, proposing by the family unit to qualify a people for such rulership. Adam had disqualified himself through the Fall and his children suffered the same loss in him.
4. As heads of families failed to teach their children, and as individual children failed to honor God's purpose for their lives, God raised up men to speak for this lack: prophets like Enoch, men of faith like Noah. This should instruct men afresh that looking to Him was a necessary qualification if men were to rule in the earth.
5. But the race continued to sink in sin (Genesis 6:5-8) until God determined to blot out the race with the exception of a remnant and start over. (It should be specially noted that God favors the remnant. In this He is not a respecter of persons, but He respects His own holy purposes, not

changing because men fail.)

6. In order to preserve a contingent of people to Himself whose God He could be by their desire and consent, which people would willingly be His people, God separated to Himself such a people by covenant by calling Abraham out of idolatry and from his country.

He had determined not ever again to wipe out the race by a flood (Genesis 9:11). His covenant was with all men (in Noah), but all men do not meet His expectations so He remains true to His goal by marking off a special people, a peculiar people, for Himself.

7. This idea of a community of people, the family, the nation, the institution, reflects God's means of preserving a remnant together for the accomplishment of his original purpose.

A kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34) is the simplest way to express this purpose. It is to be a kingdom of peace and righteousness, of supernatural working by men ruling under God, a time when God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

To this end all of God's providence's are directed. Redemption of a fallen race has this in view. The giving of His oracles (cf. Romans 3:1, 2) has this in view.

The preservation of the nation of Israel in spite of their failures is because God is faithful. He does not change. His goal is ever the same. There may be weaknesses and failures among men but it is to the praise of His glory that He remains true to Himself and uses men, in spite of their fallibilities, to accomplish His goals.

There are delays, and centuries pass while God awaits the raising up of a people who will honor Him as He originally intended.

8. Such a community or group of people, presently a remnant on earth, but ultimately comprised of "*fulness*," is being wrought upon by God's grace in every land and among all peoples. The "*fulness of the Gentiles*" is doubtless near completion (cf. Romans 11:25).
9. Then very shortly thereafter God shall complete the

"fulness" of Israel (Romans 11:12). These references cannot apply to a total of all Gentiles and all Jews, nor a total of all saved Gentiles and all saved Jews, but to a total of those meeting God's requirements for a ruling people.

We do not know how many God shall be pleased to use to consummate His purposes, but we believe there is such a number. It will be *"the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven"* (Hebrews 12:23).

This festival gathering (panegyric) and assembly of first-born ones at that point will be "universal" for the first time. The awesome glory of such a scene captivates our hearts as we anticipate the time when all of God's special people of all ages are assembled together with Him. We expect it at the end of this age.

Calling this group "universal" does not mean that it embraces all men, nor that it includes all who may have trusted God for saving them from destruction. But it means that all of those qualifying for covenant relationship shall be included. There described as *"just men made perfect."* This makes them the *"church of the firstborn (ones)."*

The *"firstborn"* are not the whole of the children in a family, but the firstborn son is the one to whom the Father bequeathed the responsibility of rulership over the family and also the position of spiritual minister for the family, that is, the priesthood.

Also, the firstborn received a double portion of the material goods left to the children. Others received blessings, including property. Rulership and priesthood were special items in the bequest to the firstborn son.

It can be seen in every text which deals of God's purpose for men that more is involved than their deliverance from perdition. Always there is found, in greater or lesser detail, the fact of man's designed purpose according to which God would have man rule under and by His own authority.

Just how many, of the total of humanity, this *"fulness"* shall be is not indicated. We may have misconstrued the sense entirely. But we feel that God is awaiting a certain total number of those qualified to assume the authority for ruling under Christ in the kingdom to come. Doubtless the standard set, and man's failure to measure up to the stan-

dard, has much to do with the delay of the king's return (2 Peter 3:10-13, specially v. 12).

10. In re-stating God's purpose we note that He desires a people who will accept Him as their God and a people of whom He is not ashamed to be their God. Therefore, it must be a listening, heeding, obedient people.
11. This people must be a unit, an agreed-in-one people, a community or group in harmony under submission to God. Each individual is responsible to surrender to God but they must also be one with each other.  
  
Individualism is required to bring each man to the common center. Beyond that it is the community which can produce the responses to God which He requires and which none of the community can produce apart from the rest.
12. Since the original purpose was that man should be *"over the works of His hands"* He *"crowned him with glory and honor"* and *"put all things in subjection under him"* (Hebrews 2:7, 8).  
  
The *"all things"* includes all men, too, including men who are not believers or who believe that who do not desire to submit in the community. *"But when he said all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him"* (1 Corinthians 15:27).  
  
Then Adam's sin changed all that and *"now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus,...."* (Hebrews 2:8, 9).
13. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:28). This is the essential idea in a kingdom. Such a kingdom has been a preparing from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34).
14. The principle of a unified people submitted to God and heeding Him as their King was illustrated in the nation of Israel. Their desire to be like other nations was displeasing to God. They said, *"Give us king to judge us."* *"Make us a king to judge us like all the nations."* God said,



*"They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:6, 7).*

15. This continual self-centered attitude of Israel wherein the people went their own way, ultimately resulted in the cutting off of all but the remnant. Those left became the nucleus of the community with which God is still dealing in this age. But the same disposition of recognizing Him and submitting to Him and to one another is still required if they are to be His people.

The Lord Jesus took of that remnant, now separated and prepared through the message of repentance preached by John the Baptist. Also, they were outwardly identified by baptism as a sign of their separation. Dead to the world and *"alive unto God by Jesus Christ"* is the disposition of the church, that community of God's covenant people today.

16. As much as we like the principles of a republic as the form of earthly government, with the voice of the people (a democracy) having the final word, its tendency is to put a sense of importance upon the individual which tends to separate him from the community and disturb the relationship necessary with God.

We rejoice to be free to choose our form of worship, but such liberty was never meant to release men from the primary requirement that they submit to God. Human rights must never be understood as the right to reject God. Only when God is our ultimate Ruler are men using their freedom of choice properly.

17. It is not strange to note that Satan also would establish a community of another sort. Ecumenism, confederacy, world trade, and world government are all in his plans. By capitalizing upon God's wisdom, yet perverting it, he draws men together under the antichrist until all the world is "one" with one ruler, the man of sin.

The "kingdom of this world" is almost completely accomplished. There is no effective cohesion, as with the unity of "one" which God requires. It is a mixture of iron and play (cf. Daniel 2:33-43).

The iron represents the stern and harsh temperament of a wicked, human ruler; the clay represents the fickle and

weak substance of the populace.

The world is crying out for such a mixture and is ready to accept the iron hand of the antichrist. But even in their desire for the "iron" there is the demand that the clay be allowed to lie in what ever shape it pleases.

18. God requires only one community of people. Only so can the solidarity and unity be found. One kingdom is purposed. One King is before men. God alone is to be heeded and worshipped.
19. Such a people must be outwardly manifest. Secret discipleship lacks the courage or the conviction it needs. God desires to be known abroad. The watchword of Ezekiel as he describes days to come was "*then shall they know that I am the Lord*" when "*they shall behold my glory*" (Ezekiel throughout speaks of man's knowing that He is the Lord.)

Outward manifestation comes by physical manifestation. A body is man's means of manifesting himself. God used such a body to manifest His glory, in the Person of His Son. Today he uses the bodies of the members of the church as instruments for manifesting Himself.

He must be openly known. Men have made religion so private until no one is supposed to know whether one even believes in God. Open declaration is required. He cannot get the glory He is due when a believer in Him is secret about it.

20. The way to "go public" is through identification with the community of His covenant people. At the beginning an open declaration of one's death to sin and resurrection to walk the God-kind of life is made in baptism (a death, burial, resurrection testimony).

Throughout this thesis we have said that it is a heart matter -- and that God knows the heart --, that it is by faith resulting from hearing His Word.

But now we insist that glory to Him is withheld if men do not openly declare their faith. And His way of doing this is through identification with the covenant people. In our day it begins with baptism and continues through association with the church in a life of obedience.

21. The individual needs the encouragement, the comfort, not to mention the instruction and fellowship of the group. The demands upon faith are increased, and the opportunities of testimony are enhanced.

We must also be willing to face the danger of such a position when antichrist comes on the scene, issues his mark, and requires all men to take it.

A daily, even hourly, communication with the Lord in those days will be required to determine just what exposure must be given to our faith.









