

Discovering Christ

in

GENESIS

Don Fortner

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Don Fortner
2734 Old Stanford Road
Danville, KY 40422

To the members of

**Grace Baptist Church of Danville
Danville, Kentucky**

Preface

It is my firm conviction that the Word of God is intended, in all its parts, to set forth one glorious message. That message is "*Jesus Christ and him crucified.*" In other words, it is the purpose of all that is written in Sacred Scripture to make known the person and work of the Son of God as the sinner's Substitute. The whole Volume of Inspiration speaks of Him (Luke 24:27, 44-45; John 1:45; Acts 10:43). Jesus Christ himself is (Acts 20:27; 1 Cor. 2:2). He is the Living Word of whom the written Word speaks.

This volume is not intended to be a thorough exposition of the Book of Genesis. No effort is made in these pages to settle theological disputes. My only purpose is to set forth, as simply and clearly as I am able, the grace and glory of God in Christ in the opening pages of Holy Scripture.

All four gospel narratives tell of a woman who brought an alabaster box, full of precious ointment, broke it open, and anointed the Savior for his burial. When she did, the fragrance filled the room (Matt. 26:6-7; Mark 14:3; Luke 7:36-38; John 12:3). John Gill suggested that the Scriptures are like her box, containing the gospel of the grace of God, which is like ointment poured forth; and of the sweet savor of the knowledge of Christ, which was to be diffused, throughout all the world, by the preaching of it.

That is precisely my view of Holy Scripture. May God the Holy Spirit be pleased to use what I have written in these pages to fill your heart and soul with the sweet aroma and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, as you read them.

Don Fortner
Danville, Kentucky USA

Chapter 1

Creation

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."
Genesis 1:1-31

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, the Apostle Paul tells us, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."* And the work of God in the new creation of grace is beautifully symbolized in the creation of the world. As the creation of the world was the work of God alone, so the making of men and women new creatures in Christ is the work of God alone. Let me show you three things in Genesis 1 about God's creation. In these three things we clearly see the work of God in the new creation. The first thing revealed in the Book of God is...

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

The Word of God opens with a simple statement of fact. *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"* (v. 1). That is all we are told concerning the original creation. No argument is given to prove the existence of God. Instead, his existence is simply affirmed as a fact to be believed. Nothing is given to gratify the curious minds of men. How long did it take for God to create the world? We are not told. How old is this world? We are not told. We are simply told, *"In the beginning God created."* The truth of God is simply stated as a fact to be received and understood by unquestioning faith.

"In the beginning God" - This is the foundation of all truth. All true doctrine, all true theology, all true religion begins with this - *"In the beginning God."* All human religion and philosophy begin with man and work up to God. The Scriptures begin with God and work down to man.

If we are to understand salvation, we must begin with God. In the garden of Eden, Adam sinned against God and brought in death; but God was not taken by surprise. In the beginning, before ever the world was created, in anticipation of the fall, God provided his Son as *“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”* (Rev. 13:8), *“who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world”* (1 Pet. 1:20).

In the new creation the sinner who is saved by grace repents, believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and walks with him in the newness of life. But it began with God. In the beginning God chose us in Christ (Eph. 1:4), and predestinated us to be his children (Eph. 1:5), and today *“we love him, because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19). Everything begins with God. If we understand this fact of divine revelation, we will not stray far from the truth.

The Book of Genesis is the book of beginnings.

In fact, the word “genesis” means “beginning.” Someone said, “The Book of Genesis is the seed plot of the Bible.” It contains in seed form all the great doctrines and truths revealed more fully in the rest of the Inspired Volume. In the Book of Genesis...

1. God is revealed. He is revealed as the Creator-God, the Covenant Keeping God, and the Almighty God, *“the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.”* From the opening verse hints are given concerning the blessed trinity and the plurality of persons in the Godhead. The very name used for God “Elohim” implies a plurality of persons in the Godhead. The phrase *“Let us make man,”* certainly implies a plurality of persons in the Godhead.¹

¹ The creation of the world was a work that involved all three Persons in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, even as the works of redemption and providence involve all three of the Divine Persons.

2. The origin and character of man is set forth. First, we see him as God's creature, then as a fallen sinner, then as one brought back to God, finding grace in his sight, walking with God, and made the friend of God.
3. Satan's devices are exposed. The arch-enemy of our souls, the tempter, the deceiver seeks to ruin men by calling into question the Word of God, casting doubt upon the goodness of God, and raising suspicions about the veracity of God.
4. God's sovereign election is exhibited. God approved of Abel and rejected Cain. God chose Abram and passed by his idolatrous neighbors. God chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael. God loved Jacob and hated Esau.
5. Salvation in Christ is typically displayed. Our fallen parents, Adam and Eve, were sought and found by grace and clothed with the skins of innocent victims. In order to clothe the fallen pair, blood must be shed, the innocent victim had to die in the place of the guilty. As those innocent animals were slain for Adam and Eve, so the Lord Jesus Christ was slain for sinners that we might be robed forever in his perfect righteousness.
6. Justification by faith is revealed. Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Faith, by believing God's testimony concerning his Son, receives righteousness, the very righteousness of God in Christ.
7. The believer's everlasting, infallible security in Christ is beautifully displayed. As the Lord brought Noah and his family into the ark and shut them in, so every believer, being brought into Christ by almighty grace is shut in

him, sealed, preserved and kept secure by the power of God. *"They shall never perish!"*

This list could go on. The incarnation of Christ is prophesied. The substitutionary death of Christ is portrayed. The resurrection and exaltation of Christ is symbolized. The priesthood of Christ is anticipated. And the blessings of Christ upon the Israel of God are declared. Genesis is the book of beginnings. And in this book of beginnings everything speaks of Christ. Christ is the tree of life in the midst of the garden of God. Christ is the promised Seed of the woman, who crushed the serpent's head. Christ is the Lamb whose blood was represented in Abel's sacrifice. Christ is the One whom Enoch believed, by whom he pleased God. Christ is the ark by which sinners are saved from the flood of God's wrath. Christ is the Seed of promise who came from Abraham's loins, in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed. Christ is the Lamb of sacrifice whom God provided to die in the place of his chosen. Christ is the ladder Jacob saw, by whom the blessings of God come down to men, and by whom men ascend up to God. Christ is that Priest after the order of Melchizedek, by whom God's elect are blessed. Christ is our Joseph, ruling over all things, in whom all things are, from whom all things come. Christ is the Surety portrayed in Judah. And Christ is the Lawgiver prophesied by Jacob. In the book of beginnings, *"Christ is all, and in all."*

I want all who read this lines to know Christ who is the Beginning of the creation of God. All things were made by him and for him. He is before all things. He is in all things. By him all things consist. And all things point to him. The new creation, which is our subject, begins with Christ. We must know the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who made all things in the beginning. And he is the One who declares, *"Behold, I make all things new"* (Rev. 21:5).

Look at verse 1 again. ***“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”*** The creation was a reflection of the Creator. In verse two, we read that the earth *“was without form and void.”* It certainly was not created that way (Read Isaiah 45:18). In its pristine beauty the earth was perfect beyond imagination. Then something happened. It became *“without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”* In the beginning there were no groans of suffering, --no worms of corruption, --no darkness of iniquity, --and no shades of death. God reigned supreme, without rival. But then the earth became without form and void, filled with darkness. Verse two describes...

THE RUIN AND CONFUSION OF GOD’S CREATION.

The word “was” in verse two really should be translated “became” (Strong’s Concordance). God did not create the world in a state of confusion (Isa. 45:18). Between verses one and two, some terrible catastrophe took place. Perhaps the catastrophe was the fall of Satan (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:14-18).² Whatever the catastrophe was, it left the earth *“without form and void,”* a desolate, uninhabitable, ruined mass of confusion. We have no indication of how long an interval there was between the creation of the world as it is stated in verse one, and the ruin of the world as it is described in verse two. However, all that took place from Genesis 1:3-31 transpired in six twenty-four hour days, probably less than seven thousand years ago.

² I am aware of the opposition of many faithful, highly esteemed expositors to this interpretation. Perhaps, there are those who embrace it as an attempt to reconcile scientific speculation with biblical revelation. That is not my purpose. I am not at all concerned about the conflicts which exist between the changing speculations of science and the facts of divine Revelation. I simply believe this to be the most accurate interpretation of the text.

“In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Ex. 20:11). There is a difference between “creating” and “making”. In Genesis 1:1, God created the world out of nothing. In Genesis 1:2, *“the earth became without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”* In Genesis 1:3-31, God made the earth in six days, forming it and fashioning it out of that which he had created.

“Out of the chaos was brought the ‘cosmos’, which signifies order, arrangement, beauty. Out of the waters emerged the earth. A scene of desolation, darkness, and death, was transformed into one of light, life, and fertility, so that at the end all was pronounced, ‘very good’” (A. W. Pinc).

As this is a picture of the world’s history, it is also a picture of man’s history. In the beginning of time, on the sixth day, God created man. What a creature he was, created in the image and likeness of God, gloriously reflecting the very character of God. God himself said man was *“very good.”* He had no sinful heredity behind him, no sinful principle within him, no sinful stain upon him, and no sinful environment around him. Man and woman walked together with God in the bliss of perfection, contentment and mutual delight. Man was delighted with God and God was delighted with man.

Then a catastrophe! It is described in Genesis 3. Sin dared to raise its horrid head against God. Man defied God’s right to be God. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Man died. He was separated from God. The earth was cursed. It began to bring forth thorns and thistles. God’s creature became without form and void. The dark slime of the serpent corrupted the race of mankind and is now found upon the face of all the earth.. This great catastrophe, the fall, is verified in hearts of all Adam’s descendants. Man is fallen (Eccles. 7:9). Man is alienated from God (Eph. 4:18). Man is depraved (Jer. 17:9). Man is spiritually dead (Rom. 5:12).

Genesis 1:2 describes the condition of fallen man. Like the earth after Satan's fall, so man after Adam's fall is in a state of disorder. The fallen state of man is a **state of confusion**. "*The earth became without form.*" Nothing was in harmony with God. Nothing was right. So, too, fallen man is out of kilter. Nothing in him is in harmony with God. Nothing in him is right or good. It is a **state of emptiness**. "*The earth was void,*" utterly empty, incapable of life and fruitfulness. And man without Christ is spiritually void, empty and barren, incapable of life and fruitfulness toward God. And it is a **state of darkness**. "*Darkness was upon the face of the deep.*" To be lost is to be under the power of darkness, to be under the rule of Satan, the prince of darkness. There is not one ray of spiritual light in man by nature. Fallen man has absolute no spiritual knowledge or understanding. Until he is born again, man cannot see, know, or understand anything spiritual (1 Cor. 2:14-16; John 3:3,5). The rest of this chapter (Gen. 1:3-31) describes...

THE RESTORATION OF GOD'S CREATION.

I will not attempt to explain the meaning of every verse. That is not my purpose in this study. I will simply point out the spiritual significance of these verses. The order followed by God in restoring the physical creation is the same order followed by God in the new creation, in the restoration of fallen man by his almighty grace. The work of God in the restoration of his creation corresponds exactly to the experience of a believer. Here are seven works performed by God in the restoration of his creation which pictures his work of grace in the believer.

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (v. 2). The earth, no doubt, moved in its orbit and rotated upon its own axis, but its motions could not mend it. It

had to be moved upon by the Spirit of God. Otherwise, it would forever remain *“without form and void.”* Even so, regeneration is not accomplished by the works of man or the motions of the heart, but by the working of God the Holy Spirit. The new birth is not an evolution, but a creation. *“It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy”* (Rom. 9:16). *“It is the Spirit tht quickeneth; the flesh profitteth nothing”* (John 6:63). The new birth is not accomplished by man’s movement toward God, but by God’s movement toward and upon the heart of man.

“And God said, Let there be light; and there was light” (v. 3). Mark this down - If the Spirit of God moves upon a man it is by the Word of God. No less than ten times in this chapter we read these words, *“and God said.”* God will not work apart from his Word. Without question, God could have refashioned and restored the earth without speaking a word. But he did not do so. His purposes were worked out and his counsels were fulfilled by his word. Light came and was produced by the word of God. These two things are inseparably joined together - The ministry of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Word of God. The Word of God is the power of God (Rom. 1:16). The Word of God is the source of spiritual light (2 Cor. 4:6). The Word of God is the seed of life (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). The Word of God is the conveyor of faith (Rom. 10:17). The Word of God is the means of grace and salvation (1 Cor. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:16). *“And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you”* (1 Pet. 1:25).

“And God divided the light from the darkness” (v. 4). As God separated the light from the darkness in the old creation, so he separates the light from the darkness in the new creation. *“Ye are the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness”* (1 Thess. 5:5). The Word of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit working

in the new man, divides between the soul and the spirit, separates the spiritual from the carnal (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Those who are born of God know light from darkness. And they walk in the light as he is in the light (1 John 1:5-7).

“And God said, Let the earth bring forth fruit” (v. 11). Where there is the work of the Spirit, the Word of God and the light of grace, there will be fruit unto God (Gal. 5:22-23). This fruit is the result of a condition, not an effort. It is the result of what we are, not of what we do. The fruit of Christ in us is Christ likeness. Those who are born of God bear fruit after his kind. The seed within bears fruit after its kind on the earth. Apples produce apples. Grapes produce grapes. And grace produces grace. The grace of God working in a man gives him a new, gracious character; and that character is seen in his conduct (Eph. 4:17-5:21).

“And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven...to give light upon the earth” (vv. 14-15). The lights must be above the earth if they are to shine upon it. Like the lights in the heavens, all who are born of God have been raised above the earth. *“Ye are the light of the world”* (Matt. 5:14). As the moon reflects the light of the sun, let us see that we reflect the light of Christ in this world (Matt. 5:16). This is something we must do. Good works are the only lights by which the world sees Christ in his people. Let us be careful to maintain them (Eph. 2:10; Titl. 3:8). Let this be clearly understood. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Good works have absolutely nothing to do with salvation. And that salvation which is wrought of God always produces good works (Eph. 2:8-10).

“God created man in his own image” (v. 27). Here is the climax of the Creator’s power. God made man in his own likeness; and he made him out of the soil of the earth, even the earth which had become *“without form and void.”* Yet,

there is a work even greater than the work of creation. In the new creation the God of all grace creates sinners new in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:10). God takes men and women who are utterly "*without form and void*" spiritually and makes them exact replicas of his Son. When God has finished his work in us, we will be exact replicas of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28-29). Imagine that!

And God blessed the man he had made and gave him dominion over all his creation (vv. 29-31). Those who are born of God are blessed of God (Eph. 1:3). "*All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*" And one day soon God shall put all things under our feet even as he has put all things under the feet of his dear Son (Heb. 2:6-9; Rom. 16:20). Then the purpose of God shall be fulfilled. Then God shall be all in all! Then the Sabbath, then God our Savior shall have finished his work.

Until we are one with Christ we are out of harmony with God's creation. But all who come to Christ, all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, all who are reconciled to God in his dear Son are new creatures in Christ, in harmony with God, with his purpose, with his providence, with his creation.

Chapter 2

THE FIRST WEEK

"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

A. W. Pink wrote, "Christ is the key which unlocks the golden doors into the temple of Divine truth."³ Our Lord says, "Search the Scriptures...for they testify of me" (John 5:39). He declares, "In the volume of the book it is written of me" (Heb. 10:7). The Book of God speaks of him. Christ is the Subject of the Book. He is enshrined upon every page. The book of Genesis speaks of him just as much as the Book of Matthew. He is the subject of both. Just as the opening verses of Genesis describe God's work of creation, they typically set forth the entire work of redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the opening verses of Genesis the great need of redemption is typically set forth. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Like everything else that comes from the hand of God, the original creation of the world was perfect, beautiful, and glorious. That was the original condition of man. Adam was made in the image of God. He was endowed with life by the breath of the Almighty. God said, concerning him, he was "very good."

Then something happened. In verse 2 we read, "And the earth was without form and void," the earth became a ruin. Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 a terrible thing happened which resulted in the ruin of the earth. No one can say with certainty,

³ Pink, Arthur W. - Gleanings In Genesis, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, U.S.A. 1922, p 20

because it is not revealed, but perhaps this was the time of Satan's fall, the time when sin first entered God's universe.

This much is certain: Satan, the mightiest and most excellent of God's creatures, was filled with pride. Lucifer dared to oppose the will of his Creator. *"The anointed cherub that covereth"* dared to defy God's right to be God. As the result of his sin, Satan was cast out of heaven, cast down to the earth. This fall of Satan had far reaching consequences. The earth, originally created by God fair and beautiful, became *"became without form and void,"* a desolate place of ruin. *"And darkness was upon the face of the deep."*

This is a striking picture of what happened in the garden. Man, who was created in the image of God, fell into sin; and his fall had far reaching consequences. The effects of his sin reached all his posterity. Humanity became a ruin. All future generations were cursed, dead, incapable of bringing forth life, as the result of Adam's fall. *"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, for all have sinned"* (Rom. 5:12).

"And darkness was upon the face of the deep." Darkness is the opposite of light. God is light. Satan is darkness. And man under sin, being void of all light, is engulfed in total, spiritual darkness. Separated from God, morally blind, spiritually dead, darkness is the condition of all unregenerate men and women. This is the black background upon which God has chosen to display the glory of his grace in redemption by Christ. *"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"* (Rom. 5:21). As the Lord God restored creation from ruin in those first six days of time, so he restores his elect from the ruin of the fall by his redemptive works in Christ.

THE FIRST DAY

In the first day's work, the incarnation of Christ is typically set forth (vv. 2-5). If fallen man is to be reconciled to the holy God, something must be done. But what? How can that great gulf which separates man from God be bridged? What ladder can be set up upon the earth that will reach into heaven itself? Only one answer can be given. The initial work of reconciliation and restoration must be the incarnation of God himself. The Word must be made flesh. God himself must come down to the horrible pit where humanity lives in helplessness, death and sin. If ever man is to be lifted out of the miry clay and transported into heavenly glory, the God of glory must become a man, the Son of God must take upon himself the form of a servant and be made in the likeness of men. This is precisely what the first day typifies.

First, there is the work of the Holy Spirit. "*And the Spirit of God moved upon (brooded over) the face of the waters*" (v. 2). That is exactly what happened in the incarnation of Christ (Lk. 1:35). That holy body which was created in Mary's womb was the offspring of God the Holy Spirit, especially prepared to be a suitable sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:4-5).

Second, the Word brought forth light. "*And God said, (there is his Word), Let there be light; and there was light*" (v. 3). And as soon as Mary brought forth her child, the Word, Light came into the world (Lk. 2:8-9, 29-32; John 1:9).

Third, the light was given God's approval. "*And God saw the light, that it was good*" (v. 4). The same word here translated "good" is in other places translated "beautiful". "*He hath made everything beautiful in his time*" (Eccles. 3:11). "*God saw the light, that it was good,*" beautiful! Even so, the Lord God, looks upon his incarnate Son with delight, satisfaction and approval (Lk. 2:52; Matt. 3:17).

Fourth, the light was separated from the darkness. “*And God divided the light from the darkness*” (v. 4). Though the Lord Jesus was and is the Son of man, he was separated from the sons of men by infinity. He knew no sin (Heb. 7:26).

Fifth, the light was named by God. “*And God called the light day*” (v. 5). So it was with him who is the Light of the world. It was not left up to Joseph and Mary to select a name for our Savior and theirs. God himself gave him his name (Isa. 49:1; Matt. 1:21).

The Second Day

In the second day’s work we see the cross of Christ typically foreshadowed (vv. 6-8). Without question, our Lord’s life of obedience as the federal head and representative of God’s elect was as necessary as his death upon the cross as our substitute. Yet we could never have been saved by his life alone. Christ’s life alone could never bring in righteousness. His life could never satisfy the justice of God. His life could never atone for our sins. Thank God for his holy life. But we are justified, redeemed, forgiven, and made righteous by his blood “*Without shedding of blood is no remission*” (Heb. 9:22). Life is in the blood. We could never have lived with Christ, but by the death of Christ upon the cross (John 12:24). The cross of Christ is the only place where the righteous claims of the Holy God could be met.

It is the cross of Christ that is set forth in the second day’s work (vv. 6-7). The firmament was purposed by God before it was made by God. In verse 6, God said, “*Let there be a firmament.*” Then, in verse 7, “*God made the firmament.*” Long, long before the cross was erected upon Mt. Calvary it was purposed by God in everlasting mercy (1 Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8).

The firmament was set *“in the midst of the waters.”* The word “waters,” as it is used in the Scriptures, frequently means “people” (Rev. 17:15). The Lord Jesus Christ performed his great work of redemption in the most public manner. He Christ was crucified publicly, in the midst of two thieves, in Jerusalem, in the middle of the earth. And he evidently is set forth in the midst of men and women everywhere by the preaching of the gospel (Gal. 3:1).

The firmament *“divided the waters.”* It divided the waters under it, upon the earth, from the waters above it, in the heavens. The cross of Christ is the great divider of mankind. As it divided the two thieves, the penitent from the unbelieving, so it divides all men into two categories: the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, the children of darkness and the children of light, the children of Satan and the sons of God. On the one hand, *“the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness,”* but on the other hand, *“unto us which are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Cor. 1:18).

The firmament was designed by God. *“And God made the firmament.”* As God designed and made the firmament that divided the waters, so the cross of Christ, which divides the people of the world, was designed and made by God himself (Acts 2:23; Isa. 53:9-11). His sin-atoning death was by the design of God and by the hand of God. The results of his death are also by the design of God and by the hand of God.

THE THIRD DAY

In the third day's work our Lord's resurrection was foreshadowed (vv. 9-13). The third thing necessary in the accomplishment of redemption was the resurrection of the crucified Christ. A dead Christ could save no one. He is able

to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him for this reason - *"He ever liveth!"* (Heb. 7:25).

Until now, death had reigned supreme. No life had appeared upon the face of the ruined earth. But on the third day, the earth is commanded to *"bring forth"*. Not on the second, not on the fourth, but on the third day life buds forth upon the previously dead and barren earth. Even so, on the third day our Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead to give life to the world *"according to the Scriptures!"*

THE FOURTH DAY

In the fourth day's work our Redeemer's ascension and exaltation is portrayed (vv. 14-19). The resurrection did not complete our Savior's mediatorial work. It was necessary for him to enter into that place not made with hands by the merits of his own blood, that he might obtain eternal redemption for us and there forever appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb. 9:12, 24). On the fourth day our eyes are lifted from the earth to heaven. As we read these verses, we can almost hear the Spirit of God saying, *"Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Col. 3:1-2).

As we lift our eyes to heaven we see two great lights. The greater light is Christ, the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2). The lesser light is his church, the moon to reflect his light (Rev. 12:1). These two great lights are set by God to rule over the day and over the night, to give light upon the earth.

THE FIFTH DAY

In the fifth day's work God gave life to the waters, typically foreshadowing the results of Christ's ascension (vv.

20-23). The direct, inevitable result of Christ's sin-atonement death as their substitute is the salvation of all God's elect. As the result of our Lord's death, resurrection and ascension, all the peoples of the earth have been blessed with God's salvation (Psa. 68:18-20; John 17:2; Gal. 3:13-14).

THE SIXTH DAY

IN the sixth day's work we are given a typical picture of the consummation of Christ's redemptive work (vv. 24-31). Our Lord is not done yet. He assumed our nature in the incarnation. He died in our place on the cross. He arose from the dead as our Representative. He ascended up to heaven and bestows the blessings of grace upon his elect. Yet, there is a work to be done. There is a day coming called the restitution of all things. In that great day, the present, sin-cursed earth will be made new, to bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 8:18-23). Then, manhood, in God's elect multitude, shall be made into the image of the Son of God perfectly. That is what the Bible calls, "glorification." The everlasting glorification of God's elect is the end of election and predestination (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-6). Then, the Lord our God shall give to his elect every good thing as "*Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.*"

THE SEVENTH DAY

Oh, blessed be God, there is a seventh day (2:1-3). The seventh day was a day of rest. It represented three things:

1. The rest of faith in Christ (Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:3).
2. The rest of Christ, our successful Savior (Heb. 4:10).

3. The rest of the Triune God in everlasting glory (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

As creation is a picture of grace, so creation is a picture of redemption, for all grace comes to us freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 3

THE FIRST MARRIAGE

"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Genesis 2:18-25

On the sixth day of creation the Lord God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26), and he did. In chapter two, verse seven we read, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Then, in verses 16 and 17, we read that "the Lord God commanded the man." He did not command men, but "the

man". He did not command the man and the woman. The woman was not around. He commanded "the man", Adam. The commandment was given to one man because one man was representative of all men.

There was a reason for this. God had ordained the salvation of his elect by another Man, the last Adam, who is our Lord Jesus Christ. As we all fell by the act of one representative man, Adam, God ordained that all his elect be saved by the work of another representative Man, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12-19).

WHY WAS EVE CREATED?

"The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone" (v. 18). Why was it not good for man to live alone? He had no one to love. Being created in the image of God, Adam was full of love and affection. That love and affection must have an object. He had no one to talk to. There was no one like himself with whom he could converse, no one with whom he could discuss the beauties of the garden, no one with whom he could share his thoughts. He had no one to touch and embrace. Companionship, togetherness is essential to those who love. We need to touch and be touched. We need to embrace and be embraced. He had no one to help. There was no one who needed Adam's help, and no one to help Adam with his needs, as a man living in the world. The Lord God graciously took care to provide help for fallen, needy man, even before he fell and became needy. There was no one for him, with whom the man could share his blessings. Love must give and delights to give; but Adam had no one to whom he could give what God had given him, no one to whom he could give himself. He had no one to comfort, --no one for him to comfort and no one to comfort him, --no one for him to admire and no one to admire him. He was alone. Adam had no one with whom to produce others like

himself. All the animals of the garden had their mates and their little ones; but Adam was alone. He had neither wife, nor sons, nor daughters (vv. 19-20). Eve was created by God specifically to be “*a help meet*” for Adam.

HOW WAS EVE CREATED?

We are first told what the Lord God did for Adam (vv. 21-22). “*The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam.*” This was more than a normal rest, or sleep. God himself put Adam into a coma. No one else could do this to Adam. While Adam slept, God took one of Adam’s ribs out of his side and closed up the flesh, so that there was no scar. From that rib which he took from Adam, God made a woman. Then he brought her to the man.

God did not create the woman as he did the man, but made the woman from the man. Woman was not the beginning of a new order and a new race. She was the continuation of the race. Adam was the sole head and representative. That is God’s order. She is called “*Ishshah*”, woman, because she was taken from “*Ish*”, man. The Lord did not take the woman from the man’s head to reign over him, nor did he take her from man’s foot to be trampled upon by him, but from his side as one who is his equal. God took woman from the rib of man, from under his arm, to be protected by him, from near his heart, to be loved by him. Then the Lord God brought the woman to the man. She was the gift of God to man. This is God’s order. It cannot be changed (1 Cor. 11:8-9).

Verses 23 and 24 tell us what Adam did. “*Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.*” He was saying, --This woman is part of me. She is to be loved and cherished by me, as I would love and cherish myself. We are one person. “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his*

mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Adam understood from the beginning what very few men understand today. The man who has a wife is the one responsible for the household. He is the head of the house, prophet, priest, and king. He is the provider for the household. He is the ruler of the house and the protector of the house. And the woman who has such a man can rest in his care and love (1 Pet. 3:7).

“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (v. 25). They were, as God had created them, holy and upright. They needed no clothes to protect them. They needed no clothes to conceal any part of their bodies which God had made. And they were not ashamed, because they had nothing to be ashamed of. There was no sin in their nature, no guilt in their consciences, and no wickedness in their actions. But they did not remain in this blessed condition. As soon as they sinned, they were under the curse. And as soon as they sinned they were ashamed (Gen. 3:1-7). We are all inheritors of their shame, because we have all inherited their guilt (Rom. 5:12).

WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT HERE TEACH US?

Without question, there is much to be learned about true womanhood in these verses. Blessed is that woman who receives and bows the Word of the Lord and teach your daughters to do so (Titus 2:3-5). Blessed is her family. She alone is a truly virtuous woman (Pro. 31:10-31). But there is something far more glorious here. The marriage performed by God in the garden of Eden, the marriage of Adam and Eve, is a picture of the marriage performed by God in grace, the marriage of Christ and his church.

There is a second representative man - Christ our Savior (1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45-49). He is not just the second

Adam. Christ is the last Adam, the last representative man. The first Adam sinned. The last Adam obeyed God perfectly for his people. The first Adam brought death to all his race. The last Adam brought life, eternal life to all who were represented by him. As we have born the image of the first man Adam, so all God's elect must and shall bear the image of the last man, the Lord from heaven, our great Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This last Adam shall not be alone in his kingdom. God has declared that he shall have a people to love and by whom he shall be loved, --a people made after his likeness (Rom. 8:29-30), --a people with whom he can be in fellowship, --a people with whom he can walk, --a people to serve him, whom he can serve, --a people to admire him, whom he can admire, a people with whom he can share everything, --a people to reign with him forever.

The Lord God made a body of flesh for his dear Son (Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 2:17; 10:5). Woman was made of man; but here is a man who was made of woman by the hand of God, that he might redeem and save fallen men.

God caused a deep sleep to come upon his Son. His sleep was death, death for sin. None but God could do this. At the cross, God put his Son to death for us, that we might live by his death. Yet, as Adam, knowing full well what he was doing (Gen. 3:6; 1 Tim. 2:14), died for Eve, so Christ freely, voluntarily laid down his life for his bride. From the side of our crucified Redeemer there flowed out blood to justify and water to sanctify his chosen bride (John 19:34; Eph. 5:22-27).

In the fulness of time the Lord God will bring the chosen bride to Christ, by the effectual, irresistible grace and power of his Spirit (Psa. 65:4; 110:3). He will make her submissive to him, cause her to adore him, and unite her to

him. Christ left all for her and cleaves unto her; and she leaves all for him and cleaves unto him (Eph. 5:30-32).

They are not ashamed (1 John 2:28-29). *“He that believeth shall not be ashamed!”* Adam and Eve had no outward clothing and they were not ashamed. The righteousness of Christ is a garment to cover us, the garment of God’s salvation, which makes believers unashamed before God. Our Savior’s death has put away our sin and our guilt. His Spirit has given us his nature. By faith in him, we have confidence before God and are not ashamed, for in Christ we are holy and unblamable. Yes, we still have this outward body of flesh that must be covered because of its corruption. But soon we shall lay it aside and rise in his likeness. In that last great day, we shall stand before the bar of God in the perfection of Christ, robed in white garments, clean and white, and shall not be ashamed.

Chapter 4

TWO TREES

"And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

Genesis 2:9

Among the many things created by God, there were two trees planted in the midst of the garden: *"The Tree of Life"* and *"The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."*

Had Adam eaten of the Tree of Life, he would have lived forever (Gen. 3:22-24). We have no way of knowing what The Tree of Life was. God has not told us. But we do know what it symbolized. It symbolized the Lord Jesus Christ who is our life, from whom we have eternal life. Christ is to all who believe a Tree of Life planted in the midst of the paradise of God (Pro. 3:18; Rev. 2:7; 22:102). To trust the Lord Jesus Christ, to live by faith upon the merits of his blood atonement and his perfect righteousness, is to eat of the Tree of Life. The fruit of this Tree, the results of Christ's obedience to God as the sinner's Substitute, is eternal life. All who eat of the fruit of this Tree shall live forever.

However, the Lord also placed another tree in the midst of the garden. It was *"The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."* The moment that Adam ate of the fruit of that tree, he died. He died spiritually, was condemned to die eternally, and began to die physically. These things are recorded in the Book of God by the Holy Spirit for our learning and for our edification. There are several important, spiritual lessons to be learned by contrasting and comparing *"The Tree of the*

Knowledge of Good and Evil" to the cursed tree upon which the Son of God was crucified. Read Acts 5:30 and 1 Peter 2:24.

SOME POINTS OF CONTRAST.

There are six obvious points of contrast between The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is as much to be learned from the disparity between the type and its fulfillment as there is from the comparison of the type and the antitype.

1. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was planted by God (Gen. 2:9); but the tree upon which Christ was crucified was made and set in its place by man (Matt. 27:33-35).

It is true - Christ was delivered to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). God almighty fixed the time of his death, the means of his death, the place of his death, the object of his death, and the results of his death. But human hands devised and erected the cruel tree on Golgotha's hill, stretched out the Lord of glory upon it, and crucified him. It is written, "*And they crucified him!*" The death of Christ was by the will, decree, purpose, and hand of God the Father; but the guilt of it lies entirely upon us. It was by the will, the hands, and the work of men that the incarnate God was nailed to the cursed tree.

2. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was pleasant to the eyes (Gen. 3:6); but everything connected with the tree of the crucifixion was hideous, repugnant, and ignominious.

Though it would be idolatrous to do so, were it possible for an artist to capture the scene of our Lord's crucifixion on

canvas, no one would want the picture hanging in his home. The scene was horrible Our suffering Savior looked more like a violently slaughtered beast than a man (Isa. 52:14; Psa. 22:11-22). Drunks and priests, thieves and scribes, harlots and Pharisees, Roman soldiers and Jewish rabbis joined in a hellish party, taunting, and jeering, and laughing as they slaughtered the incarnate God. For three hours, darkness covered the face of the earth. The Son of God, when he was made to be sin for us, he was forsaken by his Father. Quivering in pain, burning with fever, covered with blood, with the reproach of being made sin for us breaking his heart, the Son of God died upon the cursed tree, being made a curse for us. Thus he redeemed his elect from the curse of the law.

3. God forbade man to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:17); but every man is freely bidden, and even commanded, to eat of the fruit of that tree upon which the Savior died.

Do not mistake my meaning. There is no value, or merit, in that wooden cross upon which Christ died. We do not value the cross, the physical cross, at all. If I knew I had it in my possession, I would burn it and scatter the ashes to the wind. But there is infinite merit in the sacrifice him who died upon the cross. The fruits of our Savior's death upon the tree are priceless. God himself calls sinners to eat of the fruit of this tree. He tells us, *"All things are ready, Come."* *"O taste and see that the Lord is good."* The leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations, the healing of God's elect scattered throughout all the nations of the world. It will be alright to use your imagination a little. Can you see the leaves on the tree? I see in the cross, in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ all that is needed for the healing of our souls from all the consequences of sin. In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we find atonement made, justice satisfied, righteousness brought

in, forgiveness obtained, and eternal life secured for chosen sinners.

4. Satan used every cunning device to get man to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 3:1-6); but he uses every cunning device imaginable to keep sinners from eating of the fruits of Christ's death upon the tree of crucifixion.

The liar from hell deceives sinners, who are all willing to be deceived, by flattering their flesh. He persuades men and women universally that they do not need a substitute, that they are really good enough to meet with God's approval, that God would not really send them to hell. With cunning craftiness, he makes men and women think they are smart, too smart to believe God, so smart that they imagine all religion to be superstition and hypocrisy, because they are superstitious hypocrites.

5. The eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil brought death to Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:17); but life comes to all who eat the flesh and drink the blood of him who died upon the cursed tree (John 6:53-56).

Christ's flesh, his obedience to God in the body of human flesh, is righteousness. His blood, the pouring out of his life's blood unto death, is atonement. To eat his flesh and drink his blood is to receive him by faith, thus receiving his righteousness and his atonement.

6. Adam, as a thief, by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, was cast out of Paradise (Gen. 3:24); but the penitent thief, by eating of the fruit of the tree of crucifixion, entered Paradise (Lk. 23:39-43).

The only time recorded in the Scriptures our Savior used the word "*Paradise*" during his earthly ministry was in his promise to the penitent thief. It was not accidental. Like the penitent thief, all believers are reconciled to God and shall be brought into eternal Paradise, by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. As he confessed his sin and just condemnation, so do we. As he acknowledged Christ as his Lord, so do we. As he trusted the mercy and grace of Christ the Lord, so do we. As he obtained the favor of the Lord by faith in him, so do we. As he is with Christ in Paradise, so we soon shall be.

SOME MARKS OF SIMILARITY.

I have shown you the points of contrast between the tree in the garden and the cross of Christ. Now, secondly, let me show you some of the marks of similarity between these two trees.

1. Both trees were planted in a garden (John 19:41). The first Adam died in a garden; and the last Adam died in a garden.
2. Both trees were planted in the midst of the garden (Gen. 2:9; John 19:18).

Our Lord Jesus Christ died as our Substitute in the midst of the world, and in the midst of two thieves, dividing the one from the other. So it is the cross of Christ, his blood atonement, that divides all men. The blood of Christ alone is that which distinguishes God's elect from the reprobate. And our Lord Jesus was crucified in the midst of time. His death was the crisis of the world. When the fulness of the Jews was finished, as the fulness of the Gentiles began, the Son of God died at Calvary to ransom the Israel of God. This day and forever, it is the cross of Christ, which is the Tree of Life

planted in the midst of the heavenly paradise (Rev. 22:2), as the center and glory of all things.

3. Both trees were trees of the knowledge of good and evil.

There is only one place in all the world where sinners, such as we are, can learn the knowledge of good and evil. These things are learned by divine revelation at the cross. There, as we look to Christ in faith, we see the goodness of God and the holiness of God, the love of God and the wrath of God, the grace of God and the justice of God, the mercy of God and the truth of God. And it is only as we look to Christ in faith, trusting him as our crucified Savior, that we begin to see the evil of sin, the wickedness of man, and the utter depravity of our own hearts. It is looking on him whom we have pierced that melts our hearts to repentance (Zech. 12:10). And it is only in the light of Christ crucified that we discern good from evil in providence. For God's elect all things are good. For the unbeliever, all things are evil (Pro. 12:21; Isa. 3:10-11).

4. Both trees are good for food (Gen. 3:6).

The cross of Christ - I mean the doctrine of the cross, the Gospel, is the very meat and marrow of the believer's life. It is good for food for our souls! How pleasant it is to the eyes of faith! In the crucified Christ, in the doctrine of the cross, we see our sins blotted out. We see how that God is, indeed, both perfectly just and the Justifier of every believer. Truly, this is "*a tree to be desired to make one wise!*" The preaching of the cross is the power of God and the wisdom of God. It makes the believing sinner wise unto salvation.

The cross of Christ was to our dear Savior a cursed tree (Gal. 3:13), but to us a tree of blessing, a curse removed. As Abraham's guest was urged to take water and refreshment and find rest "*under the tree*" (Gen. 18:4), so in the gospel

weary sinners are bidden of God to take water and refreshment and find rest for their souls under the cross. As Abraham and his guest stood together "*under the tree*" (Gen. 18:8), so the triune God and believing sinners stand together in the cross of Christ. As the tree cast into Marah's bitter waters made the waters sweet (Ex. 15:23-25), so the cross of Christ cast into our bitter lives makes them sweet. With the inspired apostle, every believer ought to make this firm resolve - "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!*"

Chapter 5

THE FALL OF MAN

"And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

Genesis 3:1-24

If we would understand anything about the grace of God and the workings of grace for and in elect sinners, we must understand something about the fall. Genesis 3 is one of the most important chapters in all the Word of God. Here the foundation is laid upon which all gospel truth is built. If you trace all the rivers of truth back to their source, you will find their source in Genesis 3. Here the revelation of the great drama of redemption begins, that drama of redemption which is being acted out upon the stage of human history. In this one chapter of inspiration...

- The present fallen, ruined condition of our race is explained.
- The subtle devices of the devil are disclosed.
- The utter inability of man is recorded.
- The effects of sin are displayed.
- God's attitude toward fallen man is set forth.
- Man's pride and self-righteousness are demonstrated.
- God's gracious provisions for fallen sinners are proclaimed.
- And the necessity of a mediator is revealed.

There is no understanding of the rest of the Bible until Genesis 3 is understood. If we go wrong here, we will err in

our interpretation of all the rest of the Word of God. If, by the Spirit of God, we can grasp the message of Genesis 3, we will not greatly err in the rest of the Book.

This much is evident - If Genesis 3 is true, (and it is!), then both the scientists and the sociologists of our day are wrong. The evolutionary scientists tell us that man is slowly, but surely evolving into a perfect being, that though he began very low he has climbed very high. God tells us that he made man perfect, but he has ruined himself. God tells us that he made man very high, but he has fallen very, very low.

The sociologists, psychologists, educators, and philosophers have been telling us for a hundred and fifty years, that man's problem is his environment. Religious leaders tell us that man has great potential. His problems are outward. God tells us that our problem is our heart. The fact is, man is a fallen, depraved creature, under the wrath and curse of the holy Lord God, in need of redemption, regeneration, and grace. That is the message of Genesis 3.

THE FALL OF MAN

The first six verses of this chapter reveal the sin and fall of our father Adam, and of all the human race in him (Rom. 5:12). Man is not an independent, self-governing creature. He did not make himself. He owes his being to God. Man was made to serve God, to glorify his Creator by his obedience to him. As a symbol of God's sovereignty and of man's responsibility, a tree was planted in the midst of the garden which man was not permitted to use for himself (Gen. 2:16-17).

The only restriction placed upon man's liberty was the fruit of "*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" This tree symbolized the relationship in which man stood to God. Adam

was created as an intelligent, responsible creature, subject to the rule of God, the Creator. But soon he became a self-seeking, self-willed, self-centered, self-serving rebel. How did this happen? I cannot here give exposition of these verses. That is not my purpose. But there are three things that need to be understood.

1. Satan tempted, beguiled, and deceived our mother Eve.

Satan knew how God created Adam and how that he made Eve from one of Adam's ribs. He knew that Eve was the weaker vessel. And he knew Adam's love for Eve. Therefore, he set his sites on Eve. He was confident that if he could get Eve, Adam would fall. With great subtlety, the old serpent beguiled the woman. The steps that led to her ruin were these.

First, she heeded the voice of the tempter. Instead of saying, "*Get thee behind me, Satan,*" Eve quietly listened as the wicked one assaulted the Word of God. The door was opened when she began to discuss and debate what God had revealed with one who denied it. *Second*, Eve then began to make additions to the Word of God. Tampering with God's Word is always fatal. It is just as evil to add our words to God's as it is to diminish his. Eve said, "*Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it*" (Pro. 30:5-6). *Third*, the woman proceeded to alter God's Word - God said, "*In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*" Eve said, "*lest ye die*" or, "we might die." *Fourth*, she altogether disregarded God's Word. She began by questioning the Word. And she soon disregarded it altogether. This is the way sin entered into the world - "The will of God was resisted. The Word of God was rejected. The way of God was deserted" (A.W.Pink).

In verses 4-5, Satan cast doubt upon the Word of God, the justice of God and the goodness of God. In verse 6, Eve

saw, she coveted, and she took. She saw. Perhaps Satan took a bite of the fruit. She desired the wisdom, and freedom, and superiority that Satan promised. She took. She took that which belonged to God alone.

2. Then Eve gave the fruit to Adam (v. 6).

As we have seen, Eve was deceived; but Adam was not (1 Tim. 2:13-14). Adam willfully, deliberately rebelled against the express command of God. Because of his love for Eve, he defied God. He willingly plunged himself and all his posterity into enmity against God and spiritual ruin, rather than lose Eve.

3. When Adam sinned against God, we all became sinners and died spiritually.

We were all separated from God (Rom. 5:12). Adam was a representative man, a covenant head. He represented all the human race. We all fell through the sin and fall of our father Adam. How thankful we ought to be for this wise arrangement of things by our God.⁴ As an old writer said long ago, "O blessed fall!" Had there been no fall, there would always have been the possibility of one. Had there been no fall, we could never have known the wonders and beauties of redeeming love and saving grace (1 Pet. 1:12). Had there been no fall, we could never have been brought into union with God in Christ, the God-man. Since we fell by a representative, there is hope that we might rise again by a Representative (Heb. 2:16).

⁴ The fall of Adam was not an accident (Psa. 76:10). Either God could have prevented it, or he couldn't. If he couldn't then he is not God. This whole Book is a myth. If he could, but wouldn't, then it came to pass according to his will, though he did nothing to causes it.

The record of the fall, given in Genesis 3, is the only plausible explanation for the condition of the human race. Original sin is revealed here. It is verified everywhere. How else can anyone explain the universality of sin, the universality of sickness and sorrow, and the universality of death? These things are universal because we all have our being from one man, Adam. We all sinned in him. We all died in him. And we all received our nature from him.

THE GREAT POWER AND SUBTLETY OF OUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL

Here Satan appears for the first time in the Bible. We learn of his prior existence, his original glory, and his terrible fall in Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-19, and Revelation 12:7-11. Words cannot be found which are strong enough to adequately describe the crafty deceit, subtlety, and power of this creature, the devil, Satan, the serpent, the dragon of hell (Jude 9). He is too wise for us to out wit him, without divine wisdom. He is too powerful for us to overcome him, apart from Christ. He is too subtle for us to recognize him, apart from the Spirit of God and the Word of God. In this third chapter of Genesis, the Lord reveals three things to us about Satan. Be wise and understand them.

1. The primary sphere of Satan's activity is in the spiritual, religious realm.

Contrary to popular opinion, it is not Satan, but the natural depravity of the human heart that leads men and women into adultery, fornication, blasphemy, drunkenness, witchcraft, etc. (Mk. 7:21-23; Gal. 5:19-21). Satan's chief aim is to get between us and God. He seeks to keep man from his Maker. His goal is to keep us from trusting Christ. The way he does that is by inspiring confidence in ourselves. He seeks to usurp the place of God, to make God's creatures his own

subjects. His work consists of substituting his own lies for the truth of God. Beware! You will find Satan at work, not in brothels, bars, and dark alleys, but in churches, pulpits, seminaries, and religious activities (Eph. 4:10-12; 2 Cor. 11). Satan goes to church every Sunday. Satan has preachers. Satan tries to get men to perform righteousness, a righteousness of their own, to keep them from trusting Christ alone for righteousness. Satan will give faith, peace, and assurance. His ambition is not to keep men from being religious, and even moral. His ambition is to keep eternity bound sinners from trusting Christ.

2. The method of Satan's approach to our souls is the perversion of Holy Scripture and appeals to the flesh.

He throws doubt upon God's Word (v. 1). He substitutes his own word for God's (v. 4). He casts a slur upon the attributes of God (v. 5). He appeals to our flesh (v. 5). He appeals to our bodily senses -- the eye. He appeals to our fleshly emotions -- the desires. He appeals to our intellect -- our proud desire to be thought wise. He appeals to pride -- that vile pride that makes men desire to be "as gods."

3. But our adversary, the devil, shall be destroyed by the power of God (Gen. 3:15).

At Calvary our Lord Jesus Christ destroyed the devil's usurped dominion over the nations of the world (John 12:31; Rev. 20:1-3). He who deceived the nations was bound by the crucified Christ, who now gathers his elect out of every nation, people, tribe and tongue. In the new birth, in converting sinners by his almighty grace, the Son of God enters into the hearts of chosen sinners by the power of his Spirit, binds the strong man, takes his house, and spoils his goods (Eph. 2:1-4). In the day of judgment, our blessed Savior shall, at last, crush the serpent beneath our feet (Rom. 16:20).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL.

As soon as Adam sinned against God, he began to suffer the consequences of his transgression. *“The eyes of them both were opened”* (v. 7). Their eyes were not enlightened, but opened. They acquired no advanced knowledge, nothing pleasant, or profitable. Their eyes were opened to distressing, evil things. Satan has deceived our race. We lost communion and fellowship with God. We are all (since the sin and fall of our father Adam) without God, without life, without light, without Christ, and without hope by nature (Eph. 2:11-13). *“They knew that they were naked”* (v. 7). They felt things they had never known or felt before. They lost their innocence. Guilt engulfed them. Shame embarrassed them. Fear terrified them. Hatred arose within them (v. 12). *“They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons”* (v. 7). The fallen pair began to try to quieten their consciences, cover their nakedness, and get rid of their shame. Then, *“Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of God”* (v. 8). When they heard God’s voice, they ran. When they were exposed, they excused themselves (vv. 12-13). Thus it has been with the sons and daughters of Adam from that day to this.

Adam and Eve were cursed of God. The woman was cursed (v. 16). The man was cursed (v. 17-19). They were driven from the presence of God (vv. 22-24). They died spiritually; and we died in our father Adam (Col. 2:12; Eph. 2:1-4). They began to die physically; and the seeds of death are passed from father to child, generation after generation. They were sentenced to die eternally; and all the sons and daughters of Adam are born *“children of wrath”* (Eph. 2:4).

THE GRACIOUS CHARACTER OF OUR GOD

Genesis three shows us the fall of man, the subtlety of Satan, and the ruin of our race, in Adam; but it does not leave us there. This chapter also shows us something of the gracious character of our God. Here we are given great reasons for praise and gratitude to the Lord our God.

Here is the first call of grace (v. 9). The voice Adam heard was not the voice of a policeman, seeking a criminal. It was the voice of a Father's love, seeking a son who was lost. It was a call of divine justice that cannot overlook sin. It was a call of divine love that cannot be quenched. It was a call of divine grace that cannot be resisted (1 John 4:19).

Here is the first gospel sermon (v. 15). The preacher was God himself. The audience was a pair of guilty, helpless sinners. The subject was redemption by Christ. It speaks of conflict, enmity, and war between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman (Rev. 12). It speaks of God's sovereign election and predestination, separating the sons and daughters of Adam into the seed of the serpent and the seed of Christ. This first gospel sermon speaks of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:4-6), his death, having his heel bruised by the serpent, and his victory in death crushing the serpent's head. In a word, this first gospel sermon promised redemption, grace, and salvation by the substitutionary sacrifice of God's dear Son at Calvary (2 Cor. 5:21).

Here is the first portrayal of redemption by Christ (v. 21). The guilty pair, under the sentence of death, stood before God. A sacrifice of blood was made -- an innocent lamb. Adam and Eve were stripped of their fig leaf aprons by the hand of God himself. The only way any sinner will ever give up his imaginary righteousness is for God himself to strip away our fig leaf aprons. Then, the Lord God made a covering , without human aid, and put it upon the fallen pair. Like

sinners in the experience of God's saving grace, Adam and Eve were totally passive. God did everything. They did nothing (Eph. 2:8-9; Lk. 15:22; Isa. 61:10).

Here is the first description of man's lost condition (v. 24). The fallen pair were driven from the garden, separated from God. They were barred from God by the sword of justice. They were utterly incapable of returning to God. But God, in great mercy, love, and grace, found a way to bring fallen, ruined, helpless sinners back to himself (John 14:6; Zech. 13:7-9; Heb. 10:19-22).

Chapter 6

ADAM AND CHRIST

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life

Genesis 3:17-24

During the days of the great depression there were soup lines in large cities all over this country. People were hungry, poor, jobless, and homeless. The only way they could eat was to be fed at one of those soup lines.

One day, as a man was working a soup line in Chicago, IL, he spotted a man in the line who stood out from the rest. At one time this man had obviously been quite wealthy. His suit was ragged and dirty, but it was a well made

suit. It fit him so well that it had to have been tailor made. His hat was soiled; but it was a handsome, well-formed hat. Though they were ragged, the man wore a matching tie and handkerchief set. The man serving the soup could not help looking at the man questioningly, as if to say, "I wonder what your background is?" When this man held out his cup for soup, he said, "Sir, I've seen better days."

That is a pretty good description of humanity. Like the poor beggar in that soup line, even in his fallen state man has a stateliness, though now ragged and soiled by sin, that declares, "I have seen better days." We are not now what obviously we once were (Eccles. 7:29). There is no way to explain the universal condition of the human race except by the account of the fall given in Genesis 3.

Man is capable of doing noble, self-sacrificing things for his fellow man; and he is capable of beastliness and monstrous cruelty. The same person is capable of moral virtue and of utter immorality. Man is a dying creature. Yet, he alone, of all God's creatures fears, to die. The reason is obvious. Man alone is an immortal soul. In his inmost being, every man knows that *"the wages of sin is death"*.

Why is it that the sons and daughters of princes, with the best of training and education, possess the same tendencies to evil as the children of paupers? Why do the sons and daughters of God's saints, who have been raised in loving discipline, nurtured in godliness, surrounded by peace, and trained in the fear of God, experience, feel, and run after the same lusts as the children of pimps, pushers, and prostitutes? Why are all men and women everywhere sinful? Why is it that family, environment, education, and all the social programs in the world are totally incapable of changing the nature of man? Why is it that no one is capable of changing the corruption of his own heart?

Only the Word of God can answer these questions; and the answer God gives in his Word is this -- *"All have sinned!"* We all have a common origin -- Our father Adam. We all have a common heritage -- The Fall. We have all received from our parents and given to our children a common legacy -- Sin. And we are all possessed with a common nature -- Depravity.

The fall of Adam is a historic fact; and the fall of the human race in Adam is the only satisfactory explanation of human history. These are facts which cannot be denied: Man is a fallen creature. All men since the fall of Adam are sinners: by birth, by nature, and by practice. Fallen man needs a Savior.

Man by nature is alienated from God, under the condemnation of God's holy law, lost in darkness and sin. What is the remedy for man's condition? The answer is a new creation. *"If any many be in Christ he is a new creature"* (1 Cor. 5:17). A. W. Pink wrote, "It is not the cultivation of the old nature that is needed, for that is ruined by the fall, but the reception of an entirely new nature which is begotten by the Holy Spirit. *'Ye must be born again!'* Anything short of this is worthless and useless." Yet, even in the fall there was a prophecy of a recovery. In Adam there was a type, picture, and prophecy of Christ our Redeemer.

In the Garden there was one commandment given by God to man - *"Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Gen. 2:17). This one commandment was the only thing God almighty required of man. Had he obeyed that one commandment, he would have lived. Disobedience to it brought death. In the Gospel God has given one commandment to sinners - *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31). This is the one thing

God requires of men. All who obey it live forever. All who refuse to obey it must forever die.

In the Garden there was one tree. The eating of the fruit of that one tree brought death upon men. In the Gospel there is one tree, the cross of Christ. All who eat of the fruit of that tree shall live forever. In the Garden there was one man, Adam, who represented all the human race before God, by whom and in whom we all died. In the Gospel there is one Man, Christ, the second Adam, the last Adam, who represents an elect race before God. By him and in him all God's elect live forever (Rom. 5:12, 18-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22). As Adam brought destruction and death upon his race, so the Lord Jesus Christ has brought redemption and life to his race, God's elect.

ADAM WAS A TYPE OF CHRIST.

As you read through the Scriptures, you find that Adam and Christ are uniquely linked together. We would be wise to carefully and prayerfully study the comparisons and contrasts that are made of them (Rom. 5:12, 18-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22). Adam was made in the image of Christ, who is "*the image of the invisible God*" (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Adam was a representative man, a covenant head, and so is Christ, the last Adam. All that Adam did was imputed to all his seed, all that he became was imparted to all his seed by natural generation. We are all the sons of Adam, "*children of wrath*" (Eph. 2:3), by nature. So too, all that Christ did has been imputed to all his seed in justification, and all that he is as a man is imparted to all his seed by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. All believers are the sons of God by grace. In Romans 5, the Holy Spirit tells us of three great acts of imputation. (1.) Adam's sin has been imputed to all men and women. (2.) The sins of God's elect were imputed to Christ.

(3.) Christ's righteousness has been imputed to all God's elect.

Consider what Adam did as our federal head and representative. He repudiated the goodness and love of God (Gen. 3:5). He questioned the truth and veracity of God (Gen. 3:4). Adam knew nothing of death. He apparently, at least to some degree, agreed with Satan and said, "We shall not surely die. That is contrary to reason and experience." Above all else, Adam rejected, denounced, and rebelled against the authority of God!

Christ, the last Adam, the second and last man, the second and last federal head and representative, completely vindicated the love, truth, and majesty of God, which the first man Adam had so grievously and deliberately dishonored. Christ, as a man, as the God-man, our Mediator, honored God in thought, word, and deed all the days of his life upon the earth. He vindicated the love of God (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:16; 4:9-10). If ever you are tempted of the devil to question the goodness and love of God, if the events of providence appear to cast a cloud over God's goodness and love, look to Calvary and know that "*God is love!*"

Our Lord Jesus Christ vindicated the truth of God, too. When he was tempted by Satan to doubt God's goodness, truth, and supremacy, each time he answered, "*It is written*". Every sabbath day he went into the synagogue to read the Word of God. As he chose his twelve apostles, he deliberately selected Judas that the scriptures might be fulfilled. In his last moments of agony, he cried, "*I thirst,*" that the scriptures might be fulfilled. After he was risen from the dead, as he spoke to his disciples, he opened to them the scriptures (Lk. 24). At every age, in every event, in all the details of his life, our all-glorious Savior, federal head, representative, and substitute

believed, honored, and magnified God's truth, even when it cost him dearly to do so.

The Lord of glory also completely vindicated the majesty, supremacy, and sovereignty of God as our representative. He vindicated God's right to be God by his willing, voluntary submission to him at all times and by his obedience to him even unto death (Phil. 2:5-11; Gal. 4:4-5). He trusted God, as a man, living in perfect faith. He obeyed the will of God perfectly (Heb. 10:5). He fulfilled the law of God completely (Rom. 10:4). He subjected his will to the Father's will. He magnified the justice of God in his death. In doing so, our blessed Savior fulfilled all righteousness and brought in an everlasting righteousness for his people, to the praise, honor, and glory of God. He was made like unto his brethren. He is not ashamed to call us his brethren, because we are made the righteousness of God in him.

THE SON OF GOD ENDURED ALL THE CURSE PRONOUNCED UPON THE FALLEN MAN FOR HIS PEOPLE

What was the punishment of Adam's sin? I will confine my thoughts here to that which is revealed in Genesis 3:17-24. Here the Lord shows us seven things that were the consequences of Adam's transgression. (1.) The ground was cursed. (2.) In sorrow man was cursed to eat his bread all the days of his life. (3.) The earth brought forth thorns and thistles for man. (4.) Man was required to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. (5.) Man must return to the dust of the earth. (6.) A flaming sword barred the way to the tree of life. (7.) Adam was separated from God in death. These were the curses that fell upon Adam and all the sons of Adam because of sin; but Christ, the last Adam, endured all the consequences of Adam's transgression.

The Son of God was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). The Lord of glory was so thoroughly acquainted with grief that he became the *“man of sorrows”* (Isa. 53:3). The Lord Jesus Christ came forth from the judgment hall wearing *“a crown of thorns”* (John 19:5), thorns which grew from the cursed earth for the cursed man. The first Adam got his bread by the sweat of his face; but Christ, the last Adam, got his bread, his soul’s satisfaction, by the sweat of his heart. He sweat as it were *“great drops of blood falling to the ground”* (Lk. 22:44). As Adam returned to the dust, so the dying Christ cried, *“Thou hast brought me into the dust of death”* (Psa. 22:15). That sword of justice which barred the way to the tree of life, buried itself and was swallowed up in the Son of God, our Substitute, the last Adam (Zech. 13:7). As Adam who sinned was driven from the presence of God in death, so Christ, the last Adam, who was made to be sin for us, was separated from God in death, crying as he died, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matt. 27:46). Blessed, blessed, blessed Christ! Who can describe the agonies of his holy soul for us? Let us bow before him in wonder, love, praise, and thankful faith (1 Pet. 3:18; 2 Pet. 2:24). He was made to be sin for us, made to be a curse for us, died for us, and thus redeemed us. Now, because of all he has done for sinners, in his life and in his death, all who believe have been made the righteousness of God in Christ (Rom. 3:24-26; 2 Cor. 5:21).

**BY HIS OBEDIENCE TO GOD AS OUR SUBSTITUTE, IN LIFE AND IN DEATH,
CHRIST, OUR GREAT ADAM, HAS COMPLETELY REVERSED ALL THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL.**

He says, *“I restored that which I took not away”* (Psa. 69:4). God alone is able to bring good out of evil and make even the wrath of man to praise him. This is what he has done for his elect and for the glory of his name by the obedience of his Son as our substitute. The sin and fall of our father Adam

gave God opportunity to exhibit his wisdom and display the exceeding riches of his grace in a way that could not have come to pass had sin never entered into the world. In redemption Christ not only reversed the effects of the fall, he brought in a better thing. Hebrews. 10:9 applies.

Here is the transcendent miracle of God's wisdom and grace in Christ. In him, God's elect have become gainers by the fall and God himself is glorified through Adam's transgression. Before the fall Adam lived in an earthly paradise. In Christ we shall enter into a heavenly paradise. Before the fall Adam lived as the creature of God. In Christ we live as the sons of God, partakers not only of the divine breath, but of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Before the fall Adam was innocent. In Christ we are righteous. Before the fall Adam was lord of God's creation. In Christ we are heirs of a heavenly inheritance. Indeed, as it is written, "*All things are yours.*" Before the fall Adam enjoyed the happiness of innocence. In Christ we have entered into the joy of pardon, grace, and redemption. Before the fall Adam was a creature of God in fellowship with his Master. In Christ we are one with God, inseparable from our Savior (Eph. 4:30). His obedience is our obedience. His death is our death. His life is our life. His glory is our glory (John 17:5, 22). "*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!*" (Rom. 5:21).

The first man Adam made all things mortal and evil. Christ, the last Adam, makes all things holy, immortal, and new (Rev. 21:5; 2 Cor. 5:17). The Son of God gives to chosen sinners a new nature (1 John 3:6-10, a new record of perfect righteousness (Jer. 23:6; 33:16; 50:20), and a new relationship (1 John 3:1). The kingdom of God is an entirely new creation. When we think of the fall, let us ever adore God's wisdom and sovereignty (Psa. 76:10), providence (Rom. 8:28), and God's grace (Eph. 2:7). Let us ever adore God's Son, our dear Savior, the last Adam (Col. 1:18).

Chapter 7

ADAM DRIVEN FROM EDEN

"And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Genesis 3:22-24

No portion of Holy Scripture is more important than the first three chapters of Genesis. If a person truly believes and understands Genesis 1, 2, and 3, he has grasped the whole system of divine truth, for he has grasped the foundation of all truth. If we fail to understand what is revealed in these three chapters, we cannot understand anything else in the Sacred Volume. Perhaps that is the reason Satan has always raised up false prophets to twist, pervert and deny the opening chapters of Genesis.

Chapter 1 reveals the origin and creation of the universe and the formation of man from the dust of the earth. *"In the beginning God"* - Those four words show us that the Lord God is the Creator, Ruler, and Disposer of all things. *"All things were made by him and for him; and without him was not anything made that was made"* (John 1:3).

Chapter 2 reveals the happiness, power, and greatness of man before sin entered into the world. In the garden, in innocence Adam was the object of God's favor and delight.

God made him lord of the earth. All creatures were under his dominion. He lived in harmony with God, the holy angels and the beasts of the field in perfect happiness. But Adam did not continue in this blessed, happy condition.

Chapter 3 reveals the temptation and fall of our father Adam and the consequences of it. What a sad, sad picture! Man, created in the image of God, man, to whom God had given the whole world, man, the prince of God's creation rebelled against his Creator and lost everything!

When they had lost everything, when Adam and Eve were trying to hide themselves from the Lord God, trying to cover the shame of their sin and their nakedness from God, the Lord God stepped in, not to destroy them, but to save them by his grace! (Gen. 3:9). He promised a Redeemer by whom he would destroy the enemy (3:15). He made a sacrifice for them (3:21), picturing the redemptive work of Christ promised in verse fifteen. He clothed the fallen pair with the skins of the slain sacrifice (3:21), picturing the garments of salvation with which he would clothe his elect.

Then, we are told, in Genesis 3:22-24 -- *"And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."*

This, too, was an act of God's grace. It was not, as many suppose, an act of his wrath. The Lord God drove Adam and Eve from the garden *"to keep the way of the tree of life,"* that is, to preserve and protect *"the way of the tree of life."*

WHO IS SPEAKING IN THIS TEXT?

When Moses wrote, *“The Lord God said,”* who did he have in mind? It is Jehovah-Elohim speaking; but he says, *“The man has become as one of us.”* One Person is speaking, but more than one person is represented. The Person speaking is Christ, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, Jehovah-Elohim. He is speaking for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Anytime we read of God speaking to man, or of God being revealed to man in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, or in eternity, the Person speaking, the Person revealed is the Son of God, our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:37). The only way God deals with men, the only way God speaks to men, the only way God reveals himself to men is in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Christ is the Word and Revelation of God (John 1:1-3, 14, 18). When Moses penned these words, *“The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us,”* the Spirit of God was, in this Book of Beginnings, revealing four facts that are essential to the Christian faith.

1. **The pre-existence of Christ before his incarnation** (John 8:58) -- *“He is before all things, and by him all things consist”* (Col. 1:17). Our Lord Jesus Christ is not a creature of time. He is the Creator, the I AM, who is, who was and who is to come.
2. **The eternal deity of Christ** -- Our divine Mediator is called *“The Lord God,”* Jehovah-Elohim, because Jesus Christ is God (Isa. 9:6; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16; John 10:30-33). He claimed to be God, while he walked on the earth. Angels and men worshipped him as God. The Jews crucified him because he claimed that he is God (John 10:33).

3. **The plurality and unity of the eternal Godhead** -- When the Lord God spoke and called himself “us,” he was declaring the plurality of Persons in the Godhead. We are Trinitarians! We worship one God in the Trinity, or Trinity, of his sacred Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7). This is a matter constantly held before us in Holy Scripture. We see the doctrine of the trinity in the baptismal formula given by Christ (Matt. 28:19-20), in the baptism of our Master (Matt. 3:16-17), and in the benedictions of grace (2 Cor. 13:14).
4. **The Mediation of Christ** – The Lord Jesus Christ is our Mediator, the only Mediator between God and men; and he has been our Mediator from eternity (1 Tim. 2:5). In this third chapter of Genesis, Christ is revealed in all three of his mediatorial offices, Prophet, Priest, and King. In *his kingly office*, he arraigned fallen man before his bar of judgment, convicting him of treason, and passed upon him the sentence of death. In *his prophetic office*, he promised redemption and salvation to the fallen pair, and told them how it would be accomplished. In *his priestly office*, he made a sacrifice for the guilty and clothed our parents in the skins of an innocent victim.

The Person speaking in our text is the Lord God, Jehovah- Elohim, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the Son of God, our Mediator, our Savior. And he is speaking to the fallen, sinful man, our father, Adam.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF OUR LORD’S WORDS REGARDING THE CONDITION OF THE MAN?

“The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” What do those words mean? **The text might be translated, “Behold, the man was as one of us, knowing good and evil.”** If the words are taken in

that sense, they are an expression of great pity. God is saying, "Behold, the man, now fallen, sinful, ruined, depraved, and dead; he was as one of us, knowing good and evil," but now only evil.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God as he is revealed in Christ, who is the image of the invisible God (Gen. 1:26; Col. 1:15). Adam was created in the image of God in the form and constitution of his body and his human nature. That is to say, the first Adam was formed in the image of him who was to come as the second Adam, Christ, the God-man. Adam did not crawl out of a slime pit, or drop out of a tree. He was created in the image of Christ, who is the image of God. The Son of God came to be partaker of our flesh and blood, that we might be partakers of his flesh and of his bones (Eph. 5:30).

Adam was made in the image of God in moral uprightness and righteousness, too. Man came out of his Creator's hands a holy creature. And when God makes a man new by his grace, he restores holiness to him. This renovation of grace is called, "*The new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness*" (Eph. 4:24).

The image of God in which man was created is also reflected in his mental capacity. Like his Creator, Adam was wise, rational, and full of knowledge. We cannot begin to imagine how vast the mind of that original man, in his unfallen state was. He named all living things by himself! He knew his wife when she was brought to him. He knew both good and evil. Though, like Christ himself, before the fall, Adam knew no sin by experience, he knew the nature of it. He knew that it was contrary to God's Being. And he knew the consequences of it. In this sense, it is certain that Adam knew both good and evil far more fully before the fall than he did afterwards.

Again, the image of God in which man was created is seen in Adam's dominion over all earthly creatures. Adam was made lord of God's creation (Gen. 1:26). The majesty of God was seen in him by the universal subjection of all creatures to him (Psa. 8:5-8).

This sense of the text is -- "Behold, the man was as one of us, but what is he now?" His body, so strong and full of life, is now feeble and dying. His soul, so pure and holy, is now depraved and vile. His mind, so full of wisdom and knowledge, is now darkness and ignorance. The man who was the darling of heaven is now alienated from God.

However, I am inclined to think that our translation is best - "*Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.*" This is a declaration of Adam's present state and condition, and of ours, in Christ. Though fallen by nature, we are now, as Adam was, restored by grace. What God here says of Adam is true of every believer. Though in Adam we fell, in Christ we are restored, just like Adam was, by the call of God -- "*Where art thou?*", -- by blood atonement -- the slain victim, -- by imputed righteousness -- the skins.

Like Adam, we have been clothed with Christ's righteousness, and we are "*righteous, even as he is righteous*" (1 John 3:7; Jer. 23:6; 33:16). Like Adam, being renewed by grace, we are now created in the image of Christ, conformed to him (Eph. 4:24). Like Adam, we are now reconciled to and one with God in Christ (John 17:21). Enmity has been put away. Reconciliation has been made by God. Now, believing sinners are in a state of friendship with God. But more, in Christ, we are one with God. Like Adam, having been called from darkness to light in Christ, we know both good and evil. We know the goodness of God. And we know the evil our own hearts.

**WHAT WAS THE TREE OF LIFE WHICH GOD
WOULD NOT ALLOW ADAM TO TAKE BY HIS OWN HANDS?**

Without doubt, it was a real tree in the garden of Eden. Adam knew where it was, and how useful it was as the tree of life. "It is highly probable, that it might be useful for the invigorating of Adam's body...during his state of innocence" (Gill). But it was also a symbolical tree.

It was a symbol of Adam's dependence upon God for his life. Every time he saw it and ate its fruit, Adam was reminded that his life came from God, was preserved by God, and belonged to God.

It was a symbol of Adam's preservation in life, so long as he was obedient to the will of God. Perhaps it stood right beside the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We do not know. But every time he passed by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and ate only of the fruit of the tree of life, Adam had confirmed to him the promise of life for his obedience to God. The tree of life was not a tree by which fallen Adam might have been translated from his fallen condition to a state of heavenly, eternal life (Gal. 3:21). When God prevented Adam from eating the fruit of this tree it was not for the purpose of keeping Adam from obtaining life. It was for the purpose of revealing his grace in Adam and preserving, or keeping, "*the way of the tree of life*" (v. 24).

The tree of life was a picture, a symbol, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ (Pro. 3:18; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14). He is our Life! He is the Author and Giver of Life! As our Mediator, he asked the Father for our life. As our Redeemer, he purchased a right to life for us with his own blood. As our Advocate and Intercessor in heaven, he secures us in life in himself. "*Your life is hid with Christ in God*" (Col. 3:3; John 10:27-30).

**WHY WAS ADAM, AFTER THE FALL,
PREVENTED FROM EATING THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE?**

John Gill said, "The reason of this prevention was that Adam might have no hope nor expectation of life, from that, or anything else, but Christ the promised Messiah." This was an act of grace. Though Adam had forfeited all claims to life, God kept open the way of life, and kept him from seeking life anywhere else but in Christ.

If the Lord had not prevented Adam from eating the physical fruit of that physical tree, he might well have thought to himself - "As this tree was useful before in the preservation of my life, it might still be. God has promised me a Redeemer, but why should I wait for him. I can save myself by my own hands. All I have to do is eat the fruit of the tree of life." To keep Adam from such evil, the Lord God removed the temptation from him. He thrust him out of Eden and placed a guard around the tree of life.

The fact is, there is nothing a man is more prone to do than to seek salvation and life anywhere but in Christ. We are all base idolaters by nature. We want to be saved; but we want to be saved by our own hands, our own will, our own effort. Fallen man will do anything to be saved, except trust Christ alone (John 5:40). Man would rather take a pilgrimage, barefoot on broken glass, around the globe than trust Christ. He would rather climb the steep, dark, terrifying slopes of Sinai than simply look to the Christ of Calvary. But God has declared that Christ alone is Savior (1 Cor. 1:30). Sinners cannot come to God any other way. By your own works of righteousness you cannot be saved.

"He who seeks for righteousness and life by his own doings, runs upon the flaming sword of justice; and whilst

endeavoring to insure his own salvation, he is pulling ruin upon himself" (Gill).

Blessed be God, he still keeps *"the way of the tree of life."* He still keeps chosen sinners from self-destruction by self-righteousness. He blocks up the way of his elect and graciously forces them to flee to Christ, the true Tree of Life (Hosea 2:6). Let us ever beware of the wretched, vile nature of sin (Rom. 5:12). Let us ever beware of the folly and blasphemy of works religion (Gal. 2:21). Works religion is something against which God has set himself. All who seek to save themselves are fighting against God (Gal. 5:1-4). Let us ever bless, praise, and magnify the Lord our God for providing Christ the Savior for lost sinners (1 Cor. 9:15). Let us ever cease from all self-righteousness and lay hold upon Christ alone. He *"is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon him; and happy is everyone that retaineth"* him (Pro. 3:18).

Chapter 8

CAIN AND ABEL

"The LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect."

Genesis 4:1-16

Though there were no children born to Adam and Eve before the fall, there were many born to them after the fall (Gen. 5:4-5). Adam lived for 930 years! In all likelihood, before he died Adam had thousands of descendants, including sons and daughters, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc. Cain was his firstborn son; but how many sons and daughters Adam and Eve had between Cain and Abel we do not know.

Verse 1 -- *"And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD."* When Cain was born, Eve thought that he was the promised Messiah, Redeemer and Savior. She cried, *"I have gotten a man from the Lord!"* Those words might imply that she had already had many daughters; but now she had gotten a man.

Verse 2 -- *"And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."* God the Holy Spirit has singled out these two sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, to teach us by example the blessed gospel doctrine of redemption by blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22), and to condemn the doctrine of salvation by works. The way of Abel is the way of grace. The way of Cain is the way of works.

This is the line that divides the whole human race. It divides husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, fathers

and sons, brothers and sisters. It probably divides your family, as it does mine. All who attempt to come to God must choose either the way of Cain or the way of Abel, the way of works or the way of grace. The two cannot be mixed, or intermingled, at any point, to any degree (Rom. 11:6; Gal. 5:2, 4).

Verse 3-5 -- *"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell."* Cain and Abel were not young boys. They were grown men. Evidently, they were heads of households, with wives and children and occupations. Cain was a farmer. Abel was a shepherd.

In Genesis 3 we saw the entrance of sin into the world. Here we see the progress of sin and the fruit of sin. In Genesis 3 we saw sin against God. Here it is against man - The man who has no fear of God has no regard for his neighbor - In Genesis 3 we read about enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, the sons of God and the children of the devil. Here we see that enmity displayed. Cain, the wicked works-monger, persecuted and murdered Abel, the child of God. However, the central, primary thing revealed in this chapter is that God is to be worshipped, and that he can only be worshipped by faith in a blood sacrifice.

A PRESCRIBED PLACE

There was a prescribed place where God was to be worshipped. We are told that both Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices to the Lord, to the place of the Lord's presence. We

are not told where this prescribed place of worship was; but it was somewhere east of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24).

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary translates Genesis 3:24, "So he drove out the man; and he dwelt at the east of the Garden of Eden between the Cherubims, as a Shekinah (a fire-tongue, or fire-sword) to keep open the way to the tree of life." That translation is, in my opinion, very accurate. My reasons for saying so are...

1. The word "placed" in this verse is never translated "placed" anywhere else in the Old Testament. It means "to tabernacle," or "to dwell." Eighty-three times in the Old Testament it is translated "dwell."
2. The Lord God is always portrayed as the One who dwells upon the mercy-seat, between the cherubims (Ex. 25:17-18, 22; 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron. 13:6; Psa. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 6:1-6; 37:16; Ezek. 10:2, 6, 7).
3. Our great God, the God of all grace, "*who delighteth in mercy,*" has kept open for sinners the way to the tree of life (Rev. 22:2). He kept the way open from eternity by our covenant Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). He kept the way open under the types and ceremonies of the law, all of which pointed to him by whom the way of access to God would be opened and maintained (Heb. 10:1-22).

When the Lord God expelled Adam from the Garden, he appears to have established an altar, a mercy-seat, protected by the Cherubims. The flaming sword, or, as it might be rendered, the flaming tongue, represented God's presence, the Shekinah glory. Anyone who approached God must worship him at this place by means of a blood sacrifice. There was a prescribed place of worship.

I know that there are no holy places upon this earth. We are not idolaters. *“God is Spirit. And they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth.”* True worship is spiritual. It is a matter of the heart (Phil. 3:3). We have no material altar. Christ is our Altar (Heb. 13:10). We have no literal mercy-seat. Christ is our Mercy-Seat (1 John 4:10). Yet, God has always had a prescribed place of worship. --A place where men and women gather in his name. --A place where he gives out his Word. --A place where he meets sinners upon the grounds of mercy through blood atonement. --A place where he dispenses his grace.

During the forty years Israel spent in the wilderness, the prescribed place of divine worship was the tabernacle. Later, the temple of God was established at Jerusalem. In this gospel age, the place appointed for divine worship is the local church, the public assembly of his saints (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 3:16-17). This is the prescribed place of the divine presence, divine instruction, and divine blessing (Psa. 122:1-9; 133:1-3; Heb. 10:23-26).

A PRESCRIBED TIME

It also appears that there was a prescribed time for the worship of God. Look at the marginal translation of verse three. The words, *“in the process of time,”* are translated, *“at the end of days.”* Though there was no appointed sabbath, it appears that at the end of every week men and women came to the altar at the east of Eden to worship God.

In this gospel age we do not keep a literal sabbath day. The Holy Spirit expressly forbids any form of legal sabbath keeping (Col. 2:8-19). Believers are not under the law, in any sense whatsoever. Sunday is not the *“Christian Sabbath.”* Our

Sabbath is Christ. We rest in him. Yet, Sunday is “*the Lord’s day*.” God the Holy Spirit says so (Rev. 1:10). This is the day of Christ’s resurrection (Matt. 28:1). This is our appointed day of divine worship (Acts 20:7; Psa. 118:21-24). I do not suggest that the Scriptures require a specific day or time when we must gather in the house of God. However, it is obvious from the universal testimony of Scripture that it is always both proper and needful for us to have specified, appointed times set aside for the worship of God. God will not be worshipped haphazardly.

A PRESCRIBED MEANS

God’s ordained means of worship was and is blood atonement. The holy Lord God cannot be approached and will not accept the worship of fallen sinful man, but means of a blood sacrifice. It appears that the children of Adam and Eve had been clearly instructed in the worship of God.

Adam showed his sons what he had done, how he had sinned against the Lord. He told them plainly what God had done for him and Eve, sacrificing the innocent victim for them, stripping away their fig leaves, and clothing them with the garments of salvation he had made specifically for them. He spoke plainly to them about God’s promise of redemption through the woman’s seed. Adam understood and taught his family the necessity of blood atonement. Believing God, our father Adam, in his fallen state, taught his children that the only way a sinner could ever worship God is by faith in that One whom the Father would send to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Abel believed the gospel his father preached to him. Cain refused to believe.

What was wrong with Cain’s sacrifice? No doubt, this proud man brought the very best thing he could to God.

Yet, God despised his sacrifice. Why? Because It was a bloodless sacrifice! (Heb. 9:22). Cain's sacrifice, his religion, was a denial of his need of Christ, the Redeemer. Cain thought he could approach God on his own merit, be his own priest, his own mediator and his own intercessor. His sacrifice was a denial of sin. Cain denied his guilt and sin before God. He denied that he deserved condemnation and death under the wrath of God. He approached God on the ground of his own merit and works. Cain's sacrifice, indeed, his entire religious system, was a refusal of God's revelation. God had revealed the way of worship and acceptance and life (Lk. 24:44-47; Eph. 1:6-7); but Cain did not believe God. This man was not an infidel. He was a proud religionist, a self-righteous Pharisee, an unbeliever. His offering to God was the fruit of his own labor. He really thought, just as most religious people think today, that he was really good enough for God.

Why did the Lord God have respect unto Abel and his offering? God accepted Abel's sacrifice, because it looked to Christ. It was an offering of faith (Heb. 11:4). Abel believed God. He came to God through faith in a Substitute. His offering was a confession of sin, guilt, and just condemnation.

Our sins deserve the wrath of God. The only way for a holy God to justify guilty sinners is by the satisfaction of Divine justice through blood atonement. That blood atonement which magnifies God's law and makes it honorable is found only in the substitutionary death of God's own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Abel's offering was a type of Christ, the Lamb of God (Ex. 12:5-6). It was a lamb, the innocent, dying for the guilty. It was a male of the first year, in the prime of life. It was a lamb without spot or blemish, as Christ was without sin. It was a slain lamb. Its blood was shed in a violent death. Abel's slain

lamb was consumed by fire of God (Lev. 9:24), because God accepted it as a type of Christ, whose blood of atonement is a sweet smelling savor to the holy, Lord God, our heavenly Father. There were only two differences between Cain and Abel: -- blood and faith. These are the only differences between God's elect and the lost world around us. The only distinction between God's elect and the reprobate is the distinction of grace (1 Cor. 4:7).

The way of Cain is the way of natural religion (Jude 10-11). It is the religion of works. It gives no comfort, but only misery (Gen. 4:6-8). It is the way of all men and women by nature. The way of Cain is the way of ceremonialism and ritualism. The way of Cain is the way of every persecutor. The first human blood to be shed upon the earth was shed by a religious legalist; and the blood he shed was the blood of a sovereign gracer, a worshipper of God. The battle still rages. The issue is still the same. The way of Cain persecutes the way of faith. The way of Cain is the way of God's curse (vv. 10-12). The way of Cain is the way of endless wandering (vv. 12, 16). "*Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the Land of Nod.*" Nod means "wandering." There is no rest for the wicked; neither in this world, nor in the world to come.

The way of Abel is the way of life everlasting. It is the way of grace. It is the way of blood redemption. It is the way of faith. It is the way opposed and persecuted by the world. It is the way of life. It is the way of acceptance with God. Here two ways are set before us. The way of Cain (Pro. 14:12; 16:25) is the way of works religion and everlasting destruction. The way of Abel (John 14:6; 10:9) is the way of free and sovereign grace in Christ, the way of everlasting salvation. Which way will you go?

Chapter 9

ENOCH

"Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."
Genesis 5:24

My heart is motivated, driven and governed by four great concerns. Here are four things I want more than anything in this world. I am not an ambitious man. But I am ambitious for these four things. For the attainment of these four things I am prepared, by the grace of God, to sacrifice everything else. I count all other things to be but rubbish by comparison.

1. **I want to know Christ** (Phil. 3:10). Yes, I believe that in measure I do know him. God has revealed his grace and glory to me in the Person of his dear Son. Still, I want a growing, spiritual, experimental knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to know all that he has done for me. I want to know him. I want to know him fully.
2. **I want to be totally committed to Christ.** I want to totally lose my life to Christ and in Christ, so that I can truthfully say with the Apostle Paul, *"For me to live is Christ."* I want to be committed to Christ as he was to the Father, so that my heart says to him in all things, *"Not my will, thy will be done."* It is my continual prayer that God will give me a heart committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. – Committed to his will. --Committed to his gospel. --Committed to his people. --Committed to the cause of his glory in this world.
3. **I want to be like Christ.** My heart longs to be like him, conformed to him, made into this likeness. I want to be like him love, tenderness, and thoughtfulness, in zeal,

dedication, and devotion, purity, holiness, and righteousness.

I know these goals are not attainable in this life. Yet, they are the things for which my soul hungers and my heart thirsts. I cannot be satisfied with less. *“I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 3:13-14). *“I shall be satisfied when I awake with Christ’s likeness”* (Psa. 17:15), but not until then.

- 4. I want to live in communion with Christ.** Like Enoch of old, I want to walk with God (Read Genesis 5:21-24). *“Enoch walked with God.”* What a statement - *“Enoch walked with God.”* This is astounding to me. *“Enoch walked with God.”* The text does not say, “Enoch thought about God,” or “Enoch worshipped God,” or “Enoch served God,” or “Enoch talked with God,” or “Enoch talked about God,” though he certainly did all those things. The Holy Spirit uses four simple words to describe the outstanding feature of this man’s life: *“Enoch walked with God.”* In his daily life Enoch walked with God, realizing God’s presence as his living Friend, in whom he confided, by whom he was loved. *“Enoch walked with God.”*

Some use Enoch as an example of sinless perfection. Some use him to teach the deeper life doctrine. Others use him to promote self-righteous morality. But the Spirit of God explains that Enoch’s life was a picture of grace, an example of faith in Christ (Heb. 11:5-6). *“Enoch walked with God...(and) he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”* That is the heart desire of every true believer. We want to walk with God in sweet fellowship and please him in all things. How can this desire be accomplished? How can you and I walk with

God and please him? This is the thing we must see, if we are to understand what it is to walk with God and please him. -- It was not Enoch's conduct that pleased God, but his faith (Heb. 11:6). More specifically, it was Christ, the Object of Enoch's faith, that pleased God.

WHAT DOES THE SCRIPTURE MEAN WHEN IT SAYS, "*ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD*"?

How did Enoch walk with God? What does that statement imply? The author of Hebrews gives us some help by telling us that, while Enoch walked with God, "*he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*" But how, how did this man please God? What was there about him that pleased the Lord?

Obviously, Enoch did not always please God, nor did he always walk with God. Enoch was a man like us. He was not born a saint. He did not simply decide one day that he would start walking with God. Enoch was a fallen sinner. He too was a son of Adam. Enoch was, like you and me, a fallen, depraved sinner, with a wicked heart, by nature departing from God.

He was born in spiritual death. He went astray from his mother's womb, like all others, as soon as he was born, speaking lies (Ps. 58:3). He was a man who needed pardon, cleansing, redemption, atonement, justification, and regeneration, just like us. Before he could please God, his sin had to be removed and righteousness had to be imputed to him. Otherwise, God could never accept him, much less be pleased with him. In order to have these things, Enoch must believe God. He must have faith in Christ. For righteousness comes by faith in Christ "*unto all and upon all them that believe*" (Rom. 3:22).

It was by faith that Enoch pleased God (Heb. 11:6). Enoch was not pleasing to God by virtue of his conduct, his works, his disposition, or his personal character. There was nothing at all remarkable about the man by nature that caused God to look upon him with pleasure. God was pleased with Enoch because Enoch believed God. He believed that which God had spoken. Enoch's faith was the same as Abel's before him and Noah's after him. The faith by which Enoch walked with God and pleased God was the same faith that the dying thief possessed when he cried, "*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*" (Lk. 23:42). Indeed, it is the same faith that God's elect have today. This is very important. If we would walk with God, we must believe God. Walking with God is neither more nor less than believing God. The only way anyone can walk with God and please him is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Enoch had experienced a mighty change by the power and grace of God. The Lord God had changed his heart. God changed the bent, bias and direction of his will. This fallen sinner had been given life and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:1-10). This was a work of grace, without which Enoch could never have walked with God and pleased him. Long before Enoch was translated into glory, he had been translated in his heart and soul. He was delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. That which the Holy Spirit commends to us is not Enoch's character and conduct, but Enoch's faith in Christ, the grace of God upon him. This man, Enoch, believed God's revelation of himself and his will in Holy Scripture. He believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer God promised in type and prophecy. He believed God's promise of immortality and eternal life in Christ (Jude 14-15). Enoch believed that God is and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:5-6).

When we are told that “*Enoch walked with God*” and that “*he pleased him*”, the Scriptures mean for us to understand that Enoch believed God. Be sure you understand this - Nothing pleases God except his Son. The only way you and I can walk with God and be please to him is by faith in his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6; 1 Pet. 2:4-5). This is what it is to live in the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-9). This is what it is to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16).

The highest measure of sanctification is exactly the same as the earliest beginnings of salvation. It is believing God. To grow in grace is to grow in faith. The strongest believer lives exactly as the weakest babe in Christ -- by faith. We stand before God by faith. We grow strong only as we know ourselves to be weak and lay hold on Christ’s strength by faith. Having begun in the Spirit, we are not then made perfect by the works of the flesh. We do not begin and go a certain distance by faith in Christ, and then finish our course, making up the difference by the works of the law. Salvation is by grace alone. Our standing before God is by grace alone. Our acceptance with God is by grace alone. To walk with God is to continue as we begun -- by faith (Col. 2:6-7).

The believer’s life is a life of faith. I stress this point because it needs stressing. Enoch pleased God because he believed God. He walked with God by faith. We are sometimes tempted to strive after some imaginary “higher ground” or “deeper life”, by looking to our feelings, or our works, instead of looking to Christ alone. That is wrong. Any doctrine, any religion, any sermon that leaves you looking to yourself, that turns your eyes away from Christ is evil. We are not to look to our feelings, but to Christ. We are not to look to our works, but to Christ. We are not even to look to the image of Christ created in us by the Holy Spirit, but to Christ alone. Jesus Christ alone is our acceptance with God. By faith Enoch

walked with God. By faith Enoch pleased God. Let us follow his example.

This man's walking with God by faith implies many things. When I read that "*Enoch walked with God*" and that "*he pleased God*", my heart cries out, "That's what I want as I make my pilgrimage through this world - I want to walk with God and please him in this world." What is it to walk with God? To walk with God is to live in the realization of his presence (Phil. 4:4-5). To walk with God is to enjoy familiar communion and fellowship with him (1 Thess. 5:16-18). To "*pray without ceasing*" is to live in communion with God, ever trusting Christ, seeking his will and his glory, submitting to his providence (Pro. 3:5-6).

The term "*walked*" implies perseverance and continuance. Enoch persevered in faith. He walked with God for three hundred years. His religion was not in spurts. His communion with God was steady and constant. He walked with God, steadily, for three hundred years.

The phrase "walked with God" also implies progress. Enoch's faith was not stagnant, but progressive. At the end of three hundred years he stood upon the same ground, was built upon the same foundation, and was in the same company as in the beginning. But he was not in the same place. And he was not the same man. Enoch went forward in faith. At the end of his days he knew more, enjoyed more, loved more, did more, believed more, received more, and gave more than in the beginning of his walk with God. A believer walks with God in this world like a little child walks through the woods with its father. It is a loving walk, a walk of confidence and trust, an instructive walk, a happy walk, and a safe walk.

WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES

IN WHICH “*ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD*”?

We all have a tendency a tendency to think, “Enoch lived in a different time. The world was different then. It was relatively easy for a man to walk with God in those days.” Such thinking is wrong. The details of Enoch’s life are sketchy. We do not know much about him. Still, we can be sure that the life of faith was not easier then than now. Enoch lived in the most trying, most stressful, most difficult times the world has ever known. He lived in those days just before the flood. In those dark, dark days, when very few people did, “*Enoch walked with God.*”

He was a public man, with great responsibilities. This patriarch was the head of a large family. As such, he was a prophet, priest, and king in his household. He had public cares and responsibilities as a public leader. And Enoch had his trials. He bore the brunt of opposition from powerful men who hated the way of faith, who hated God and his truth. We know this is so because the Scriptures tell us plainly that all who live godly in this world shall suffer persecution. Yet, Enoch walked with God for three hundred years.

He was also a family man. Like many today, he had the responsibilities of providing for, caring for, disciplining and educating a large family. He had a wife and many children. Yet, “*Enoch walked with God.*”

He lived in a terribly wicked, degenerate society. In those days, men commonly lived to be more than eight hundred years old. Their long lives gave them opportunity to invent many forms of evil. Sin covered the earth. The sons of God and the daughters of men made unholy alliances. There were few who believed God. Scoffers, mockers, unbelievers and infidels were abundant. The few who did profess to believe God compromised every principle and tried, as much

as possible, to make a marriage of righteousness and unrighteousness. Yet, "*Enoch walked with God.*"

Still there is more. -- Enoch faithfully bore witness to Christ in the midst of that wicked generation (Jude 14-15). He delivered his testimony in spite of opposition. He stood his ground firmly against the tide of blasphemy. The more men spoke against God, his Son and his truth, the more Enoch spoke for his Redeemer. "*Enoch walked with God.*" He was a man of faith, and therefore a man of conviction, purpose, boldness, and courage. In the midst of greater evil, greater opposition and greater trials than we can imagine, If this man could, by the grace of God, walk with God in his day, then you and I, who are saved by the same grace, washed in the same precious blood, and sanctified by the same Spirit, can walk with God today.

WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF ENOCH'S WALKING WITH GOD?

Enoch left here at a comparatively young age. Compared to others in his day, he was just a young man, in the prime of life, when God took him. He was only three hundred and sixty-five years old. He seems to have finished his course early. It appears that it did not take this man, walking with God, very long to do all that God had for him to do. Be that as it may, here are three things which are clear results of Enoch's walking with God.

1. Because he walked with God, Enoch escaped death. Let us walk with God by faith, with our hearts set upon Christ, and we too shall escape death (John 11:25; Rev. 20:6). Soon we too shall be translated to glory (2 Cor. 5:1-9; Col. 3:1-4).

Of course, everyone knows that believers die physically, just as unbelievers do. Yet, the Son of God declares plainly that those who trust him shall never die. The word “death,” as it relates to believers is used only to accommodate our present weakness and lack of understanding. The fact is, the death of the body for the child of God is not death at all, but the beginning of life!

2. Because he walked with God, Enoch was greatly missed. When Enoch was gone people began to look for him, but *“he was not found.”* When men and women like Enoch, people who walk with God, are taken from us, they are missed.
3. Because he walked with God, when Bro. Enoch went to glory, he left a testimony behind him. *“Before he was translated he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”* Everyone who knew Enoch knew about his God, his righteous judgment and his salvation in Christ.

Enoch’s translation is a warning to all men and women. Soon you will be swept out of this world, without warning, and ushered into eternity to meet the holy Lord God in judgment. Enoch’s translation to glory is also a testimony of comfort to encourage God’s pilgrims in this world. God *“is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

Can you hear Enoch’s voice. He is saying to every child of God in this world, “Press on, weary pilgrims, press on. Walk with God by faith. There is a kingdom prepared for you, where there is no more sorrow, no more weeping, no more pain, and no more death. There is a Redeemer waiting to embrace you. There is a God waiting to crown you. There are saints and angels waiting to welcome you. There is a Fountain to refresh you forever, a Tree to feed you forever, a Light to lighten you forever. Press on. Walk with God. Make your

steps lively, ever '*Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.*'"

**WHAT ARE WE TO LEARN FROM THIS
MAN, ENOCH, WHO "WALKED WITH GOD"?**

1. The only way any sinner can ever be accepted with God is in Christ. We must be in Christ by faith, or we can never please God. But, being in Christ, all who are in him always please God in him.

"Nearer, so very near to God, Nearer I cannot be,
For in the Person of His Son I am as near as He."
With His spotless garments on I am as holy as God's Son."

2. God sometimes makes great differences in his providence toward his beloved children. Both Abel and Enoch walked with God and pleased God. Both were loved, chosen of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ and saved by his grace, but Abel was murdered and Enoch was translated. Today both are seated around the throne in the presence of Christ.
3. That which God did for Enoch he will do for all who walk with him by faith in Christ (1 Cor. 15:51-58). Some saints must die, in a physical sense, and be resurrected. Some saints will be taken alive into glory. But all will be translated into the glorious image of Christ.
4. Only those who walk with God in this world by faith will live with God in that glorious eternal world called "Heaven". Let us then walk with God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 10

NOAH

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”
Genesis 6:1-22

As we read the sixth chapter of Genesis, several things are obvious. *First*, we see sin increasing (vv. 1-5). Nine generations had now descended from Adam. We have no way of knowing how many millions of people there were upon the earth; but there were so many that they covered the face of the earth. And wherever men and women were found, sin was evident. The one thing all men had in common in those days, as now, was sin. Polygamy, which began with Lamech (4:19) was now commonly practiced (6:1-2). The number of wives men took was limited only by the lusts they could fulfil.

“The sons of God,” the sons of Seth, *“began to marry the daughters of men,”* the daughters of Cain. Those who professed to be and had a name to be the sons of God, sacrificed their principles upon the altar of their lusts and married beautiful, but godless, daughters of Cain (6:2). And *“there were giants in the earth in those days”* (v. 4). The word “giants” simply means “violent, oppressive, fallen men.” They had the name of Seth, but the nature of Cain. They laid claim to God’s name and his promises, because their fathers were *“the sons of God.”* But they were the sons of Cain, fallen, cursed, violent, wicked men. Godless religious men have always been the most violent, cruel, and wicked of all men.

“God saw that...every imagination of the thoughts of (men’s) heart was only evil continually” (v. 5). Sin had reached its utmost depths. Sin was everywhere. Sin was the only appetite, desire, and work of the entire human race, until it *“repented the Lord that he had made man.”* Man, who was

created in the image and likeness of God, had become repugnant to his holy Creator.

Second, we see the Holy Spirit striving with men (v. 3). The Apostle Peter helps us to understand the meaning of this verse (1 Pet. 3:20). The Spirit's striving with men is the longsuffering of God, calling sinners to repentance by the preaching of the gospel and granting them space for repentance. What mercy! God calls sinners who deserve his immediate wrath to repentance. God gives sinners opportunity to repent. But he will not always call. The day is coming when God will shut the door of mercy. When that happens, when God leaves men and women to themselves, they cannot be saved (Pro. 1:23-33; Hos. 4:17; Lk. 13:24-25).

Third, we see God repenting (v. 6). The first time repentance is mentioned in the Bible, the Person repenting is God himself. Understand what this verse says and you will understand what repentance is. Repentance is a change of mind, a change of attitude, a change of direction, and a change of action.

Obviously, this is an anthropomorphic expression. We know that because we know that God does not change, nor can he be changed. God is immutable (Mal. 3:6; heb. 13:8). He never changes his mind, or alters his purpose (Job 23:13). Yet, the Lord God does sometimes alter his course of action in providence. Israel, a nation once so greatly blessed of God, is now a nation cursed. As a potter who forms a vessel that does not please him, breaks it in pieces, may be said to repent of his work, so God, to show his aversion to man's wickedness resolved to destroy him. True repentance, then, is a change of direction in a man's heart, in his life, in his desires and in his behavior.

Fourth, we see justice threatening (v. 7). *“The soul that sinneth, it must die!”* Justice demands it. A holy, righteous and just God must punish sin. Just as God once flooded this world in a storm of wrath, he will one day consume this world and all who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in vengeful, flaming fire. He will punish the wicked with everlasting destruction (Psa. 11:6; 2 Thess. 1:7-10). Yet, there is hope. God is just; but he is gracious too. He is *“a just God and a Savior!”*

Fifth, we see grace intervening (v. 8). “Grace” – What a blessed word! This is the first time grace is mentioned in the Bible. *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord!”* Salvation is by grace alone. The cause of Noah’s salvation was God’s free and sovereign grace. Our text does not say, “God found grace in the eyes of Noah.” It says, *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord!”* It is never the other way around. Salvation does not begin with man. It begins with God. Grace is not the result of something man does. Grace is God’s work. Grace is God’s gift. Grace is God’s intervention.

Because God from eternity had set his heart upon Noah, and was determined to be gracious to him, the Lord found a way to save him, though he was resolved to destroy the world. It was grace in God, not goodness in Noah, that saved this man from the flood of God’s wrath.

Grace is here mentioned for the first time by divine purpose. Grace first appears when the sin of man had reached its climax, as if to teach us from the beginning that there is nothing in man which causes God to bestow his grace. Grace is free. Grace is sovereign. Grace is unconditional. The world was lost; *“but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”* The world was condemned; *“but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”* The world perished; *“but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”* God always has a

remnant to whom he will be gracious. Noah alone was God's remnant in that day (Rom. 11:5). Noah's family was blessed, because of their association with him. However, there is no indication in the Scriptures that, at this time, any of them knew God. It appears that only Noah believed God, that the Lord revealed himself to no one else.

Noah is truly a picture of grace. He was the grandson of Methuselah, the great grandson of Enoch, who "*walked with God and was not, for God took him.*" His father was Lamech. His name, Noah, means "comfort, or rest." The Scripture seems to indicate that his father also was a man of faith (5:28-29). Lamech had many, many sons and daughters. But the only one who knew God was Noah. Grace does not run in bloodlines. Only Noah believed his father's God. Noah believed the report of his father (Gen. 5:28-29), who both acknowledged God's curse upon the earth and prophesied that God would work deliverance by Noah. I Genesis 6:9 and Hebrews 11:7, the Holy Spirit tells us ten things about this man, Noah, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

1. He was "just." Here again is a word mentioned for the first time. This word does not refer to Noah's character, but to his standing before God. It is true, he behaved justly; but that is mentioned in the next line. This word, "just" here, refers to Noah's justification by grace upon the grounds of Christ's obedience, justification received by faith. As with all believers, it was not Noah's faith that justified him, but Christ, the object of his faith.
2. Noah was "*perfect in his generation.*" Perfect means, "sincere and upright." Noah was unblemished in his conduct, unspotted by the world, and unaffected by all the generations in which he lived.

3. *“And Noah walked with God.”* Like Enoch before him and Abraham after him, Noah lived in the awareness of God’s immediate presence. He walked with God by faith, trusting him, believing his Word, doing his will, in sweet, blessed communion. Hebrews 11:7 describes Noah’s faith.
4. The basis of Noah’s faith was the Word of God. He was *“warned of God of things not seen as yet.”* Faith must have a foundation. And the foundation of all true faith is the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Noah believed because God spoke; and he believed what God spoke, though it was contrary to reason, experience, and science. God warned him of things not yet seen. His faith truly was remarkable. Noah believed God was about to send a universal flood, with waters covering the entire earth, though it had never rained. He built an ark, though no one had ever seen a boat, by which he, his family, and all the creatures of the earth were saved from destruction. His faith in God condemned all who would not enter the ark, all who believed not God.
5. The character of Noah’s faith was reverence. He was *“moved with fear.”* Noah feared God, because he believed God. He had an awesome sense of God’s wisdom, holiness, justice, truth, and power. He was overwhelmed with a sense of God’s goodness.
6. The evidence of Noah’s faith was obedience. *Being moved with fear, (he) prepared an ark.* Immediately, without delay, before the first raindrops fell, Noah began building an ark, following the pattern God had given him precisely. Faith is more than a creed. It is more than embracing historical facts and religious dogma. Faith acts upon God’s revelation. Faith is belief in action (James 2:14).

7. The result of Noah's faith was the salvation of his house. He "*prepared an ark to the saving of his house.*" God always honors faith. We know that there is no such thing as "salvation by proxy." Yet, God does honor faith. Noah believed God; and God saved his family. Abraham believed God; and God gave his seed the land of promise. Rahab believed God; and God saved her household. The Canaanite woman believed God; and Christ healed her daughter. Because four men believed God, Christ healed their paralyzed friend (Matt. 8:2). The word of promise is yet to be believed - "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house!*" (Acts 16:31).
8. The faith of Noah was a publicly confessed faith. By his faith in and by his obedience to the Lord God, Noah "*condemned the world.*" He warned the men and women of his generation of God's judgment and impending wrath. He called them to faith. He, by the Word of God he preached, condemned them for their unbelief.
9. The reward of Noah's faith is everlasting. He "*became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*" He was made an heir of righteousness of Christ, and a heir of that which righteousness deserves -- eternal glory.
10. The means of Noah's salvation was an ark (Gen. 6:13-18).
Noah and his family were saved by an ark, a ship which God commanded him to build. That ark was a picture of Christ.

There are three arks mentioned in the Word of God. Each was a place of refuge, shelter, and safety, typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God's salvation in and by him. The ark which Noah built secured those who were in it from the vengeance and violent wrath of an angry God. That is Christ our Substitute. The ark of bulrushes protected God's chosen

one, Moses, from the murderous designs of a wicked ruler, Pharaoh. That ark is Christ, into whom chosen sinners were placed by our loving Father from eternity. The ark of the covenant sheltered the two tables of God's holy law, and being covered with blood, was the place of atonement, mercy, and acceptance with God for sinners. That ark is Christ our Mercy-seat. From the beginning there has been but one place of refuge for sinners, only one way of salvation. That refuge, that way, that salvation is Christ! If we would be saved, we must be robed in Christ's righteousness and washed in his blood. We must be in Christ by faith. Only Christ can bear our souls above the flood of God's wrath. Only Christ can save us.

Chapter 11

The Ark

"And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."

Genesis 7:1

Three arks are mentioned in the Scriptures. All three were places of refuge and means of salvation. All three were pictures of grace, typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. The ark of the covenant sheltered the two tables of stone upon which the law of God was written. There, in that ark, under the mercy-seat were found the broken law that demanded death, -- the manna that gave life, -- and the rod of power that led and protected Israel. The ark of bulrushes protected God's chosen one, Moses, from the wrath and murderous designs of Pharaoh, the wicked ruler of Egypt. The ark which Noah built was the ark of God's salvation for him and his family. This ark was also a beautiful type of Christ and a clear, instructive picture of the grace of God in him. Noah and his family were saved in the flood by a ship, an ark, which God commanded him to build.

As there was but one ark in the days of Noah, there is but one way of salvation for poor, helpless, guilty sinners. The whole world was drowned under the flood of God's wrath, except for those eight happy souls in the ark. Even so, the whole world shall be destroyed in the everlasting wrath of almighty God, except those happy, blessed men and women who are in Christ. Christ alone is the Savior of men. *"There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."* If we would be saved, we must come into the Ark, Christ Jesus. We must be washed in his blood and

robed in his righteousness. We must flee from the wrath of God, and fleeing, we must flee to Christ

A PLANNED ARK

The ark was planned, purposed, and provided by God (Gen. 6:13-16). Long before the flood came, long before the first drop of water fell from heaven, the Lord God provided for the salvation of his own. The ark was not an afterthought with God. It was not hurriedly put together after the waters began to rise. It was something God planned and purposed long before. It was God himself and God alone who determined the size, shape, and material of the ark. God alone determined who would be saved by the ark. The ark was designed, built and stocked to house a specific number of residents, both of men and beasts. God determined where, how, and when the ark would be built.

Are you getting the picture? In just this same way, the Lord God planned and purposed the salvation of his people by Christ in his eternal purpose of grace. The Lord Jesus was provided and set up in the purpose of God from eternity, long before the clouds of Divine wrath began to swell against fallen men. Our salvation was not an afterthought with God. The Lord our God made provision for the salvation of his people in his Son long before the world began (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:3-6). Christ is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

Long before we sinned in Adam, the Lord God planned the salvation of his elect in Christ. The plan of salvation is not a path you follow to find God. It is the path God follows to find his elect. It is an eternal plan! God determined from eternity who he would save (2 Thess. 2:13). God purposed from eternity that he would save his elect by the substitutionary sacrifice of his dear Son (Rom. 3:24-26). And God's purpose of grace is sure and immutable (Rom. 8:28-30).

In the fulness of time, God provided his own dear Son to be the salvation of sinners (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10; Gal. 4:4-5). As the ark was God's provision for Noah and his family, Christ is God's provision for sinners. As the ark was a provision of pure, free grace, so Christ is the provision of God's grace.

A SUFFICIENT ARK

The ark which Noah built was an all-sufficient refuge for all who entered it. The ark was a huge, immense ship. There was no lack of room in it; but there was no wasted space. There was room enough for Noah and his family. There was room enough for two of every unclean bird, beast, rodent and insect in the world. There was room enough for seven of every clean animal. There was room enough in the ark to supply all the people and animals on board with food for a full year. The ark was an immense ship, about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, 45 feet high.; and it housed all kinds of creatures.

Even so, the Lord Jesus Christ is a great and mighty Savior, an all-sufficient Refuge for sinners of every kind. As the ark was an immense vessel, in which a vast multitude of animals, as well as Noah and his family, floated safely through the storm of God's wrath, so Christ is an immense Savior. His salvation is an immense salvation, delivering a vast multitude, which no man can number, from the wrath of God.

There was one door, only one door, in the ark; but that one door was enough. All who entered the ark, clean and unclean, large and small, male and female, all came in through the same door. There is but one Door of salvation for sinners. That Door is Christ (John 10:9; 14:6). If we would be saved, we must enter in by the Door, Christ Jesus. Grace is a great equalizer It puts all on common ground. We cannot

come to God, except as sinners in need of grace, trusting his Son. This one Door is sufficient. All who will may enter into life eternal by Christ the Door.

There was only one window in the ark; but that one window was enough. It gave light to all and gave all the light that was needed. That window represents the Spirit of God through whom Christ, the Light of the world, the Sun of Righteousness, shines into the hearts of men. All who come to Christ and receive salvation by him are illuminated and taught by God the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; 1 John 6:44-45). And all who are taught of God are well taught. When God teaches, those who are taught of him get the lesson. He teaches and convinces all his own of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment – Of their own sin. – Of righteousness accomplished by Christ's obedience. – Of judgment finished, atonement made, and condemnation ended forever, by the death of Christ who bore the wrath of God for us, as our Substitute.

There was plenty of room in the ark for all who came into it. So too, every needy sinner who comes to Christ finds all his needs abundantly supplied in him. All the grace we need is in Christ (Eph. 1:3). All the temporal blessings we need in this life are in Christ (Phil. 4:19). And all the spiritual blessings we need, for all eternity, are in Christ (John 1:15; Col. 1:18; 2:9-10). Everything that God can or will do for sinful men and women, he has done for us in Christ. Everything that God can or will require of sinners, he has supplied in Christ. And everything that God can or will give to sinners, he has given to us in Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is a mighty, all-sufficient, able Savior for needy sinners. He is able to do all that he has promised (Rom. 4:21). He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him (Heb. 7:25). He is able to keep that which we have committed unto him (2 Tim. 1:12). He is able

to keep us from falling (Jude 24-25). He is able to raise us from the dead (Phil. 3:20-21).

CALLED TO ENTER

Noah and his family came into the ark by divine invitation (Gen. 7:1). I will leave it to others to argue about whether the gospel call comes as an invitation or a command. Being the call of the sovereign God, it is certainly a call that no man is allowed to despise with impunity. That makes it a command. Yet, it comes to needy sinners like the sweetest, most gracious, most magnanimous invitation imaginable.

God graciously revealed his thoughts of mercy, love, and grace to Noah. Had the Lord not made himself known to Noah, Noah would have perished with the rest of the world. In the same way, the Lord graciously reveals his love, mercy, and grace in Christ in the hearts of his elect by the gospel (2 Cor. 4:6).

Look at God's call to Noah and learn about the call of grace. This was a divine call. God himself spoke to Noah. It was a personal, particular, distinguishing call. *"The LORD said to Noah, Come into the ark!"* Noah's family benefited from the call; but only Noah was called (1 Cor. 7:14). This was a sovereign, powerful, effectual, irresistible call. Noah went in (Gen. 7:5). Most gladly, most willingly, most cheerfully, all who are called by God the Holy Spirit flee to Christ, the Ark of salvation. All who hear his voice enter into the Ark (Psa. 65:4; 110:3).

A PICTURE OF ATONEMENT

This ark, by which Noah and his family were saved, beautifully represents our atonement for sin in Christ. There are two things in particular which set forth our Lord's work of

atonement. *First*, Noah was commanded to pitch the ark within and without with pitch (Gen. 6:14). The word which is here translated “pitch” simply means “to cover”, or to “take away”. At least seventy times in the Old Testament it is translated “to make atonement”. The pitch was a covering which sheltered Noah, and all who were in the ark, from the terrible storm of God’s wrath. As the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat covered the broken law of God on the day of atonement, so the pitch covered the ark. This is a picture of Christ’s blood atonement. The pitch without portrays redemption accomplished (Heb. 9:12). The pitch within pictures redemption applied (Heb. 9:14). *Second*, the storm of God’s wrath fell upon the ark with all the fulness of its fury. As the rains descended and the depths of the earth were broken up, the angry, merciless billows of God’s unmitigated wrath beat down upon the ark. Everyone in that ark went through the terrible storm of God’s undiluted wrath. But it was the ark which took all the punishment.

Do you see the picture? When Christ was made to be sin for us, the terrible storm of God’s wrath fell full force upon him and beat him to death, without mercy, until his justice and wrath were fully satisfied and totally expended. As our adorable Redeemer hung upon the cross, dying as our Substitute, he cried, “*All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me*” (Psa. 42:7). As those in the ark went through the flood, in Christ all God’s elect have gone through the storm of his holy wrath. But it was Christ, our Ark, took all the punishment. Having once endured God’s wrath, Noah had no cause to fear another flood. He was assured that he would never again suffer the flood of wrath. He had God’s promise for it, and the bow of God’s covenant to attest it (Gen. 9:11-13). So too, those who endured the wrath of God once in Christ, the sinner’s Substitute, shall never endure it again, not to any degree, not at any time, not for any reason.

SAFETY IN THE ARK

All who were in the ark were perfectly safe “*The LORD shut him in*” (Gen. 7:16). Though the ark passed through the horrible storm of God’s wrath, all who were in the ark were perfectly safe and secure. The Lord brought them in. The Lord shut them in. And the Lord kept them in.

There were three stories in the ark, the lower, the second, and the upper decks (Gen. 6:16). Perhaps, these three stories represent the believer’s threefold salvation in Christ: past, present, and future. We have been saved by election, redemption, and regeneration. We are being saved by divine preservation. We shall yet be saved in our translation into heaven at the death of the body, by the resurrection from the grave, and in ultimate glorification.

Certainly, there is also a picture of the safety of all God’s elect in Christ. Some who are in Christ are in the lower deck of doubt and fear. Some are up in the second deck of strong faith. Some are in the upper deck of full assurance. Yet, all who believe are in the Ark. And all who are in the Ark Christ Jesus are perfectly safe and secure. God has shut them in. It is not the strength of our faith that gives us security, but the strength of our Savior, the Ark (John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:31-39). All who entered the ark passed through the flood and came out of the ark unharmed (Gen. 8:18; John 18:9; Rom. 8:29-30; Heb. 2:13). So it shall be with all who are in Christ.

The ark was a place of peace and rest for those who were in it. It had many “rooms” (nests) in it (Gen. 6:14). In Christ we have something more than a refuge. We have a resting place. We are like young birds in their nests, the objects of another’s constant, loving care. As the dove found rest only in the ark, sinners cannot find rest for their souls

except in Christ. Christ is our Rest, our Sabbath. Believing on him we find rest (Matt. 11:28-29). Though they were tossed upon the stormy tempests, all God's elect are safe and secure in the Christ. Like frightened birds, we nestle down in our resting place. Is it not true with you? In Christ we pass through the storms of life and trials of faith unharmed, if not unalarmed (Isa. 43:1-7). With David, we say, *"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."*

There is safety and security in the ark, Christ Jesus. All on board the good ship Grace are safe, immutably safe, and forever safe. Satan cannot harm us. The law cannot condemn us. God has sworn that his wrath shall not be poured out upon us again (Gen. 8:20-22; Isa. 54:9-10; Rev. 4:3). The Lord Jesus Christ cannot fail to save all who trust him (Isa. 42:1-4).

"Firm as His throne the gospel stands, My Lord, my Hope, my Trust.

If I am found in Jesus' hands, My soul can not be lost!
His honor is engaged to keep the weakest of His sheep.
All that his heavenly Father gave, His hands securely keep.
Not death, nor hell shall ever remove His people from His
breast
In the dear bosom of His love, We shall forever rest!"

Chapter 12

God's Covenant With Noah

"And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth."

Genesis 9:11

Noah's first act, when he came out of the ark, was to build, not a house for himself, but an altar "unto the Lord" on which he offered blood sacrifices as burnt offerings to God. These were received by God as a sweet-smelling savor. Having received these offerings, God declared that he would never again curse the ground for man's sake and that, as long as the earth remained, its seasons would not cease.⁵

Then we are told, "*God blessed Noah and his sons*" (9:1). This is the first time we read of God blessing anyone since the fall of our father Adam. The basis of the blessing was the sacrifice God had received. That blood sacrifice was symbolical. It was a picture of Christ, the Lamb of God, for whose sake and through whose merits all the blessings of grace flow to sinners upon the earth. This is a new beginning. Judgment is over. Old things have passed away. All things are now new. And everything now rests upon a covenant that God made, a covenant of grace, based upon shed blood. Man had forfeited the blessing of God. He had forfeited his position as lord of creation. But grace restores him. Grace reinstates him. God made a covenant with Noah and, in its scope, that

⁵ Do not allow the infidels of our day influence your thinking. Scientists, environmentalists and politicians may fret and worry themselves about "global warming" and the disappearance of seasons; but God has declared that "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease!"

covenant reached even to the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea (9:2). This covenant was made to last forever.

Everything about Noah's salvation by the ark is representative of our salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole story is full of spiritual suggestions.

1. The ark is a picture of Christ and our redemption by him.
2. The salvation of Noah and his family by water is a picture of our salvation by the washing of regeneration. Like Noah, though we are in the world, we are dead to it. As Noah came out of the ark, out of the flood of God's wrath, so we have come up out of the watery grave to walk with Christ in the newness of life by the power of our resurrected Redeemer.
3. As Noah came out of the ark to walk abroad in the earth, so the believer in Christ walks in freedom.
4. Noah's sacrifices to God picture the believer's employment in this world - The worship and praise of God our Savior.
5. When the Lord commanded Noah to be fruitful and fill the earth with his fruit, he set forth the fruitfulness of faith. Believer's bear fruit, the fruit of the Spirit, unto God (Gal. 5:22-23). And as his witnesses in this world, believing sinners are spiritual parents to immortal souls, travailing in birth until Christ is formed in other chosen sinners by the work of God the Holy Spirit.
6. Noah's dominion over the beasts of the earth symbolized the believer's dominion over the lusts of his own nature. Grace has made us priests and kings in Christ. We are priests to offer up sacrifices

to God by Christ. We are kings to rule our own spirits by the Spirit of Christ.

7. Noah's security, standing before God upon the ground of God's own covenant, was a picture of every believer's security before God upon the basis of God's covenant.

Before ever the earth was made, before time began, in old eternity, God made a covenant with his Son for the salvation of his elect. We call it the covenant of grace, or the everlasting covenant. That covenant was a solemn compact between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, which guarantees and secures the salvation of God's elect. It is a covenant ordered in all things and made sure from eternity (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9). It is a covenant ratified by the blood of Christ at Calvary (Heb. 13:20). It is a covenant established and sealed to God's elect by the Holy Spirit in regeneration through faith (Eph. 1:13-14). It was this blessed covenant of grace that comforted, sustained, and gave satisfaction to David on his deathbed (2 Sam. 23:5). It is this very same covenant which is the comfort and strength of believing sinners today (2 Tim. 1:9-12). The covenant that God made with Noah was a covenant of pure grace and was representative of the covenant of grace which he made for us with Christ before the world began.

WHO MADE THIS COVENANT?

The source of this covenant was God alone. This was a covenant which God made with Noah, not a covenant that Noah made with God (Read vv. 11, 12, and 15). This was God's covenant with Noah. Man had no part in making it, or in keeping it. And man could not break it. So it is with that everlasting covenant of grace that God has made for us. It is a covenant of pure grace (Rom. 9:11-18). It is a covenant of unconditional, unqualified promise. God says, "*I will*" and "*you*

shall" (Gal. 4:22-31). Believers do not stand before God under a covenant that demands anything of us. We live under a covenant of promise. Its' favors are unconditional. Its' mercies are unlimited. All its' blessings are made sure to all the seed by the oath and promise of God. As God kept his covenant with Noah, so the covenant of grace has been faithfully kept to this day (8:22), kept by God himself. Nothing in the covenant depends, in any degree, upon man - God says, "*I will remember my covenant,*" and he does. The garments of salvation are all garments of God's providing, garments of grace. None of God's people wear garments of linen and wool, of works and grace.

C. H. Spurgeon said, "My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God's looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all his elect; for it is impossible for God to look at Christ, our bleeding Surety, and then be angry with us for sins already punished in him."

The covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant. Time does not change God or his purpose. David rejoiced to declare on his dying bed, "*The LORD hath made with me and everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.*" Every child of God in this world can and should have the same joyful confidence in all his circumstances. Grace is never in jeopardy. Salvation is never in danger. God's elect cannot, by any means, be lost (Isa. 54:9-10). The covenant of grace is a covenant made by God and kept by God.

WITH WHOM WAS THE COVENANT ESTABLISHED?

The covenant touched everything in God's creation. The benefits of the covenant were given to all Noah's posterity. But the covenant was made with only one man - Noah (v. 11). Even so, the covenant of grace was made with

one Person - the Lord Jesus Christ; but that one Person was Surety for many (Heb. 7:22). God made his covenant for us with Christ. Our divine Surety met all the stipulations of the covenant for us. In him, only in him, every believer receives all the blessings of the covenant. They are ours in Christ and for his sake (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9).

WHAT WAS THE BASIS, OR FOUNDATION, OF THE COVENANT?

This covenant was God's response to Noah's sacrifice (Gen. 8:20-22). The covenant which God made with Noah was God's answer to the "sweet savor" that ascended to him from the altar. All the blessings of the covenant flowed to Noah, because of the sacrifice. And all the blessings of the covenant of grace flow to all of God's elect through "*the blood of the everlasting covenant*" (Heb. 13:20), the blood of Christ, "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (Rev. 13:8).⁶

WHY WAS THIS COVENANT MADE?

We must not pry into the secrets of almighty God. I do not pretend to know all that moved God in the covenant he made with Noah, or in the covenant he made with Christ for us. However, this much he has revealed. God made his covenant to be...

- a wondrous display of his amazing grace (Gen. 8:21; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).
- a perpetual declaration of his glorious sovereignty (Gen. 8:22; Rom. 9:11-18).
- a solid ground of comfort to his elect (Rom. 8:28-32).

⁶ God could not and would not bless and save even the people whom he loved with an everlasting love apart from the satisfaction of his justice by the blood of Christ.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE COVENANT?

In a word -- Everything! The covenant God made with Noah included all the elements of the world (8:22), all the creatures of the world (9:3, 9, 10), and all the governments of the world (9:6). The covenant of grace includes everything. *"All things are of God"* (2 Cor. 5:18). *"All things are yours"* (1 Cor. 3:21; Hos. 2:18; Rom. 8:28). Everything in this world is so absolutely governed by God that nothing happens, nothing is done, nothing moves, nothing lives, nothing dies, except that which God has purposed for the fulfilling of his covenant in his elect.

**WHAT IS THE MEANING OF
THE RAINBOW, THE TOKEN OF THE COVENANT?**

Read verses 12 - 16. Here we see the rainbow upon the earth; but when John was caught up to heaven, he saw the rainbow encircling God's throne (Rev. 4:3), and he saw Christ, our Mediator, ruling all things for the fulfilment of God's covenant, crowned with a rainbow on his head (Rev. 10:1).

The Lord is ever mindful of his covenant. He does not need a token to remind him of it; but we do. So he gave us the rainbow. It was the symbol to Noah of God's covenant with him; and it is a symbol to us to remind us of God's covenant with us in Christ.

When may we expect to see the rainbow, the token of the covenant? The only time the rainbow is seen is when there is a cloud (v. 14). When our blessed Savior died at Calvary, there was a dark cloud over the earth; and there, in the death of our Substitute, we see God's covenant. The believer's days in this world are often filled with clouds, clouds hung by our heavenly Father -- *"When I bring a cloud."* We

read the lines and promises of God's covenant best when we read them drawn out for us upon the dark and cloudy sky of adversity. You will never see the rainbow until a cloud appears. But, as A. W. Pink wrote, "How blessed to know that the cloud that comes over our sky is of his bringing! And if so, how sure that some way he will reveal his glory in it!"

If we would see the rainbow, there must also be some rain. The cloud itself does not give the rainbow. We will never see a rainbow without the crystal drops of water to reflect the light of the sun. And you cannot see the rainbow unless the sun shines. It is only as Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shines in our hearts by the Spirit of grace that we are able to see God's covenant and grace toward us in him.

"Shine, O Sun of Righteousness
Through all the clouds of time and sense;
Display the rainbow of your grace
And rest my soul in covenant peace."

What do we see in the rainbow, the token of the covenant? In the rainbow, we see transcendent beauty and glory. That is what we see revealed in the covenant of God's grace. In the rainbow, we see a symbol of justice and vengeance satisfied. There is the bow; but it has neither string nor arrow. God has hung up his bow. The warfare is over (Isa. 40:1-2). That is the covenant fulfilled by our Surety. In the rainbow, we see streamers of joy, a banner of delight, flung across the heavens. That is what the covenant of grace is! (Jer. 31:3; 31-34; 32:37-41).

Chapter 13

THE RAINBOW

"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth."

Genesis 9:13

After God destroyed the world with the waters of the flood in his fierce anger, he promised Noah that he would never do so again. He made a covenant with Noah, by which he assured him that he would never again destroy the world with a flood. As a perpetual reminder of that covenant, God set a rainbow in the sky (Gen. 9:11-16). From that day to this, the rainbow has stood as a perpetual reminder of God's covenant. It is a sign of the covenant that will stand until God our Savior comes again and makes all things new.

The rainbow and the covenant are mentioned frequently in the Scriptures in connection with the throne of God, the glory of God, and the promises of the grace of God. It is the Lord our God who declares, *"This is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee"* (Isa. 54:9-10). When Ezekiel describes his vision of God's glory, he tells us that he saw a rainbow, the symbol of the covenant, encircling God's glorious throne. *"As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord"* (Ezek. 1:28). When the apostle John was called up to heaven, to behold the throne of God, he tells us, *"There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like*

unto an emerald" (Rev. 4:3). As the throne John saw is a symbol of God's sovereignty, the rainbow round about the throne is a symbol of the covenant of grace.

The rainbow is a reverberation, or a reflection of the beams of the sun upon a thin watery cloud. And the covenant of grace is owing to Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness" (John Gill). It is Christ who made the covenant for us with the Father. He fills the covenant with all the blessings of grace. Christ is the Mediator of the covenant, the Surety of the covenant, and the Messenger of the covenant. In Revelation 10:1; John draws a picture of Christ as One clothed with a cloud having a rainbow upon his head. The fact is the whole of the covenant of grace is Jesus Christ himself. He is the Surety of the covenant, the Ratifier of the covenant, the Blessing of the covenant, and the Embodiment of the covenant. God the Father said to his Son, "*I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people*" (Isa. 49:8).

AN EMBLEM OF MERCY AND PEACE

The rainbow is an emblem of the covenant of grace. Its many colors might be expressive of the promises of God in the covenant. The covenant symbolized by the rainbow is the everlasting covenant of grace, of mercy, and of peace (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:37-40; Heb. 8:8-13; 10:16-17; Psa. 89:19-37). This covenant of grace was made between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit before the world was made. Our Surety and Representative in the covenant was the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:22; Gen. 43:8-9). In this everlasting covenant of grace, the salvation of God's elect was agreed upon, wrought out, and accomplished in the oath, purpose, and decree of God (1 Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; Job 33:24). In time this covenant of grace, made in God's eternal purpose, was ratified and fulfilled by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in the place of his people (Heb. 9:15-

17). And all the blessings and promises of the covenant are sealed to the hearts of God's elect by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:13-17; Eph. 1:13-14).

As the rainbow is the emblem of mercy, peace, and reconciliation in God toward man, after he had destroyed the world by the flood, so the covenant of grace is a covenant of mercy and peace. It comes from God's mercy. It is full of God's mercy. And it provides abundant mercy, peace, and reconciliation for sinners through the blood of Christ.

THE SECURITY OF THE WORLD

When God set his bow in the sky, he promised that he would never again destroy the world by a flood. Can you imagine how Noah and his sons must have trembled, when they heard that first clap of thunder and saw that first bolt of lightning after the flood. The ark was gone. Perhaps they used it for fire wood. As the rain began to fall, I do not doubt, they must have been horrified. Then, the rain stopped. The sun began to shine. And the bow of God appeared in the sky! By the appearing of God's bow in the sky, their fears were silenced.

As the rainbow is a symbol of God's covenant and his promise to Noah that he would never again destroy the earth with a flood, it is God's covenant of grace that holds back the hand of his justice, and keeps Him from destroying this earth and its inhabitants. Had it not been for the covenant of grace, God would have destroyed the human race when Adam sinned in the garden. And were it not for that same, inalterable covenant, God would not allow the wicked to live today (2 Pet. 3:9). As the angels of judgment could not destroy Sodom until Lot was safely out of the city, so the Lord God will not destroy this earth in his wrath until he has saved all the hosts of his elect (Rev. 7:1-17).

Above all else, it is the firm and everlasting covenant of grace that secures the eternal salvation of God's elect (2 Sam. 23:5). We believe in eternal security, because we believe in the immutability of God's covenant. God is faithful to his covenant. He will honor his covenant. He will keep his covenant. And, blessed be his name, God's faithfulness to his covenant is not in anyway dependent upon the faithfulness of his people (Psa. 89:28, 34; Ezek. 16:60-62).

ENCOMPASSING THE THRONE

The throne, remember, is the emblem of God's sovereignty, his dominion, and his power. The *"rainbow round about the throne"* tells us that God's sovereignty is bound, hedged about, and limited by his covenant. In other words, God cannot and will not do anything contrary to or inconsistent with his covenant (Heb. 6:13-19). God has bound himself to his covenant. The fact that this rainbow, the covenant of grace, completely encircles the throne of God signifies three things:

1. *God is always mindful of his covenant.*

The Psalmist said, *"He will ever be mindful of his covenant"* (Psa. 111:5). No matter which way he turns, the covenant is always before his eyes. He constantly remembers it for the good of his people. He faithfully keeps his covenant. No matter how he comes to his people, he comes to us by way of the covenant. No matter what God does, he is fulfilling his covenant.

2. *No man can come to God, except through the covenant.*

Strip the throne of this rainbow, and there is the august, sparkling majesty of God, a consuming fire, which no man

dare approach. But that same throne, encircled with a rainbow, is inviting (Heb. 4:16). Sinners may approach the God of the covenant by a new and living way, by the blood of the everlasting covenant. We cannot draw near to God with our works. Both Cain and Uzza stand as striking examples of what becomes of those who put their own hands into the business of God's salvation. We dare not attempt to draw near to God with the strange fire of our own religious deeds and sacrifices. But sinners can draw near to God on the basis of the covenant, pleading the merits of Christ's righteousness and shed blood. We come to God in the covenant name, Jesus Christ. The pass-word to God's throne is Christ. We pray in Christ's name (John 15:16). We worship in Christ's name (Matt. 18:20). We are saved in Christ's name (Acts 4:12).

3. The fact that this rainbow encircles the throne of God tells us that *God's government of this world is determined by and is in exact agreement with the covenant of grace* (Rom. 8:28).

God always has respect to the covenant. He does everything for the fulfilment of the covenant. In all the great events of providence, God is simply fulfilling his covenant. As you read the Scriptures, you will notice that everything was done to suit God's purposes for his chosen nation. Egypt comes across the stage, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome. But all these nations are just background settings. Their pomp, grandeur, and wealth are just accessories. They rise and fall, they come and go with insignificance. The central figure is Israel, the elect nation, the church of God. The rest of the nations are nothing more than props, scaffolding, and gardeners for the Lord's vineyard. God has chosen Jacob for his portion. He is only concerned with Jacob. He does everything for Jacob. "I believe", C. H. Spurgeon once said, "that when kings and potentates meet in the cabinet chamber

and consult together according to their ambition, a Counsellor whom they never see pulls the strings, and they are only his puppets." (Read Isaiah 10:1-34; 43:1-7)

The ultimate end of all the events of providence is the salvation of God 's elect, the gathering of his redeemed ones, the calling of his church. God rules this world for his elect, covenant people. By secret, almighty, irresistible force, God works all things together for the good of his elect.

As this is true in all the great, momentous events of providence, it is equally true of all the small, minute matters of daily life - The painting of the lilac, the feeding of the sparrow, the numbering of the hairs of our heads, are all done by God because of his care and love for his people in Christ. The promise of the covenant is, "*Surely blessing I will bless thee*" (Heb. 6:14); and he always does. "*Although my house be not so with God, yet*" I am blessed of God. Let every child of God rejoice in this great fact of covenant grace. We are blessed of God according to the tenor of the covenant. In all our temptations (1 Cor. 10:13), in all our afflictions, in all our chastisements (Heb. 12:5; Rev. 3:19), our heavenly Father is bringing upon us his covenant blessings in and through Christ Jesus.

There is a rainbow round about the throne. Let that throne decree what it may, the decree shall never run contrary to the covenant of love. Even when I am most distressed, and the circumstances of my life are most painful, yet I know of a certainty, and testify gladly, "*Truly God is good to Israel*" (Psa. 73:1).

EMERALD GREEN IN COLOR

The rainbow has many colors. But the dominant, prevailing color is green. This is the color of life, peace,

tranquility, and joy. Truly, the most delightful, enlivening, peaceful sight in all the world is the covenant of God's grace. What is more cheering than to see God as our covenant God, Christ as our covenant Surety, and all the blessings and promises of the covenant made sure to us in him? The covenant of grace, like the emerald, is ever green. It is always new. Its promises are always fresh. Its blessings shall endure forever.

DESIGNED TO BE A REMINDER

Though God does not need anything to bring things to his remembrance, yet, he condescends to set the rainbow in the sky so that he might look at it and remember his everlasting covenant; and he allows us to put him in remembrance of his covenant, pleading the promises of the covenant with him in prayer (Isa. 43:25-26). Let every believer have a constant regard to the covenant. Our God does. Draw comfort from the covenant. Never be so base as to entertain hard thoughts about God's providence. God's providence is only the outworking of his covenant grace. Give thanks and praise to God for his covenant (2 Sam. 23:1-5; Eph. 1:3-6).

Chapter 14

Noah and His Sons

"And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan

Genesis 9:18-29

The entire inspired account of Noah's life after the flood, a period of 350 years, is given to us by Moses in just twenty-nine verses (Gen. 9:1-29). That fact, in itself, is remarkable, when we consider what tremendous responsibilities fell upon his shoulders. Noah led the world in the worship of God. He was the man responsible for the government of the nations which issued from his loins. In addition to his tasks as both the prophet of God and the civil magistracy of the world, Noah still had the care of his family.

Yet, the Holy Spirit passes by all the frustrations of earth he endured and feats of faith he accomplished, and focuses our attention upon the only blemish recorded concerning his life of 950 years! There must be some special reason for this. Don't you think?

The Scriptures declare that "*Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*" (Gen. 6:8). The Lord God reduced the world to one family. In the flood, the Lord God destroyed the whole human race, except for Noah, his sons, and their wives. Why? Because "*Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*" God chose Noah, provided an ark of salvation for Noah and his family, put them in the ark and graciously brought Noah and all who were with him in the ark through the judgment.

In Genesis 10:1-11 Moses describes God's covenant with Noah and his sons after the flood. In these verses God

promised his providential care to Noah and his family, as they went about replenishing the earth (v. 1). He put the fear of man in the beasts of the earth (v. 2). The Lord gave man all the vegetation of the earth, beasts of the land, fowls of the air, and fish of the sea for his food and pleasure (vv. 3-4). God required all men, under penalty of death, to take care of one another (vv. 5-6)⁷. Then, in verses 8-17, we read of God's covenant, in which he promised never to destroy the world by water again and the rainbow, the token of his covenant⁸.

In verses 18 and 19, we are told that "*The sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.*" We have two choices. We can either accept the ever changing, wild guesses of evolutionary fools regarding the origins of man and the nations of the world; or we can believe the revelation of God. I believe God.

According to the Book of God, all mankind descended from Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, and before that from Adam and Eve. It is obvious that we have many different groups or races with what seem to be greatly differing features. The most obvious of these is skin color. Many see this as a reason to doubt the Bible's record of

⁷ As it is expanded in the giving of the law and by our Lord Jesus in his sermon on the Mount, this prohibition of murder is much more than just a prohibition of murder. It requires that we love and care for one another, that we protect both the lives of others and the name and well-being of others. As we shall see, it is precisely at this point that Ham's rebellion and sin were manifest. He hated his father and sought to destroy his character.

⁸ This covenant and its token (the rainbow) are used by the Spirit of God as a type and picture of the covenant of grace, according to which our heavenly Father rules the universe for the salvation of his elect (Rev. 4:1-3; Rom. 8:28-30).

history. They believe that the various groups could have arisen only by evolving separately over tens of thousands of years.

That is sheer nonsense. Skin pigmentation, eye and hair colors, and the shapes of men's physical features change within immediate families in one generation. It requires nothing more than looking at any man and his children to see that fact clearly demonstrated. The races of humanity did not evolve from some cosmic ooze, or from the fish of the sea, or from some very crude early species of monkey. We may have different skin color and may be shaped differently, but the entire human race is one race. We are all the sons and daughters of Adam, descended through Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The dispersing of the nations, under the judgment of God, was the work of God's wise and adorable providence, not the luck of evolutionary accidents (Acts 17:26).

In verses 20-29, the Holy Spirit records the sad events of Noah's drunkenness and Ham's sin against his father, the curse of Canaan, his prophecy regarding his sons, and Noah's death.

NOAH'S FALL

In verses 20-21, Moses describes and records for all to read Noah's fall. A sad, sad record this is, but it is written for our learning and admonition. So let us learn its lessons well. May God the Holy Spirit inscribe them upon our hearts. We must make neither more nor less of this than the Spirit of God does. We are told by God what kind of man Noah was. Like Job, grace had made Noah a just and upright man (Gen. 6:9). He was "*just*," – Both justified by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ and just in his dealings with God and men. He was sincere, upright, and honest. The grace of

God which distinguished him from the world had saved him from the corruption of his own heart and the corruptions of the world in which he lived. Noah was a child of God, a man of faith (Heb. 11:7).

Yet, when Moses was inspired of God to write the history of this remarkable man after the flood, he mentions nothing about those 350 years in which he walked with God by faith in Christ, just as his great grandfather, Enoch, had done. Nothing else is mentioned about all those years except this drunken stupor and the events surrounding it.

The intention of our Heavenly Father in permitting these things and the intention of the Holy Spirit in inspiring Moses to record them here is that we might learn from them and profit by them (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11-13). Without question, there are many other lessons which could and should be drawn from this sad event in Noah's life than I shall mention; but it appears to me that there are five very obvious lessons for us to learn from this,

First, learn this: – The Bible is, indeed, the inspired Word of God himself. One glaring evidence of Divine Inspiration is the fact that those men who wrote the Scriptures recorded, without excuse or extenuation, the most horrible failures of the greatest examples of faith and godliness. Unlike the writings of men, the Word of God deals with things honestly, even those things which are most likely to give men occasion to blaspheme and ridicule it. There is no attempt made in the Book of God to hide or excuse Noah's drunkenness, Abraham's actions before Pharaoh, David's crime, Peter's fall, or even the strife between Paul and Barnabas.

Second, these things are written in the Book of God to teach us, by example, that "*Salvation is of the LORD!*" Grace

precedes the need for grace. God chose Noah and made a covenant with him, assuring him of God's goodness before he needed the assurance, in anticipation of the need. Grace saved Noah and preserved him; and when he fell, grace restored the fallen saint, and preserved him still.

Third, the Holy Spirit here shows us that the very best of men are only men at best. "*Man at his best estate is altogether vanity.*" The fact is, though he was saved by the grace of God, Noah was still, just like you and me, a sinner. The human heart is essentially evil (Jer. 17:9).

Fourth, the only righteousness any sinner has or can have before the holy, Lord God, is the righteousness of Christ. It is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by grace that justifies us, and the righteousness of Christ imparted to us in the new birth that sanctifies us.

Fifth, learn this: – No believer in this world is immune from temptation or sin. God graciously keeps his own elect from Satan, but not from sin, -- from death, but not from decline, -- from condemnation, but not from corruption, -- from falling away, but not from falling. Sometimes God let's one of his saints fall for the comfort of others, lest we be overwhelmed with despair when we experience the same thing.

Martin Luther wrote, "The Holy Spirit wanted the godly, who know their weakness and for this reason are disheartened, to take comfort from the offense that comes from the account of the lapses among the most perfect patriarchs. In such instances we should find proof of our own weakness and therefore bow down in humble confession, not only to ask for forgiveness, but also to hope for it."

HAM'S SIN

Next, in verses 22-23, the Spirit of God shows us Ham's sin, the terrible sin of a malicious, God hating rebel against his father, and, more importantly, against the God of heaven, whose authority was represented in his father.

When Noah lay naked in his tent, in his drunkenness, Ham walked in on him. When he saw his father in such a condition, rather than trying to help the old man recover, rather than protecting his father's honor, he went outside and called his brothers, seizing the opportunity to defame his father, his father's God, and the worship of God his father had taught him.

Remember, Ham was not a boy. This was not a childish taunt. Ham was a grown man. He was at least 100 years old. No doubt, Noah had often upbraided and reprovved him. Perhaps he had often reprovved Ham for drunkenness. Ham's sin revealed his heart. The son would not have treated his father with such contempt, if he had not already murdered him in his heart.

God commands children to reverence their parents, giving them the honor due to their position as our parents, because it is right. Ham despised his father. Before the flood, the whole world thought Noah was a fool, condemned him as a heretic, and looked down upon him as a mad, divisive, mean-spirited bigot, because the gospel he preached condemned them. Though he hid it, Ham was, all the while, in complete agreement with them; and now his true heart was manifest. Like Absalom after him, Ham walked in the way of Cain, ran after the error of Balaam, and perished under the gainsaying of Korah (Jude 8, 10, 11). Ham thought himself holy and Noah evil. Therefore, he jumped at the chance to expose Noah as a sinful wretch, despised and judged of God. He gleefully aired his father's nakedness.

This is the conflict which has been going on in this world since the beginning of time and continues today. The seed of the serpent is at enmity with the seed of the woman. As Cain's murder of Abel must be traced to the enmity Satan has for Christ, so Ham's uncovering of his father's nakedness reveals the same enmity. It is this enmity of hell which inflames the rage of the entire world against Christ, his church, and the gospel of the grace of God. It is this enmity which unites the whole religious world of Babylon (intoxicated with the wine of free will, works religion) against Christ and his kingdom.

Ham was an apostate. He professed to be one with Noah. He professed to believe the gospel Noah preached. But it was all a show of hypocrisy. In time, he turned from the way of Noah to the way of Cain. Ham behaved as a reprobate man. He rejoiced in the iniquity of his father and published it (1 Cor. 13:4-6; Gal. 6:1; Pro. 10:12; 12:6; 17:9). Like his father, the devil, he was a liar and a murderer.

As Shem and Japheth refused to look upon and covered their father's nakedness, believers protect the names, reputations, and honor of others (Gen. 9:23). They took a blanket and went into the tent backwards, refusing to look upon Noah's nakedness and folly. By their actions, they said to one another, "This is not our father. We will not look upon his folly, ourselves or expose it to anyone else." That is what love does when object loved falls (Pro. 10:12). Believers are kind, forbearing, and gracious, bearing with one another's infirmities, covering one another's faults, extenuating, excusing, and making as little as possible of one another's failures. As this is true regarding all men, it is particularly true with regard to our brethren, and most particularly with regard to God's servants. – *“Against an elder receive not an accusation, except it be by the mouth of two or three*

witnesses.” Gossiping, slandering men and women, people who rejoice in spreading the faults of others (though they always preface it by saying, “I hate to say it, but...”), simply do not know God.

CANAAN’S CURSE

In verses 24-25, we read about the dreadful curse that fell upon Canaan and all the descendants of Ham because of their father’s sin. These words do not represent the wrath and vengeance of Noah, but the terrible wrath of God. The Lord God was so moved in wrath against this despicable, insolent, contemptuous rebel, that he does not even call him by name, but calls him Canaan, after his son and the multitude of rebels which would spring from his loins.

What was this curse? What did it involve? There is no question that Ham was the father of those people known as Negroid; but it is the height of racial arrogance and displays a terrible ignorance of Scripture to suggest that the color of a man’s skin represents the curse of God (Col. 3:10-11). Ham and his sons were cursed to servitude, bondage, and slavery; and it is true that in modern times the sons of Ham were enslaved by other people. Some have even pointed to this text as a biblical justification for the barbaric practice of slavery. However, if we read the Bible and/or history books, we see that cursed Ham took possession of the largest part of the earth and established the most extensive and powerful kingdoms in the world. Compare this with the history of blessed Shem and Japheth, it appears to the eye of carnal reason that they were cursed and Ham was blessed.

The curse of God upon Canaan (Ham and his descendants) must have been something other than what men look upon and consider a curse. The fact is, this prophecy, like all others, is beyond the mere scope of reason.

It can be understood only by the revelation of God given in Holy Scripture and embraced by faith.

The life of the believer is a life of faith and hope. Physical health, material prosperity, and domestic tranquillity is no more an indication of blessedness, than adversity is an indication of wretchedness. In fact, just the opposite is true, as the book of Job demonstrates. Ham was cursed. Yet, he alone became a master. Nimrod, who was his grandson by Cush, became the father of Babylon. Mizraim, another of Ham's children, became the father of Egypt (Gen. 10:6; Ps. 78:51). Shem and Japheth were blessed. Yet, they appear to have been cursed. The specific curse of God upon Ham and his sons was slavery. Yet, it was Ham and his descendants who held Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in slavery in Canaan and in Egypt. What, then, was God's curse upon Ham? Do we have any indication in Holy Scripture what it was? We do indeed.

You will recall that when the Lord God cursed Cain, he put a mark upon him. Cain complained that his punishment was greater than he could bear and wanted to die; but God made him a permanent fugitive and vagabond in the earth. Yet, again, we see Cain's sons possessing great wealth and power (Gen. 4:10-18). The mark God put on Cain, like the curse placed upon Ham, was a spiritual mark and a spiritual curse. I do not know whether Cain was marked by some terrible, grotesque disease or deformity; but I really doubt it. The mark of Cain and the curse of Canaan were the same. God's mark upon Cain was the mark of the beast, the mark of the world, the mark of doomed, damned men, clinging to the religion of the world, despising God, his Son, and the gospel of his grace. The same is the curse God put upon Ham and his spiritual sons.

The only people in this world who are not engulfed in the religion of this world, the only ones who do not wear the mark of the beast are God's elect, whose names are in the book of life and who have been sealed by the Spirit of God⁹ (2 Thess. 2:11-12; Rev. 13:8, 17-18; 14:11; 16:2; 17:8; 19:20).

Learn this, and learn it well. -- God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His ways are higher than our ways. God's elect are blessed with a kingdom, but it is a kingdom of grace, not of the world. We possess great blessedness, but it is the blessedness of forgiven sin, a reconciled God, and everlasting glory. Upon these things we must set our hearts, leaving the cursed followers of Cain and Ham to possess and perish with the world (Col. 3:1-3; Matt. 6:19-21, 33)..

Learn this, too. – The Lord God does visit the iniquities of the fathers upon their children, generation after generation. God considers it no more a dishonor to his character to declare this than he did to declare that he has mercy on whom he will have mercy (Ex. 33:19; 34:6-7). It should, however, be understood that while the sin of a father makes him responsible for the ruin of his family, a man's own sin alone is the cause of his punishment (Ezek. 18:20; Deut. 24:16). In the day of judgment we will, each one, give account of himself to God.

NOAH'S PROPHECY

In verses 25-27 we read concerning his other two sons as well, Shem and Japheth. What a remarkable prophecy this is. It is a prophecy which was never fully understood or explained by any other man, until the apostle

⁹ The curse, in so far as it relates to spiritual things, is not upon the physical descendants of Cain and Ham, but upon those who walk in the way of Cain and Ham, in the way of self-righteous, free will, works religion. – In other words, all idolaters are the descendants of Cain and Ham.

Paul, writing by the same Spirit of inspiration, explained its meaning in Romans 9-11. Noah understood that his sons would inhabit the earth until the end of time. He prophesied that Christ (the God of Shem – the Seed of woman) would come into the earth through Shem's seed. He also prophesied that God would bring about the fulness of Israel by gathering his elect from the Gentile world (Japheth) into the tents of Shem (the Jews). Noah also prophesied that Ham, that dominant but reprobate son, would ultimately become the servant of both Shem and Japheth.

Noah praised the God of Shem for his electing love. – *“Blessed be the LORD God of Shem.”* The blessings Shem enjoys are not the result of his goodness, but of God's. Therefore it is the God of Shem who is blessed. Then the old patriarch spoke of the union of Jew and Gentile in Christ. *“God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.”* This dwelling of Japheth in the tents of Shem is not the result of war, but the blessed unity and union of believing hearts in Christ (Eph. 2:13-22).

Noah also assured his favored sons that their oppressing, persecuting, slandering brother, with all his apparent power, would only and always be their servant, performing only that which will ultimately benefit them. What a promise this is! Ham built Egypt, and Egypt possessed Israel; but there redemption was portrayed in the overthrow of Pharaoh. Ham built Canaan, and Canaan became the land of Israel's inheritance by the blessing of God. Ham built Babylon, and Babylon possessed Israel. Yet, there redemption was portrayed in Cyrus. It was the sons of Ham (the Pharisees and the Romans) who crucified the Lord of glory; but thereby the Son of God redeemed his people (Acts 2:23). To this day, the sons of Ham despise, persecute, and slander Shem and Japheth (God's elect); but they only serve the interests of our souls (Rom. 11:33-36).

NOAH'S END

In verses 28-29, the Holy Spirit records Noah's end, that we might also learn from that as well. Noah lived 950 years, 20 years longer than Adam and only 19 years less than Methuselah. He lived, for at least 370 of those years, as a preacher of righteousness. Yet, he died at last. Here is a man who saw great things. Happy are those who are blessed of God to see the same. Noah saw the world before the flood, deserving the wrath and judgment of God. He saw the justice and mercy of God in bringing him through the flood. This man saw the world after the flood and the splendor of God's good providence in all things. This same man, Noah, now lives in the world above and sees all things clearly, in the light of the glory of God our Savior.

Do you see him, seated yonder, with the blood washed band around the throne of God and of the Lamb? I think I can hear the old patriarch singing, as he cast his crown at the Savior's feet and worships him that liveth for ever and ever. -- *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created... Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth... Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."*

Chapter 15

Babel – The Religion of the Cursed

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top [may reach] unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people [is] one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”

Genesis 11:1-9

In this age of superstition and spiritual ignorance, it is fairly easy to convince educated fools that when we die we float around in the air looking for a new body to inhabit and come back in some animal form, or as another person. It is not difficult to persuade well read, well educated people that there are highly intelligent little green men from Mars or Pluto flying in and out of the earth's atmosphere in UFOs looking for friendly faces with whom to communicate.

Yet, it is next to impossible to persuade men of the most self-evident, undeniable facts revealed in Scripture. Among the many things which men choose not to believe because they wish not to believe is the fact that Satan is real, that his influence is real, and that his most cunning, powerful, deceptive influence has always been religious deception. This is a fact men and women ignore to the peril of their souls and to the peril of the souls under their influence.

OUR ADVERSARY

Satan is today what he has been throughout the history of this world, our adversary. He is the avowed enemy of God, the enemy of Christ, the enemy of the gospel, and the enemy of our souls. In his pride, the fiend of hell longs for the place of God. He longs to sit upon the throne of total sovereignty. Because God has from eternity given that place to his Son and to chosen sinners in his Son (Heb. 2:6-9), Apollyon has been bent upon the destruction of Christ and his people from the beginning. The red dragon of hell is determined to destroy Christ and the woman of his choice, his bride, the church (Gen. 3:15).

No other explanation can be given for the serpent's attack upon Adam and Eve in the garden, except the serpent's hatred of God and his people. Satan's rage was displayed in Cain's murder of his brother, Abel. Cain murdered his brother for only one reason. Abel confessed that the only way a sinner could approach God is by the blood and righteousness of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Abel was the first disciple of Christ persecuted and murdered for righteousness' (the righteousness of Christ) sake (Matt. 5:11-12). It was Satan's hellish influence that swelled Ham's heart with pride and hypocrisy, causing him to despise his father Noah and gleefully expose his father's sin.

Satan's master plan by which he seeks to dominate the world, by which he strives to destroy the souls of men, by which he toils night and day to do what he knows he cannot do (topple the throne of the Almighty and destroy the people of his love), is deception, hellish religious deception.

Satan is the master of deception. The prince of darkness is the great imitator. It is not now and never has been his aim to destroy the souls of men by drugs, alcohol, pornography, adultery, fornication, abortion and murder. By these things men and women destroy their lives and the lives of others. However, as horrible as such vices are, Satan's devices are far more crafty. He seeks to destroy the souls of men by religion and righteousness.

He cannot destroy the Christ of God. So he raises up false christs, antichrists. He cannot keep sinners from Christ by making them ever so wicked. So he transforms himself into an angel of light and sends preachers from hell to teach sinners how to make themselves righteous (2 Cor. 11:13-15). He cannot destroy the church and kingdom of God, the woman of Christ's choice, his virgin bride (made holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable by his grace and righteousness). So the destroyer has, from the beginning, raised up and maintained a religion to rival the worship of God, a woman to rival and seek to destroy the church of God.

BABYLON, THE GREAT HARLOT

This rival religion, this rival woman, by whom the prince of darkness rules over the minds of men and women throughout the world is referred to throughout the Scriptures as Babylon, the great whore, the mother of all harlot religion (Pro. 7:1-27; Rev. 16-18). The wine of this old, old whore's fornication, by which she keeps the heads and hearts of men

in the spin of a drunken stupor is self-righteous, freewill, works religion. We are warned and commanded of God to come out of and have nothing to do with the blasphemous, soul-damning charms of Arminian, freewill, works religion (Pro. 6:23-26; Isa. 48:20; 57:11; Jer. 50:8; 51:6, 45; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Rev. 18:4).

The religion of Babylon, Arminian, freewill, works religion, is the religion of the damned. The religion of this world began as an organized religious system way back in Genesis 10 and 11, during the days of Nimrod and the building of the tower of Babel.

NIMROD, THE MIGHTY REBEL

The story of Nimrod and the great tower of Babel was very prominent in medieval folklore. Regretfully, most of what people think about Nimrod, Babel, and the great tower of Babel arise, not from the account given by divine inspiration, but from medieval folklore. The myths and legends of dark ages still linger. We are told by many, based only on these myths and legends, that the walls of Babel were nine miles high.

Men and women commonly pass over the account given in Scripture with little notice and learn nothing from it, simply because they mistakenly picture a huge tower reaching upward toward heaven, so high that men hoped to walk into heaven by climbing a brick tower. How easily Satan blinds us to the warnings and teachings of Holy Scripture. The city of Babel (Babylon) was built by cursed Ham's grandson, Nimrod, in rebellion against God, as a fortress to protect unbelieving rebels from the wrath and judgment of God. The religion of Babel is the religion of the cursed, the damned, the reprobate.

The man who built this city was Nimrod, a mighty rebel against God (Gen. 10:8-10). The name “Nimrod” means rebel, and a rebel this man was. He was the cursed son of a cursed son. Nimrod knew the curse of God upon Ham and Canaan. He knew the reason for the curse. He knew what Ham had done to Noah. Yet, being the proud rebel he was, Nimrod dared sit himself up as the judge of God’s judgment. He was a hunter, but not just a hunter of game. This man was a bloodthirsty man. He wanted all men to be put in subjection to him; and he was determined to make it happen, no matter who he had to kill or how many. God said, “The sons of Ham will serve Japheth and Shem.” Nimrod said, “We’ll see about that.” He “*began to be a mighty one in the earth,*” and took possession of the land of Shinar and all the peoples of the East.

When we read in verse 9 that “*he was a mighty hunter before the Lord,*” the word “*before*” would be better translated “*against.*” The beginning of this God hating rebel’s empire was Babel. It had been at least 300 years since the flood. The terror of God’s judgment was forgotten. The people were of one language, doing great, impressive things. Nimrod made himself powerful. The words and counsel of Eber were ignored. The gospel he learned from his grandfather Noah through his godly father Shem, was held in contempt. The worship of God was trampled under foot. The sheer power of Nimrod’s wealth, influence, following, and terror caused the whole world, except for God’s chosen remnant to follow him and unite with him, in the name of God, fighting against God and his people.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

The city of Babel, which Nimrod built, was more than a place of government. Babel was a religious refuge. Today, we associate the word “Babel” with confusion. That is what the

name has come to mean because God turned the place into confusion. However, the word “Babel” originally meant something far different. Nimrod named the city Babel because Babel meant “the gate of God.” Nimrod was, in the name of worshipping God, like Cain of old, determined to worship God only on his own terms (Gen. 11:1-4). In other words, he was in reality worshipping himself and calling it the worship of God. This is what the Holy Spirit calls “*will worship*” in Colossians 2:23. Babel was a refuge of lies, but a refuge in which men tried to secure themselves from the wrath of God and convinced themselves that they had done so.

Babel, like all false religion, was built by a confederacy of rebels. -- “*They said one to another...*” Honest, faithful, believing men do not try to gain the approval or amass the strength of others in worshipping God. They just worship God, obeying his will and his word. Rebels need the reinforcement of other rebels. They never dare to stand alone with God and for the glory of God against the flood of human opinion.

Babel, like all false religion, was a religious refuge built according to man’s wisdom. The followers of Nimrod discovered a new way of doing things. They made bricks and mixed mortar (the bricks of their self-righteous works, held together by the serpent-slime of their free will) to build a church house and a city with man-made material, for the honor of man, and called it the gate of God. It was the most splendid city and the most gorgeous temple the world had ever seen; but God held it in utter contempt; and so did those men and women who worshipped him.

Like all false religion, the city and tower of Babel were built by men, for men, to protect them from the judgment of God. That is the meaning of verse 4. “*Go to, **LET US BUILD US A CITY AND A TOWER, whose TOP MAY REACH UNTO***”

HEAVEN – LEST WE BE SCATTERED ABROAD *upon the face of the whole earth.”*

Obviously, the sons of Ham understood that the curse God placed upon them meant the dispersion of their race through all the earth, the destruction of their family. They said, “No sir. We will stay right here and protect ourselves from God’s judgment, by building a house and religion which God himself will have to approve of, by which the whole world will know our names forever.” When the Scriptures speak of this tower reaching to heaven no more is implied than a very high, massive wall (Deut. 1:28; 9:1), a fortress.

It matters not what a person’s refuge is, if it is not Christ and him crucified, it is a refuge of lies and will be swept away in the day of God’s wrath (Isa. 28:14-21).

The religion of Babel was exactly the same as the religion of this perverse generation, the religion of the curse. False religion has always been God’s curse upon men and women who refuse to worship him. All false religion is man centered, flesh pleasing, freewill, works religion, religion by which man attempts to make himself acceptable to God (2 Thess. 2:11-12). This was the mark of Cain. This is the mark of the beast. This is the religion of our age.

In ancient Babylon, in the days of Nimrod, in defiance to the God of Noah, men said, "*Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name.*" That is the creed of all false religion. The religion of Babylon is any religion which centers in man, depends upon man, and gives man a name of honor. It matters not what name the religion wears, any religion that makes salvation dependent upon something man does, rather than what Christ has done, is the religion of Babylon. Any religion that makes salvation to be determined by the will of man, rather than the

will of God, is the religion of Babylon. Let me be unmistakably clear.

ELECTION

No one can deny that the Bible teaches the doctrine of election; but most say that election is determined by God responding to what he "foresaw" man would do. Others say, "God chose to save whosoever will, and if a man wills to be saved he makes himself one of the elect." In either case, election is dependent on the will of man. That is Babylonian doctrine. The Word of God declares that election is by God's sovereign will alone (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9).

REDEMPTION

All religions, which claim to be Christian, profess to believe in redemption by the blood of Christ. Most declare that the blood of Christ was shed to redeem those who perish as well as those who are saved. Such doctrine means that Christ shed his blood in vain for those who perish in hell. Such doctrine declares that it is man who makes the blood of Christ effectual for redemption by the power of his free-will. That is Babylonian heresy. The Word of God declares that Christ has effectually accomplished the redemption of his people (Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:12).

REGENERATION

Regeneration, the new birth, is declared to be the result of man's choice only by those whose religion is Babylonian. The Word of God plainly declares that man's will has nothing to do with the accomplishment of the new birth. It is the work of God's will and power alone (John 1:12-13; Rom. 9:16).

THE CAUSE OF JUDGMENT

The cause of divine judgment was then as it is now and ever shall be, – the willful rejection of divine revelation (Gen. 11:5-9) The words at the end of verse 6, (*“now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do”*), are not a suggestion that God was fearful these men might actually get to heaven by their inventions. These words are a declaration of the basis of divine judgment. Nimrod and the sons of Ham would not, by any means, be turned away from their delusion.

Look what happened when the Lord God came down to Babel, to visit them with his wrath and vex them with his sore displeasure. He confounded their language so that they could not understand one another. He sealed them up in confusion and reprobation. God fixed it so that those who would not believe could not believe (Pro. 1:23-33). The sons of Ham could no longer understand the speech of Shem’s sons. The sons of God speak a language the world cannot understand. The Lord God scattered the rebels. He scattered them from place to place over the earth. He scattered them in enmity against one another. He scattered them through all the earth, so that they might serve his purpose of grace toward his elect in all places.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Nothing and no one shall ever overturn God’s purpose, destroy his church, or even slightly hinder his purpose. As Satan and the demons of hell are God’s unwilling and unwitting vassals, so too, the sons of Ham can do nothing but serve God’s elect, exactly according to God’s purpose (Gen. 9:25).

The confusion of divine judgment is forever ended in Christ, only in Christ. The Lord God sent confusion in his wrath, to foil the schemes of hell. But when God pours upon us the Spirit of grace and supplication and turns our hearts to Christ, as he did on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the confusion is over (Col. 3:10-11). All who would know, worship, and be saved by God, must come out of Babel, the religion of the cursed, and flee to Christ (2 Cor. 6:12-7:1; Rev. 18:1-4).

Chapter 16

ABRAHAM

*"And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said,
Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there
builded he an altar unto the LORD, who
appeared unto him."*

Genesis 11:27 -- 13:4

Throughout the Word of God Abraham is held before us as an example of faith. The Lord God called Abraham, "My friend" (Isa. 41:8). He was "the friend of God" (James 2:23). When Paul wanted an illustration of the believer's faith and justification, he selected Abraham as the example (Rom. 4). When he wrote to the Galatians, who were Gentiles by nature, he declared that all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are "the children of Abraham" (v.7), and that we are "blessed with faithful Abraham" (v.9). If there is any man in the Bible who should be of interest to believers, that man is Abraham.

"Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; (8) And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous" (Neh. 9: 6-9)

Consider what those Levites said about Abraham, as they sought to worship the God of Abraham. Thou "didst choose Abraham." Abraham belonged to God by God's choice

in electing love and grace. *“And broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees.”* He was brought to believe God by God’s call, by effectual, irresistible grace. *“And gavest him the name Abraham.”* Abram, the pagan, was converted to Abraham, the believer, by a work of God’s mercy. *“And foundest his heart faithful.”* God’s grace in him made Abraham faithful unto death. He persevered in faith because he was preserved by grace. *“And madest a covenant with him.”* God blessed Abraham with the blessings of his covenant, a covenant which was typical of and a foreshadowing of the covenant of grace made with all God’s elect in Christ before the world began (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:1-13). Though this covenant was not fully revealed until the coming of Christ and the outpouring of his Spirit upon the Gentiles (Gal. 3:13-29), it was made before the world began. The covenant of grace is that everlasting covenant, according to which all who are in Christ are blessed with all spiritual blessings from eternity (Eph. 1:3-7).

Abraham stands before us as an example of faith. And Abraham stands before us as a picture of grace. Like us, Abraham was what he was by the grace of God. All that Abraham was, and all that he experienced throughout the days of his life show us the grace of God. Here are seven things revealed about Abraham in Genesis 11:27 – 13:4, which are true of all saved men and women. If we are believers, Abraham is our father; and if Abraham is our father, we will both do the works of Abraham and enjoy the privileges of Abraham.

ABRAHAM WAS A CHOSEN MAN (Gen. 11:27-12:1).

Terah was one man among many. He had many sons and daughters. There were a great many people living in Ur. But God chose Abraham. The Lord appeared to Abraham. He called Abraham. This was an act of free and sovereign grace. God’s choice of Abraham was the cause of Abraham’s faith.

The Lord God is found of them that seek him not. God's election separated Abraham from other men (1 Cor. 4:7). Electing love preserved Abraham until he was called (Jude 1). Electing grace retrieved Abraham from the idolatry of his fathers (1 Thess. 2:10-14). Let every saved sinner unceasingly give thanks to God for electing love (John 15:16). Because he was a chosen man...

ABRAHAM WAS A CALLED MAN (Gen. 12:1-4; Gal. 3:8).

The whole world around him was lying in wickedness. By this time in history idolatry had engulfed the world. The religion of Nimrod and Babel had become the religion of the world. There were few exceptions (Job and his friends, Melchizedek). Polytheism was rampant. *"They served other gods"* (Josh. 24:2). The worship of "saints" was common (Job 5:1). Astrology was a part of everyday life. In short, the days of Abraham were much like the days in which we now live. Apparently, Abraham and his family, along with the rest of the world, were idolaters before the Lord appeared to him.

Then, suddenly, unexpectedly, the Lord God appeared to Abraham and called him. As the Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, so the Lord took Abraham by surprise. The Lord God himself appeared to Abraham and preached the gospel to him, saying, *"In thee shall all nations blessed."* Paul's inspired explanation of Abraham's call (Gal. 3) gives us the meaning of the word "blessed," as it is used with reference to Abraham. The blessedness which God gave to Abraham, the blessedness to which he was called, was justification. Justification, free justification in Christ, without works, is the blessing of the gospel. With it comes all other blessings. Without it there is no blessedness.

When the God of glory appeared to Abraham, his life was radically changed forever. He was converted by a

particular, distinguishing call. It was an irresistible, effectual call of almighty grace. The call by which God fetched Abraham (by which he fetches every object of his grace) to himself was an unconditional, irrevocable call. He said, “I”, who alone can bless, “*will bless thee!*” No wonder the psalmist sang, “*Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee*” (Psa. 65:4). Being called of God,

ABRAHAM WAS A BELIEVING MAN (Gen. 15:6).

When God called him, Abraham obeyed, because he believed God (Heb. 11:8). He might have raised many questions. He might have said, “How can these things be? How can I, a guilty sinner, be freely forgiven and justified? How can I know that the Word I have heard is indeed the Word of God?” But he did not. He simply believed God. As he walked with God, he learned more of the details of God’s promise. But in the beginning, he simply believed what God had spoken (Gen. 22:17-18). Later, God gave him a sign (Gen. 18). But in the beginning he had nothing but the bare Word of God. And he believed God. Can you do that? Will you believe God? Will you take God at his Word? If you do, your faith in Christ will be counted to you for righteousness (Rom. 4:21-25). Believing God,

ABRAHAM WAS A BLESSED MAN (Gen. 12:2-3).

He was justified. He stood before God accepted in Christ, with the righteousness of Christ (the Object of his faith) imputed to him. God gave him a Son in whom all the nations of the world are blessed. That Son, who was only typified in Isaac, is Christ. Because of God’s grace upon him, Abraham was a blessing to all his house. God dealt with all men as they dealt with Abraham, the object of his mercy, grace, and love. All who believe are, like Abraham, blessed of God with all

spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). We are, in Christ, eternally, unconditionally, perpetually, universally blessed of God!

ABRAHAM WAS A TRIED MAN.

As a believer, Abraham began his pilgrimage through this world, as all believers must. His faith was constantly tried and proved by many difficulties, as all true faith is. Sarah, his wife, was still barren. He had no idea where he was going (Heb. 11:8-9). Moses tells us God had called him to the land of Canaan. But Abraham did not know it. He did not know where he was going, how he would get there, or what his place would be when he got there. Yet, Abraham never once asked God to show him these things. He simply committed everything to God. This was no small trial; but greater trials followed.

He had to break many earthly ties. He not only had to leave family and friends, he had to leave them in idolatry. When he got into the land of Canaan, new trials awaited him. Canaanites were everywhere, troops of idolaters. Abraham roamed about as a nomad, dwelling in tents. Still, he believed God (12:7). At last his daily bread began to fail him and he had to go down to Egypt (12:10). Then there was trouble with Lot (Gen. 13:5-18). Later, he was required by his God to give up Hagar and his son, Ishmael, whom he dearly loved. Then, we are told, "*God did tempt (tried) Abraham*" (Gen. 22:1-19). It is written, "*Many are the afflictions of the righteous.*" Trials always accompany faith (1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; Rom. 8:7).

ABRAHAM WAS A SINFUL MAN (Gen. 12:10-13).

Without question, his temptation was a severe one. Yet, his actions betrayed a lack of confidence in God. In the face of great fear, this man of great faith displayed great

unbelief, and was willing to sacrifice his wife's honor to save his own skin! His schemes gained him nothing, only shame.

Why is this great flaw in the life of this great man set before us, by God the Holy Spirit, without the slightest excuse? It is set before us to teach us and remind us that salvation is, in its totality, the work of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ. Let us ever remember that the best of men are only men at best. True saints, all of them, are plagued with much sin as long as they live in this body of sin. There are no exceptions. It is not our faith that merits our justification, but Christ, the Object of our faith. Yet, though he was, like us, weak and sinful,

ABRAHAM WAS A KEPT MAN (Gen. 12:14 – 13:4).

The Lord God would not deal with Abraham according to his sins. Instead, he interferences to deliver him. He not only kept Sarah from Pharaoh and Abraham from death, but also turned Abraham's evil into good (Psa. 76:10). The fear of God came upon Pharaoh. Pharaoh and his house saw how blessed that man is who is blessed of God. Abraham came up out of Egypt a richer man. God is faithful. He will not lose his own. He will be gracious.

Chapter 17

The God of Glory Appeared to Abraham

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Genesis 11:27-13:4

Of all the men mentioned in Bible history, other than our LORD himself, none is set before us as a more prominent example of faith than Abraham. Abraham is uniquely described as the friend of God, the father of them that believe, and that man through whom all the nations of the earth are blessed. These things make Abraham a man whose life and experiences in the grace of God are worthy of careful study.

In fact, the Book of Genesis, from chapter 11 and verse 27 through the rest of the Book, is taken up almost exclusively with Abraham and his seed. However, when we study the lives and experiences of men like Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, men of exemplary faith and faithfulness, we must not look upon them as extraordinary men, but as men who were saved by the grace of the extraordinary God of glory. Abraham's greatness must be traced back to and attributed to the greatness of God and his grace. Abraham would say, concerning himself what Paul said concerning himself. – *"By the grace of God I am what I am."* Indeed, that is the delightful confession of all who know God. Every believer delights to turn attention away from himself to the LORD God alone. It is the joy of every believing heart to sing, *"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."* We recognize that the life we live in this

body of flesh, we live by the grace of God. The life of faith is not a life of amazing will power, fortitude, and self-control. Far from it. The life of faith is a life of amazing grace (Eph. 2:8-9).

THE GIFT AND OPERATION OF GOD

Faith in Christ is the gift and operation of God in us. Faith begins with God, not with man. Faith is not the result of man's will, decision, or choice. Left to ourselves, none of us would or could believe God. If we believe, it is because it is "*God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" We believe "*according to the working of his mighty power.*" We believe by "*the operation of God,*" because God has given us faith to believe. This is exemplified in the experience of Abraham.

Genesis 12:1 *"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."*

Notice that Moses says, "*the LORD had said unto Abraham.*" We are not told exactly when the LORD first spoke to the man Abram (Abraham) until we hear Stephen's sermon in Acts 7. There we read "*The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran*" (Acts 7:2). Those words, "*the God of Glory,*" are used only twice in the entire Bible, in Acts 7:2 and Psalm 29:3. They refer, of course, to our LORD Jesus Christ, "*the King of Glory.*" It was Christ himself who came to and made himself known to Abram. What does this teach us?

First, God gives faith to whom he will. Abram was in Ur, dwelling among the Chaldeans, living in the midst of an idolatrous people, when God almighty stepped into his life. Why did the God of Glory appear to this particular man? The only answer that can be given is this: "*It pleased the LORD.*"

God loved Abram. God chose Abram. God was pleased to be gracious to Abram. Abram was one of that great multitude whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the world began, one of those for whom the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. Every sinner to whom God gives faith is, like Abram, a monument to the sovereign will, purpose, and grace of God (Rom. 9:16).

Second, faith is wrought in the hearts of chosen, redeemed sinners by the revelation of Christ (Gal. 1:15). No one can or will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ until Christ is revealed to him and in him. That which is essential to faith is the knowledge of God in Christ (John 17:3). You cannot believe until Christ, the God of Glory appears to you (2 Cor. 4:6).

Four hundred years had passed since the flood. The world was steeped in idolatry, much as it is today. Yet, even in that wicked, perverse, idolatrous generation, God sent someone to Abram who told him the story of grace, redemption, and salvation. When the word was preached, "*the God of Glory appeared to Abraham*," and Abraham believed God. That is always how faith comes to chosen sinners (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 10:13-17).

Third, faith in Christ is the result of the effectual call of God the Holy Spirit in irresistible grace. God "*called Abraham alone, and blessed him and increased him*" (Isa. 51:2). That fact is revealed by God as an encouragement and reason to "*look unto the rock whence we are hewn and to the hole of the pit whence whence we are digged.*" Abraham's call is relevant to us because the grace of God given to him, the call by which he was brought to life and faith in Christ, is the same grace and call by which God saves his elect in all ages.

Genesis 12:2-3 *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”*

There are many things about God's call of Abram which must not be overlooked.

1. It was a *gracious, personal, distinguishing call*. God called Abram simply because he was pleased to do so. There was nothing in him which made him the object of God's grace. By this call, the Lord God distinguished Abram from all those dwelling in Ur of the Chaldees, who were left to themselves. The Lord God called Abram personally, and called Abram alone. As it is written, *“The good Shepherd calleth his own sheep by name.”*
2. It was a *separating call*. The Lord God called Abram to forsake his family and friends and their gods. If we would follow Christ, we must, like him, turn from all the idolatrous gods of darkness and death to the one true and living God (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Rev. 18:4). All who are called of God are called to abandon self, to yield up the rule of their lives to Christ the Lord, denying father, mother, brother, sister, and their own lives, for the gospel's sake (Luke 14:25-33).
3. It was a *call to blessedness*. The Lord God made promises of true blessedness to Abram. These are not promises conditioned upon Abram's obedience, but sure and certain promises. Abram must obey God's call; but his obedience as well as the blessings following it were secured by God's purpose of grace.

The Lord promised to make of him a great nation, which he did both in the physical nation of Israel and in that "*holy nation*" which is "*the Israel of God*". In blessing him, God promised to make Abram's name great. Blessed indeed is that one whose name is great before God, whose name is written in heaven!

God promised to make Abram a blessing. Wonderful grace! God takes sinners who are corrupt and corrupting, and makes them a blessing. Those who by nature defile everything and everyone they touch, when called of God and born of his Spirit, become a blessing everywhere they go, to all around them. Indeed, God deals with men and nations, (providentially, in mercy or in judgment), as they deal with his people. He says, "*I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.*"

Then, the Lord God promised Abram that he would be that man through whom Christ, the promised Seed of woman (Gen. 3:15) would come, by whom redemption, salvation and grace would come to God's elect in all nations (Gal. 3:13-14). The word of promise was, "*in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*"

4. The call of God is an irresistible, effectual call. -- "*So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran*" (v. 4; Ps. 65:4; 110:3). When God the Holy Spirit comes calling, chosen, redeemed sinners obey his voice.

OBEDIENT FAITH

Genesis 12:4-5 -- "*So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.*"

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

Faith in Christ is obedient. Faith obeys God. It is not perfectly obedient; but it is obedient. God has ordained that those who are saved by his grace walk before him in obedience (Eph. 2:10). And what God has ordained God always accomplishes. It appears that Abram's obedience was reluctant. The LORD had plainly told him to leave his kindred and his father's house and go into the land of Canaan; but Abraham and Terah left Ur together and they dwelt in the land of Haran, until Terah died (Gen. 11:31-32).

After God took his father Terah, we read, "*So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him.*" Disobedience is always costly. If we are his, the LORD God will see that we obey him. If necessary, he will take away anything and anyone hindering us, as he took Terah from Abram. Once Terah was dead, Abram went on to Canaan, as the LORD commanded him. God has his ways of making his children willingly obedient to him; and where he gives faith he also gives obedience by the sweet discipline of his grace (Ex. 4:24-27).

WORSHIPPING FAITH

Genesis 12:6-9 "And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and

called upon the name of the LORD. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south."

Faith, true faith, worships God. If we believe God, we will worship him as he is, as he makes himself known to us in his Son, in his Word, and in his works. If we believe God, we will worship him at the altar he requires and in the way he prescribes. Christ is our altar of worship (Heb. 13:10). The altar at which Abraham worshipped God typified him. God requires that we worship him on either an altar of earth, or an altar of unhewn stones, without steps (Ex. 20:24-26). We must worship the Lord God on the Altar of his making, without any contribution from us, without any ascending steps. Christ alone is that Altar. We must come to God trusting Christ alone, contributing nothing. If we make any contribution, we pollute the altar (Gal. 5:2, 4). We cannot come to God by ascending degrees of works based sanctification, but by faith in Christ alone.

If we worship God, we will worship him in his house. "Bethel" means the house of God. There Abraham worshipped, and there God's people still worship. God reveals himself in Bethel, in his house. Bethel is all the more precious, the house of God is all the more precious, because as long as we are in this world the Canaanites surround us.

IMPERFECT FAITH

In verses 10-20, the Holy Spirit shows us that faith in Christ, even the most exemplary faith, is never perfect faith. Faith must be tried. By the trial of our faith, God proves both the reality of it and the weakness of it. So the LORD sent a famine in the land of Canaan.

Abram's faith, like ours, was weak. God plainly told him to go to Canaan and promised to bless him there. But when

famine came, Abraham went down to Egypt. In his unbelief and disobedience, he feared for his life and told Sarah to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister instead of his wife. In weakness, fear, and disobedience, Abraham temporarily forsook God for Egypt. But God abides faithful. He would not forsake the object of his grace (2 Tim. 2:13; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:5).

How gracious God is! When we would bring ourselves to shame and misery, when we would, if left to our own devices, destroy ourselves and all around us, the Lord our God graciously protects his own. He will not suffer his faithfulness to fail. It is written, "*The gifts and callings of God are without repentance.*" Abraham was foolish; but God is wise. Abraham was unbelieving; but God abides faithful. When Abraham chose a path of destruction, God plagued the house of Pharaoh, kept the pagan king of Egypt from the lusts of his own heart, and caused that pagan king to become the protector of his erring child (Gen. 12:20).

PERSEVERING FAITH

Genesis 13:1-4 *"And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD."*

With all our faults, failures, failings, trials, falls, and sins, faith will never die. True faith will persevere. Faith does not persevere because we are faithful, but because God is faithful. Faith does not persevere because we are strong, but because our God is strong. Faith does not persevere because

of our hold on the Lord, but because of the Lord's hold upon us. This is what we see in these four verses.

God brought Abraham out of Egypt (v. 1). Not only did he force Abraham to leave Egypt (Gen. 12:19), but he graciously enriched him, using even his unbelief, weakness, and disobedience to do so (v. 2). Abraham came out of Egypt a better man. The word "*rich*" means much more than wealthy. It means "honorable." Abraham was made a better man by his failure, because God works all things together for the good of his elect, even our failures (Ps. 76:10; Rom. 8:28).

Abraham pitched his tent between Bethel (the house of God) and Hai (a heap of ruins), and worshipped God "*at the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.*" I can almost hear the old patriarch, say, as he kneels to worship by the heap of ruins at Bethel, "*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD...What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.... I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people....O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.*" Let us, like Abraham, return to the place of the altar, to Christ our Savior, and abide there, as sinners saved by the grace of God alone, through the merits of his blood and righteousness. "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the LORD, so walk ye in him*" (Col. 2:6).

Chapter 18

The Strife Between Abraham and Lot

“There was a strife between the herdmen of Abram’s cattle and the herdmen of Lot’s cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.”

Genesis 13:1-18

Genesis 13 records one of the saddest, most troubling, most distressing, most shameful experiences in the lives of God’s people in this world. This chapter describes strife between Abraham and Lot, a strife which led to separation, and a separation which led to even greater sorrow. This was a strife between members of the same family. Abraham was Lot’s Uncle. It was a strife between brethren, strife between two men who had enjoyed the closest possible spiritual communion and fellowship. Abraham was Lot’s spiritual father. He was the instrument by whom Lot had learned the gospel. And it was strife in the church of God. The whole church of God in the world at this time was the family of Abraham. And Lot was a member of that blessed family.

Domestic trials, family quarrels, and strife in the house of God are not easy to bear. We would all prefer to pass through this world without trouble. If we must have trouble, we would prefer to have it anywhere than at home. Jacob would have preferred not to endure the trial he had with the loss of Joseph. David would have preferred to avoid the trials he had to endure from Michael, Amnon, and Absalom. And Abraham would have much preferred to live out his days with Lot’s constant companionship; but it must not be. God’s people all *“must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”* Much of that tribulation will come from our own homes.

Why is this? Why do believers have to endure domestic trials, particularly strifes, and quarrels, and divisions in our homes and in our churches? Three reasons are obvious. *First*, our faith must be tried in all directions. Just as silver and gold must be tried by the fire, not to destroy it, but to separate the precious metal from the dross, just as the diamond must be cut to shape it into a valuable gem, our trials are intended by our God to purify our hearts and mold us into the image of his dear Son. *Second*, our trials are designed to make us long for heaven. When God permits strife to rise between believers, especially of the same family, it is to remind us that this world of sin, strife, and sorrow is not our home. *Third*, these painful, domestic troubles are permitted by God, they are brought to pass by the wise, unerring providence of our heavenly Father, that we may learn by them, that we may learn patience, forbearance, and kindness toward one another.

God permitted the strife between Abraham and Lot to arise, come to a head, and erupt in permanent separation, disgraceful as it was, and recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures, so that we might learn from their mistakes.

Abraham and Lot were both saved men. Both were chosen of God. Both were redeemed by the blood of Christ. Both were called by the Spirit. Both believed God. Both were righteous before God, made righteous by having the righteousness of God in Christ imputed to them. Both are seated together now before the throne of God and of the Lamb. But, while they lived in this world, strife between their herdsmen brought strife between and divided them.

A SHAMEFUL QUARREL

Strife between brethren is always repugnant, bringing reproach upon the gospel we believe and upon the God we serve. The God of glory appeared unto Abraham when he

was in Mesopotamia. The Lord God chose Abraham, called him alone, and made a covenant with him (Gen. 12:1-3).

I do not know how much Abraham knew; but he was not an ignorant, barbarian. He knew and believed the gospel. When he was 75 years old, God promised to send his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into this world through the loins of Abraham (Gal. 3:13-16); and Abraham believed God. Believing God, his faith was imputed to him for righteousness (Rom. 4:3, 13, 23-25).

After the death of Terah, his father, Abraham left Haran, came into Canaan, and pitched his tent at Bethel. There he built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. Bethel was “the house of God” to Abraham. Yet, he left Bethel because of the famine that arose in the land. He went down into Egypt for a while. Now, Abraham has returned from Egypt with his wife Sarah, all his possessions, all his servants, and with Lot. They all came back to Bethel. That is where Genesis 13 begins.

When he got back to Bethel, I am sure Abraham must have thought, “Now my trials and troubles are all over. I am back in the place of God. It will be smooth sailing from now on.” About the time he got settled, just as he had begun to gather his family for worship again at Bethel, strife broke out between his servants and the servants of Lot. This strife between Abraham and Lot was a very shameful, needless thing.

It was particularly shameful, because Abraham and Lot were both blessed of God with great wealth. They had as much of this world's goods as they could possibly need (vv. 2, 6). If one or the other of them had been poor and needy we might understand jealousy and strife between them. But both of these men were filthy rich. The word translated “*rich*” in

verse two has many shades of meaning. It means “rich,” as our translation indicates. It also means “honorable.” It could also be translated “heavy”. Riches are a burden. Those who seek to be rich load themselves with thick clay (Hab. 2:6).

In commenting upon the fact that riches are a heavy burden, Matthew Henry wrote, “There is a burden of care in getting them, fear in keeping them, temptation in using them, guilt in abusing them, sorrow in losing them, and a burden of account, at last, to be given up concerning them.”

Certainly, riches may be a great blessing of God's providence. Abraham was a man rich in faith and rich in this world's goods. If well-managed, earthly wealth is a friend to faith. It furnishes men with the opportunity to do much good. But very few men can be both wealthy and useful. I have seen a good many men make advancement in the world. But I have seen very few make advancement both in riches and in grace. How often people say, “If I had just a little more, I could do so much more for the cause of Christ.” But, usually, the more people get the less they give, the less they attend the worship of God, and the less they do for Christ, his people, and the furtherance of the gospel. Wise is that man who has learned to pray - *“Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain”* (Pro. 30:8-9). *“Beware of covetousness!”* Beware of *“the deceitfulness of riches!”* All of Lot's woes began when his herds and his gold began to increase!

This was a shameful quarrel because Abraham and Lot were brothers and friends (v. 8). They were physically related. Lot was Abraham's nephew. More importantly, they were spiritual brethren. Abraham was Lot's spiritual father. When he left his father's house, Abraham told Lot what God had

revealed to him and urged Lot to join him. They walked together for years in the pursuit of God's will and glory. But now they had a falling out. They were both chosen of God and called. They were both believers. They were both heirs of eternal life. But they fell into strife. There is something peculiarly sinful about strife between believers.

Lot owed Abraham everything, both materially and spiritually. He knew nothing, but what Abraham taught him. He had nothing, but what Abraham gave him. And he had for years followed Abraham as Abraham followed God. But now he is willing to part company with the best friend he had in this world for a little more property. How fickle men are, even believing men, when left to themselves! At one time, the Galatians were willing to pluck out their eyes and give them to Paul. But in time, they turned against him. Paul and Barnabas labored together for the cause of Christ. Then, they fell out over Mark. Strife between brethren is a reproach. It is always a reproach. It is always petty, too. Brethren do not fall out over the gospel. If the gospel is at stake, we must part company with those who oppose it. But brethren quarrel about petty things, things that really amount to nothing but pride. What can be more shameful?

This strife between Abraham and Lot was particularly disgraceful because -- "*The Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land*" (v. 7). It gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme. The Spirit of God here indicates that this was, above all else, the great shame of this strife between Abraham and Lot. The heathen observed it. They had seen Abraham and Lot worshipping at the same altar. Now they saw them fighting over water and grazing rights!

EXEMPLARY CONDUCT

Abraham had his faults. I do not suggest that he was a perfect man. We saw his weakness in chapter 12, when he was in Egypt. But in this strife, it was Abraham who moved to put it to an end. His conduct throughout the matter exemplified what believers ought to do in such matters (vv. 8-9).

Abraham's behavior was conciliatory. He was a man of peace. It was in his heart, as much as possible, to live peaceably with all men, especially with those who believe. He knew the value and blessedness of peace. Abraham knew that *"the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water."* Once it begins, it is almost impossible to stop. He had learned to *"therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with"* (Pro. 17:14). Abraham took the initiative (v. 8). He preferred the glory of God to his own will. He was more concerned for the gospel and the worship of God than he was for his own rights. The souls of men were of greater concern to Abraham than cattle, water, and grass. He preferred yielding to Lot's greed to fighting with his brother and friend. He was a magnanimous man.

Lot should have yielded to Abraham. God had given the land to Abraham. It was all his. Abraham was the older. Abraham was richer and stronger. Lot owed everything to Abraham. Abraham was God's spokesman. But Lot was a petty, little man, obstinate, and self-willed. Abraham was gracious and condescended to Lot's pleasure. He was generous, magnanimous, even to his own hurt. Worldlings, looking at Abraham, would say, "You fool!" But Abraham sought the glory of God. He turned the other cheek (Matt. 5:39). He took the wrong, and allowed himself to be defrauded (1 Cor. 6:7). He made himself servant to Lot (1 Cor. 9:19; Matt. 20:26-28). Why? He did it for two reasons: (1.) To keep Lot's friendship, and (2.) For the honor of God.

This is exemplary Christianity. Christianity is more than doctrines, and creeds, and ordinances. Christianity is Christ in us. And if Christ is in us, he will stick out in our lives.

Abraham was generous. He waved his rights and cheerfully gave Lot whatever he wanted. It does not appear that he was even slightly troubled by the fact that Lot took the best for himself. In fact, it seems that Abraham wanted Lot to have the best. Why? How could he behave this way? Abraham believed God. He loved Lot. Abraham was dead to this world!

A LAMENTABLE CHOICE

Abraham and Lot were standing on one of the high mountains of Canaan, perhaps Mt. Hebron. Looking to the east, Lot beheld all the well-watered, fertile plains of Sodom and the rich hills of Moab. It reminded him of the garden of Eden, which he had heard Abraham describe. And he chose that to be his portion (vv. 10-13). He left the tents of Abraham for the tents of Sodom. He left the altar of Abraham for the hills of Moab. He left the worship of Bethel for the riches of the plain. He saw. He coveted. He took.

Without regard for anything spiritual, his own soul, or the glory of God, Lot chose the rich plains of Sodom. His choice was sad. It tells us much about Lot. He had too much love for this world. And he had too little concern for his own soul, and the souls of those who were under his influence. There were no prophets in Sodom, only riches. There was no altar at which to worship God in Sodom, only luscious looking grass. There was no believers in Sodom , only worldlings.

From the moment that Lot made his choice, he began to decline. He did not go directly into Sodom. But step by step, he hardened his heart and seared his conscience, until he

convinced himself that the best thing he could do for himself, his family, and his servants was to move into Sodom. He lifted up his eyes and beheld the land. Then, he chose the plains of Sodom. Soon, he separated himself from Abraham. He dwelt in the cities of the plains for a while. Then, he pitched his tent toward Sodom. At last, he dwelt in Sodom. There he was elected to the city council. He became of man of great *respectability* among the Sodomites, when he had no respectability left.

Do you see how lamentable Lot's choice was?

A COSTLY CHOICE

Lot's choice, in the end, cost him everything he cherished, except his own soul. He lost all influence for God with his family, servants, and neighbors. He seems to have lost all spiritual communion, fellowship, and instruction. He lost his daughters, sons-in-laws, and grandchildren to the Sodomites. He lost all his earthly possessions. He lost his wife. He lost his last two daughters in his drunken incest. He lost everything but his soul. In fact, were it not for what is recorded in 2 Peter 2, we would be compelled to conclude that Lot was a man altogether without grace. Abraham lost nothing. He gave up everything, but the honor of God, the glory of God, and his love for Lot; but he lost nothing (vv. 14-18)!

Let every child of God always endeavor to "*keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" Avoid strife with brethren at all costs. "*Love not the world..*" It is the love of the world and the love of self which lies at the root of all strife among believers. How shameful! In all our earthly decisions, we must take care not to neglect the welfare of our souls. In all things, endeavor to do that which is right, walk with God, and live in peace.

The very mention of the name “Lot” echoes the words of Jonah, -- *“Salvation is of the Lord!”* Lot was a saved man, a sinner saved by grace alone, through the merits of Christ’s blood and righteousness, without any works of his own. Like every saved sinner, Lot was saved by God’s sovereign election, blood atonement, imputed righteousness, and infallible grace.

Chapter 19

ABRAHAM AND MELCHIZEDEK

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

Genesis 14:18-20

Genesis 14 gives us the first account of war mentioned in Holy Scripture. When the war was over, Lot, his family, and his goods had been carried away into captivity. Lot laid up treasures for himself upon the earth; and thieves broke through and took all his treasures. When Abraham heard what had happened to Lot, his nephew by nature and his brother by grace, he armed three hundred and eighteen of his trained servants and rescued his beloved brother, his brother's family, his goods, the king of Sodom, and all his people. When Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings, Melchizedek met him and blessed him. This meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek is recorded for our learning and admonition in Genesis 14:18-20.

I know that Melchizedek is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 7 makes that perfectly clear. However, as I read this chapter, I am always constrained to think, - "What a blessed picture Abraham is of our Savior!" What he did for Lot is exactly what Christ has done for his people.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, because of his great love for us, took us to be his brethren from eternity. We were taken into

captivity and bondage by sin. We lost everything. Satan thoroughly spoiled us. He held us in the dark dungeon of sin and death. When we could do nothing to help ourselves. Christ Jesus, our Elder Brother, like Abraham, came to deliver us, not with three hundred and eighteen armed men, but by the merits of his blood and the power of his grace.

He defeated our enemies and took them captive who had held us captive (Col. 2:13-15). He ransomed us from the hands of God's offended justice (Gal. 3:15). He set us free by the power of his grace, restoring all that we had lost (Eph. 2:1-13). Christ has defeated all our adversaries, forever delivered us from their power, and made us more than conquerors in him by the power of his grace (Rom. 8:33-39).

Yet, in this particular passage of Scripture I am sure that the Holy Spirit has set Abraham before us as a representative, a type and picture of every believer in this world. Abraham was the father of the faithful, allegorically the father of all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In the history of Abraham, every believer can read his own biography. His temptations, trials, tragedies and triumphs were prophetic pictures of those things that every follower of Christ must experience. Like Abraham, all the children of Abraham must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God. As Abraham here represents the believer living in this world. Melchizedek is a type of our great King and Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A WARFARE ENGAGED

Abraham engaged in a warfare, deliberately and purposefully. Though he was a man of peace., he lived among men of war. In Genesis 14, we see this man who was the friend of God taking up arms against his godless enemies, because of the great evil they had done. Like Abraham, the

sons and daughters of Abraham are engaged in a warfare so long as we live in this world.

The believer is a soldier, “*a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*” In the Word of God, the believer is compared to a soldier engaged in warfare more often than he is compared to anything else, except perhaps a sheep. He is a man of peace. Yet, he is a man of war. We have wars within and wars without. Sometimes our wars arise, like Abraham’s, from erring brethren. Sometimes they arise from providential trials. Often they arise from enemies without, and more often from enemies within; but as long as we live in this world, we are at war. We must, as soldiers on the battlefield, carry our swords always drawn. We must protect ourselves with the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, stand fast having our feet shod with the gospel of peace, and march onward carrying the weapon of all-prayer. The believer must never feel himself at ease as long as he is on this side of Jordan. Here, in this world, we are in the enemy’s land. Expect a foe behind every bush. At the end of everyday, if we have not fallen prey to some hellish foe, let us adore and give thanks to God for his almighty grace which has kept us. Like Abraham, we are on a battlefield. Our enemies are sin, Satan, the world, and error. We must fight the good fight of faith, for ourselves, for our brethren, and for the glory of God.

We fight against powerful odds. Abraham had only three hundred and eighteen loyal servants at his command. Yet, in the name of God, he marched against and defeated the armies of the kings of the nations around him. He fought in God’s name, for God’s cause. Therefore, he fought in God’s strength. Failure was not even a possibility.

Our warfare is one that is carried on in faith. Abraham was a man of faith. The spirit of his life was simple confidence in God. Had he gone out against the kings of the nations by

any other power than faith in Christ, he would have fallen. *“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* And the weapon of faith is *“the blood of the Lamb.”* We fight against our inward sins by faith in Christ, not by resolutions of our wills. We fight against the world by faith, trusting God, not by ingenuity. We fight against heresy by faith, believing the Word of God, not by logic, history, tradition, and popularity polls. We fight against Satan by faith, trusting him by whose omnipotent hand the fiend of hell is bound and governed, not by the strength of our own wills. We would be wise to heed the admonition given by C. H. Spurgeon. -- “Live near to Jesus, rest upon the power of his atonement and the prevalence of his plea, and then go forward against every enemy without and every foe within, and you shall be more than conquerors.”

We have the blessed consolation of knowing that our battle is right. In this great battle, carried on by faith, Abraham had a God-given right to do what he did. The whole land of Canaan was his (Gen. 13:14-16). The kings of the nations had no business there. They were invaders. God, who gave him the land, promised his unfailing presence to protect him in it (Gen. 12:3; 15:1).

Is there any way we can properly apply this fact to ourselves? Indeed there is. If you belong to Christ, Satan has no right to hold you (John 12:30-31). If you have been justified from sin, sin has no right to rule you (Rom. 6:14-18). If God is true, error (that which denies his truth) has no right to exist. If Christ is our Master, the world has no right to our hearts. God is with us, and in the name of God we shall be victorious (Psa. 118:11-12).

The warfare in which we are engaged demands diligence and the use of all means. Abraham did not sit still and say, “Well, the Lord will deliver Lot.” That would not have

been and act of faith, but presumption. Believing God, Abraham called upon all his servants and went to war. We must do the same. We must engage all the servants God has given us to fight the good fight of faith. So long as we are on this battlefield, let us be engaged in prayer, skilful in the knowledge and use of God's Word, mighty in praise, and found in the company of our brethren, our comrades in grace.

This is a warfare from which there is no discharge until victory is won. Abraham did not lay down his sword until he had gotten all that he went after and defeated every foe. Blessed is that man or woman who, believing God, follows his example (Phil. 3:4-14). We must give ourselves no rest so long as sin is in our hearts, one of God's elect is unconverted, error is found in God's earth, or one breath is left in the nostrils of that old dragon, Satan. We must bring back everything that has been lost. Everything must be brought in subjection to Christ. We cannot rest until it is; and it shall be. Victory shall be ours (Rom. 16:20).

VISITATION OF GRACE

Abraham enjoyed a visitation of grace. Many debate whether Melchizedek was Christ, or just a type of Christ. Either way, he represents Christ visiting his servant on the earth. Battle weary soldiers, engaged in the cause of Christ, may well expect and anticipate a visitation of grace. As Christ showed himself to Abraham, by the appearing of Melchizedek, he will show himself to you. He knows that his warriors need strengthening, comforting, and encouraging. As he came to Shadrach, Meshech, and Obed-nego in the fiery furnace, the Son of God will come to you in your hour of need.

Why did the Lord Jesus now appear to Abraham under the type of Melchizedek? Abraham was weary and needed refreshing. Being a man of sinful flesh, he may have been

somewhat self-elated by his victory (Luke 10:17-20). If that were the case, the best cure for pride is the sight of Christ (Job 42:5-6). The best cure for indifference is his presence (Rev. 3:21). Perhaps the greatest reason for this gracious visitation was the fact that Abraham was about to be tried in a far more subtle way than he had ever been tried before and needed to be prepared for it (vv. 21-24). The king of Sodom, a godless, reprobate man, was about to offer Abraham great wealth and the honor of his ungodly crown. Nothing could equip Abraham or us to honor God and strengthen him and us for temptation like communion with Christ (Song 1:2-4, 12-14).

Abraham had brought back the captives. He had every right to the spoils. If he had taken them, no one could charge him with any evil. What could be wrong with accepting the accolades of an ungodly king and an ungodly nation? The fact is, believers live by a higher rule than other men. Their concern is not for their rights, their own honor, or the riches of this world. The ungodly live for and seek those things (Matt. 6:32). Believers live for and seek the will and glory of God in Christ.

How did Christ appear to Abraham? Melchizedek, the Lord Jesus in type, came to Abraham the way he comes to all his people, as a royal, kingly priest. He came to Abraham as a king with power, a king with power over Abraham, his servant, power over his enemies, with power over all things. He who is God our Savior is the sovereign Monarch of the universe. He is also our great High Priest. Melchizedek came to Abraham as a priest with a sacrifice - "*bread and wine*," tokens of our Savior's perfect obedience and blood atonement.

What did Melchizedek do for Abraham? - "*He brought forth bread and wine.*" This is the food of faith (the righteousness and atonement of Christ) which we must eat (John 6:53-56). The bread and wine foreshadowed the

elements used by our Lord in establishing the blessed ordinance of the Lord's Supper . When it is truly observed, that gospel ordinance is a spiritual feast, an act of faith. Melchizedek revealed God's greatness to his servant Abraham. He conveyed God's blessing to Abraham. He blessed God for Abraham as a priest, and taught Abraham to bless God. In all these things, he portrayed our Lord Jesus Christ, the believer's King and Priest.

A TYPE OF CHRIST

Some say that Melchizedek was Noah's son, Shem. Some say that he was an angelic, celestial being. Some say he was Christ. Melchizedek was a man who was a great type of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:3, 4, 15). "*Consider how great this man was!*" This man (both Melchizedek and Christ) was without father or mother. If Melchizedek was a mere man, no one knew his parents. Certainly, this is stated to remind us of the eternity of our Savior. He who became a man to save us is God, the eternal Son. He was the priest of the Most High God. He was not of the Aaronic or Levitical orders, a priest of Israel, but of God, God's special priest. He was not a priest, but the Priest. He was King. Again, he was not a king, but the King, the King of Righteousness and the King of Salem, that is to say, the King of Peace. He is called the King of Righteousness and afterward the King of Peace, because righteousness must be established before peace can be given (Psa. 85:10; Isa. 32:17; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1; Col. 1:20). This man was both the Priest and the King, as I said, not of Levi; but of Judah. And the Scriptures tell us that our Lord Jesus Christ is not a priest after the order of Aaron, or Levi, but after the order of Melchizedek.

- The Levitical Priests were unclean; and therefore had to make sacrifices for their own sins and then for the peoples. -- Christ had no sin.

- The Levitical Priests were mortal. -- Christ is a Priest forever.

The Lord Jesus Christ, God's own dear Son, is our Melchizedek. He is the great High Priest (Heb. 7:21-25). He is a Priest by God's oath (Psa. 110:4). He is a Surety of a better covenant. He is an unchangeable Priest. He is a saving Priest. He is an abiding, prevailing, propitiatory Priest (1 John 2:1-2).

AN ACT OF CONSECRATION

Abraham gave Melchizedek tithes of all that he had. We recognize that tithing was a requirement of the law; but the law had not yet been given. Like believers today, Abraham here made a free, voluntary gift, compelled by nothing but gratitude. It was a reasonable gift. The tithe Abraham gave was an acknowledgement that all that he possessed belonged to God. By his gift, he was saying, "I am yours." The tithe he gave was a gift of faith. He gave it with confidence that the God he worshipped by his gift would supply all his needs. If we would worship God with our gifts, we must bring our gifts to him like Abraham brought this gift to Melchizedek. We cannot worship God by paying a tithe. That was a legal necessity in the Mosaic age. We worship God by bringing free gifts of gratitude and faith to him (2 Cor. 9:7, voluntarily, as symbols both of our consecration to him and our faith in him, saying...

"Hail, Melchizedek divine! Christ, the Great High Priest is
mine!

Here, before Your throne I fall! Take not a tithe, but take me
all!"

Chapter 20

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."
Genesis 15:1-6

Justification by faith is the great, foundation doctrine of Holy Scripture. It is beautifully illustrated in the experience of Abraham in Genesis 15. In verse six, we are told that Abraham "*believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*" But Abraham's faith and his justification before God are the subject matter throughout this entire chapter.

Abraham is set before us in the Scriptures as the father of all who believe. He is the first man spoken of in the Word of God as a believer. Certainly, there were other believers before him. Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah and many others also believed God. But the word "*believed*" is not used in reference to any man in the Bible until we come to Genesis 15:6. Therefore, Abraham is called "*the father of all them that believe*" (Rom. 4:11).

Abraham is also the father of all believers in the sense that he is held before us as the pre-eminent example of what it is for a sinner to believe God. From the time of his calling until the day of his death, the Lord God appears to have dealt with Abraham specifically to show us by example what the life of faith is. That which is here written concerning Abraham and his faith, is written specifically for our instruction in the matter of faith and justification before God. This is exactly what God the Holy Spirit tells us in Romans 4:23-24

- Romans 4:23-24 "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom

it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."

With these things in mind, let's look at Genesis 15 together, beginning at verse 1.

Genesis 15:1 -- "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward."

"After these things" – Many years had now passed since the Lord God first appeared to Abram and called him out of Ur. Terah, his father, was now dead. Many years had passed since God first promised to make of him a great nation and make him a blessing in all nations. Abram had come into the land of Canaan. He had been tried by great famine. He went down to Egypt. There, the Lord let Abram see how weak he was. Even the father of believers was weak, when left to himself.

After he came back up to Canaan, there was a terrible strife between Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen, and the two parted company. Though Lot abandoned his uncle and abandoned the land of Canaan, Abram never forgot his erring nephew. He was truly a magnanimous man. When the kings of the land fell out with one another and went to war, Abram seems to have looked upon it as a matter of nothing but casual, passing interest, at most. The fall of Sodom and Gomorrah was of no concern to the heaven bound pilgrim. But, when a messenger came and told him that Chedorlaomer and the kings of the plain had taken Lot captive, Abram acted without hesitation.

He armed 318 of his men and pursued the kings, defeated them and their armies, and brought Lot, his family, his goods, the people of Sodom, and the king of Sodom back

to their place. Upon their return, Melchizedek met Abram with bread and wine, and blessed him, as priest of the most high God. He blessed him upon the basis of that sacrifice (the sacrifice of Christ) portrayed in the bread and wine. To him, Abram, gave tithes of all that he had.

The king of Sodom saw and heard all that passed between Abram and Melchizedek, but was totally unaware of what was going on and had no interest in such matters. No sooner had Melchizedek departed than that proud pimple of a man offered to give Abram the goods which Abram himself had recovered! Upon that Abram did two things, which tell us much about the kind of man he was.

1. He told the king of Sodom plainly that he would not take anything from him, because he had already sworn to his God, "*the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth,*" that he would not.
2. And he pointedly told the little man who wore a king's robe that the goods he offered to give Abram were not his to give, by telling him exactly what he would do with the people and the goods.

"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision." – He who appeared to Abraham was the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, the Son of God. God always reveals himself to men and speaks to men only through Christ, the Mediator.

"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." First, the Lord bids his servant to cease from fear. – "*Fear not, Abram.*" Why does he tell him not to be afraid? He had just succeeded in conquering four armies with 318 shepherds! Perhaps he feared retaliation

from those who remained of the kingdoms he had conquered. That seems to be the universal opinion of the commentators. I am inclined to think otherwise. I think, he was fearful simply because he was overwhelmed by the manifest presence of God. He was fearful because he knew himself a sinful man in the presence of the holy Lord God. Like Moses, Daniel, and John after him, Abram revered God and stood in utter awe before him.

This is a blessed fear. Should not a man aware of his own corruption of heart, depravity, and sin be overwhelmed and humbled before the Lord God? But when Christ appears to his own, he appears in perfect love, to cast out fear. Thus, he says, "*Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*" Here the Lord God our Savior, makes two great promises to Abraham, by which he quietens his fears, comforts his heart, and encourages his faith.

1. "***I am thy Shield.***" – Who or what shall harm me, if the Lord God himself is my shield? "Thus, in tender grace," wrote A. W. Pink, "did Jehovah quiet the troubled heart of the one whom he was pleased to call his '*friend*.'"
2. "***I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward.***"

After Abraham had defeated the kings of the plain and had been blessed by Melchizedek, he declined to take anything from the king of Sodom, lest a heathen king should point to Abraham and say, "I made him what he is." His refusal to be enriched by a pagan worldling is here bountifully compensated. He forsook all for the glory of God, but lost nothing. So it is to this day and shall be forever. We are required to forsake all to follow Christ. Indeed, we cannot be his disciples, if we do not surrender all to him. But God will never permit his own to suffer any real loss by following him and seeking his glory. Our Lord asked his disciples, "*Lacked*

ye anything?" To that question, they were compelled to answer, "Nothing" (Lk. 22:35).

"I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward." -

- This great promise is applicable to all believers, to all who are "*strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*" The Son of God himself is our Shield of faith. He is our Shield and defense. Christ is the One behind whom faith hides, upon whom faith leans, and in whom faith finds refuge and safety (Ps. 3:3; 5:12; 84:11; 91:4; 119:114). As he is our Shield, our Savior is also our exceeding great Reward. "*The LORD is my Portion, saith my soul. Therefore will I hope in him.*" "*The LORD is the Portion of my inheritance and of my cup.*"

Genesis 15:2-3 -- "And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir."

After hearing the Lord's declaration, Abraham seems to have immediately thought, -- "If I am to have the inheritance in God, which he has promised me, if I am to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth, as the Lord has said, I must have a son through whom the blessing shall come." As Pink suggests, he recognized that heirship is based upon sonship (Rom. 8:16-17; Eph. 1:5, 11).

Abraham's asking God for a son, in verses 2 and 3, was not an act of unbelief, as many suppose, but of faith. He took God at his word. He seems to have reasoned like this -- "If God has promised me a heritage, promised to make me a blessing to all nations, and promised to make my seed to be as the dust of the earth (people scattered throughout all the earth), he must first give me a son." Therefore he asked for

one. That, it seems to me, is obvious from the Lord's response in verses 4 and 5.

Genesis 15:4-5 -- "And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."

Remember, in Genesis 13:15 and 16, the Lord promised Abraham that his seed would be as the dust of the earth. Here, he takes him by the hand, leads him outside, and points him to the sky, saying, I will give you a seed like the stars of heaven.

Be sure you understand the meaning of this, as it given in the Scriptures. Without question, his seed has reference to the whole, innumerable multitude of God's elect, whom he purposed to saved before the world began (Heb. 2:16). However, the primary significance of this promise is that God here promised Abraham that he would send the seed of the woman, that great Redeemer who would crush the serpent's head and redeem God's elect (Gen. 3:15-16), through his loins.

Genesis 15:6 -- "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

When Abraham heard the gospel preached to him, as the Holy Spirit tells us he did (Gal. 3:8), he believed God. There is no other single text in the Old Testament so thoroughly and specifically expounded in the New Testament as Genesis 15:6. The Apostle Paul was inspired to write extensively about this text in the Book of Romans and in the

Book of Galatians. He uses this text as the foundation upon which the entire house of God rests, which is justification by faith alone. "*Abraham believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*"

Here the Holy Spirit gives us the first explanation of justification found in the Bible. As stated above, there were many others before Abram who were justified, in exactly the same way Abram was. In fact, a careful reading of the Scriptures makes it obvious that Abram was himself a believer a man justified before God, before this.

The Scriptures tell us plainly that he was a believer when he left Ur of the Chaldees (Heb. 11:8). – "*By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*" Though he was then a justified man, his justification is not mentioned on that occasion because there is no connection between our experience of grace and our justification before God. Justification is the result of redemption accomplished, not redemption experienced.¹⁰ Therefore, the Holy Spirit here speaks of Abram's justification in connection with Christ and the redemption of our souls by him.

That faith which was "*counted for righteousness*" was and must be faith which believed what God had said concerning the promised Seed. Therefore the Holy Spirit picked this experience, and arranged it, to stand as the first and primary model and example of justification by faith.

There is no justification apart from Christ. This is the only way God has ever, will ever, or can ever justify the

¹⁰ Without question, no one knows what God has done for him in election and redemption until he trusts Christ. Yet, faith in Christ is not the cause of God's grace, but the evidence of it (Heb. 11:1-2).

ungodly. — *“Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by Him all that believe are justified from all things”* (Acts 13:38, 39). Justifying faith is directly connected to the person and work of Christ. Saving faith is that faith which looks to Christ crucified and trusts him. This is what is taught in Genesis 15. God made a promise and revealed to Abraham that Christ, his Son, would come into the world as his son, and redeem him. -- *“And Abram believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”*

First, the gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8-16). This is not a matter of speculation on my part. This is exactly what the Holy Spirit tells us had taken place in Genesis 15:1-5. God’s method of grace never changes. *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”*

Second, we read that *“Abram believed in the LORD.”* How was Abraham justified? He was justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. He was not justified by religious ceremonialism (circumcision), but by faith (Rom. 4:3-10). Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith. Though he had done many noble, good things in the exercise of faith, though he had lived upon the Word of God, for the glory of God for many years, his works are not mentioned in connection with his justification, except as the fruit of it. He was not justified by keeping the law, but by faith in Christ. We must always distinguish between the truth, that true faith always produces good works; and the lie, the damning heresy, that our works are mixed with our faith in the matter of our acceptance with God.

Notice this, too – *“He believed in the LORD,”* not in facts about the Lord (Rom. 4:3, 16-25). Christ himself is the solitary Object of all true faith. Faith is not believing that there is a God. All men and women, whether they acknowledge it or not, believe there is a God, that he is holy, and that they must

meet him in judgment. Faith is not simply acknowledging the historic facts of Christ's incarnation, obedience, death, and resurrection. You cannot be a believer and deny the historic facts of the gospel. But faith is not believing historic facts. And saving faith is not the embracing of gospel doctrine. Without question, that person is not saved and does not know God who does not believe the doctrine of the gospel. But we are not saved, we are not justified before God, by believing certain doctrines. No one has ever been justified, no sinner has ever been saved, by believing the doctrines of predestination, – sovereign election, -- effectual atonement, -- irresistible grace, or any other. Saving faith does not trust facts or feelings, creeds or confessions, but a Person! -- "*Abraham believed God!*" That is the issue, the only issue between men and God. – "*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*"

*Third, "He believed in the LORD: **and he counted it to him for righteousness.**"* Multitudes have jumped on this text like ducks on a June-bug, pointing to Abram's act of believing and saying that it was that act which was imputed to him for righteousness. Such doctrine is utterly blasphemous. It makes faith a work, an act of man's will, meritorious before God. It makes justification to be, not a matter of righteousness and justice, but a compromise, declaring that God accepts faith in the stead of righteousness and satisfaction. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Justification is a legal term. It has everything to do with law, and justice, and righteousness, and nothing to do with compromise (Rom. 3:24-26).—"*By mercy and truth iniquity is purged*" (Pro. 16:6). In justification, we are declared right at law, right in the court of heaven. In justification, our sins are all blotted out, put away, and forgiven, upon the grounds of justice satisfied. In justification, we are made to be perfect before God, holy, blameless, utterly unreprieveable. In

justification, we are accepted in the Beloved, complete in Christ, who is made the righteousness of God unto us.

The act of believing has no more to do with the accomplishment of justification than the act of sinning. Our justification was accomplished by Christ, when he died at Calvary. Indeed, it was accomplished in the decree of God from eternity, and God's elect are declared to be justified from eternity (Rom. 8:28-30), justified in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

We simply receive and experience the blessedness of justification by faith. Faith contributes nothing to the work of righteousness and the satisfaction of justice. Our righteousness was accomplished for us by Christ's obedience unto death. It is that which was imputed to Abraham, not his act of believing; and it is that which is imputed to us for righteousness, not our act of believing. Our justification is by the Object of our faith, -- Jehovah-tsidkenu -- "*The LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*" -- not by the act of our faith (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21). In fact, the Apostle Peter tells us plainly that our faith in Christ is the result, not the cause, of our justification (2 Pet. 1:1).

As C. H. Spurgeon put it, "Faith cannot be its own righteousness, for it is the very nature of faith to look out of itself to Christ...We must look altogether away from ourselves to Christ alone, or we have no true faith at all...To say that faith becomes our righteousness is to tear the very bowels out of the gospel, and to deny the faith which has been once delivered to the saints."

Christ "*was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified,* (The comma belongs right here, not after faith.) *by faith* (This is the result.) *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus*

Christ' (Rom. 4:25-5:1) The whole work of justification took place and was accomplished outside ourselves, by Christ alone (Rom. 5:9-11).

Would you like to be justified before God? Would you like to go down to your house, like the publican, justified? Would you stand before God, from this day forward, in peace, being forever righteous, justified, freed from the debt of sin and the curse of God's holy law? Would you like to silence that screaming conscience that torments your soul night and day? If you would be saved, if you would be justified, you must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, just as Abraham did.

Abraham believed God's promise of grace, salvation, and eternal life in Christ, preached to him in the gospel. Abraham believed God's word concerning his Son. – He believed that which was not possible, except by God's own work. He believed that God would from his dead body and Sarah's dead womb, raise up a Son in whom they would have life (Rom. 4:20-24). Abraham believed this word from God as the word of God to him (Eph. 1:13; 1 John 5:1, 10-13).

Chapter 21

STANDING ON JUSTIFIED GROUND

“Abraham believed God.”
Genesis 15:6-21

“Abraham believed God.” What a tremendous declaration that is. Though faith has nothing to do with the accomplishment of justification, we cannot have justification without faith. Yet, this faith which is exemplified in Abraham is a thing no man can perform. It is not the result of man’s will, decision, or moral and mental determination. Faith is the gift of God. No man can or will believe, except it be by the gift and operation of God in him. We believe according to the working of his mighty power. So, when the Scriptures assert that *“Abraham believed God,”* the Holy Spirit is saying, -- Here is a miracle of grace. Here is a sinner doing what no sinner can do, doing what we must do, doing what only the grace of God can enable him to do

In this 15th chapter of Genesis, when the Holy Spirit declares that Abraham believed in the Lord, at least five things are evident.

1. He believed the Gospel as the very word of God, as a word directly from God himself.

Paul tells us that the word God spoke to him was the gospel of Christ preached to him. God had said, *“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”* Upon the heels of this revelation, Abram asked the Lord to give him a son in whom all his promised mercy might be fulfilled. *“And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he*

brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."

Like Saul of Tarsus, Abraham was a man who could declare, *"I certify you, that the gospel I believe is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."* The gospel came to him, not as the word of man, but the word of God. His faith stood not in the words of man's wisdom, but in the power of God.

If ever a sinner believes God, he will believe because the gospel has come to him in the demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit with much assurance, being assured by God himself that it is the very word of God (1 Thess. 1:5). That faith which stands in the wisdom of man is but the faith of a man. That faith which stands in the power of God is the faith of God's elect.

2. Abraham believed the word of God concerning his Son, the Seed in whom and by whom redemption would be accomplished.

The promise he heard from God, he recognized to be the very same as that made to mother Eve in the Garden. Abraham understood that God's promise here declared went far beyond the promise of a son. It was the promise of God concerning his Son (Gal. 3:6-16).

True faith is fixed on Christ alone. It is not the faith of this sect or that, but faith in Christ. It is not the faith of this creed or that. It is not the faith of emotion and fear. True faith looks to Christ, embracing him, his person and his work, as the God-man our Mediator.

3. Abraham believed that God could and would do that which was humanly impossible.

Abraham believed God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which are not as though they were (Rom. 4:18-25). Faith believes that Christ is able to save. He can cause dry bones to live. He can raise up the dead. He can give life to the corpse, cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dead to hear, and the cursed to be blessed.

4. Abraham believed the promise made to him by God in the gospel, though vast and sublime beyond calculation, to be a matter of absolute certainty, because God had spoken it.

He believed God would do all that he said he would do for him and in him by Christ Jesus (Rom. 4:8; Eph. 1:3-6)

5. Abraham believed the gospel as the word of God to him.

He believed God to be his Shield, his exceeding great Reward, and his Savior. He heard God speak the gospel to him as the word of his salvation (Eph. 1:13-14). Believing God, Abraham was justified. By faith he received the blessedness of sins forgiven, righteousness imputed, and immutable, perfect acceptance with God himself, through the blood and righteousness of Christ. That is what verse 6 declares. – *“And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”*

Beginning at verse 7 and going through to the end of the chapter, we see a believing sinner standing on justified ground. Oh, what a blessed place to stand! Once a man or woman believes God, he sees what he could not see before, understands things which mystified and dumbfounded before,

and rejoices in things which either bored him to death or stirred his hatred of God to the boiling point before. Standing on justified ground, the most uneducated, illiterate believer sees with perfect clarity what the most brilliant and most educated unbeliever cannot even imagine, because faith understands all things (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:9-16; Heb. 11:1-3; 1 John 2:20).

GOD'S CALL

Genesis 15:7 "And he said unto him, I *am* the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it."

Standing justified before God, as a sinner accepted in Christ the beloved, faith sees the value of God's call and prizes it. Abraham saw that the Lord God had called him distinctively and that it was God's call which distinguished him from all others (1 Cor. 4:7). Abraham recognized that all the blessedness he now enjoyed and would enjoy forever was his because the Lord had separated him from Adam's fallen race and called him to life and faith in Christ. This man, once he believed God, understood perfectly that his faith was the result, not the cause, of God's grace and the call of it. Once a sinner is made to stand before God on justified ground, he prizes the call of God, by which he has been made to believe God.

BLOOD ATONEMENT

Genesis 15:8-11 "And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the

birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away."

Standing on justified ground, faith sees the glory of God in blood atonement. Every believing sinner sees clearly that the only grounds upon which God can bless and save a sinner is blood atonement. -- "*The precious blood of Christ.*" Believers understand, and rejoice in the fact, that God cannot be our Justifier except he be just. He cannot be our Savior, except he be "*a just God and a Savior.*"

Abraham took those very sacrifices later instituted by law as types of Christ, and seems to say, "All the sacrifices point to one sacrifice." He recognized that Christ alone, that promised One whom he believed, could take away sin by the shedding of his own blood. Thus, he exemplifies faith. Faith drives away every unclean foul of the air which would take away or turn it from the sacrifice. And faith sees itself involved in the sacrifice. As Abraham stood in the midst of the slain animals, so the believer realizes that when Christ died he died. Faith understands that Christ's death is the death of his people. His satisfaction is their satisfaction.

COVENANT GRACE

Genesis 15:12 "And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him."

Genesis 15:17-18 "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:"

Standing on justified ground, faith sees God in covenant grace, a covenant ratified by blood. Believing sinners see the connection between God's purpose, God's covenant promises and their fulfillment, and blood atonement. The blood of Christ is the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20), the blood by which the covenant has been ratified, the blood by which all the promises of the covenant are secured to us (Heb. 9:15-17).

Abraham seems to have seen what few see today. He saw that this covenant and the promises of it involved the very glory of God. The God of glory staked, as it were, the very glory of his being, the honor of his name, and the reputation of his very throne on the fulfillment of his promises (Heb. 6:6-20). He saw himself involved in the covenant, in the sacrifice, and the very glory of God!

THE TRIAL OF FAITH

Genesis 15:13 "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years."

Standing on justified ground, faith sees that every trial, every trouble, every affliction, and every sorrow we experience in this world of woe is ordained of God in covenant mercy and comes to pass according to the purpose of God's grace in the covenant. Immediately, the Lord God caused Abraham to know that while he lived in this world, and while his seed lived in this world, faith must be tried and that the trial of our faith would, itself, prove to be a matter of great blessedness. Our trials are as much a part of our blessedness as our justification. The Holy Spirit tells us this plainly in Romans 5:1-5.

ASSURED SALVATION

Genesis 15:14-16 "And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet full."

Standing on justified ground, faith sees and is assured of the fact that our ultimate salvation and triumph in Christ is sure. The Lord God gave his servant, Abraham, assurance concerning all that he promised. He assured him that he would both judge those who oppressed him and bless him as the result of their oppression. And he assured him that he would die in peace. What a blessed word of grace this is. How can a sinner be assured that he will leave this world and go into eternity to stand before the holy Lord God in peace? There is only one way. -- *"Being justified, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!"*

Chapter 22

El-shaddai – The God Of The Covenant

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him."

Genesis 17:1-21

The God of Glory appeared to Abram when he was yet in Ur of the Chaldees. There, the Lord God promised to make of him a great nation. After the death of his father, Terah, in Haran, the Lord appeared to Abram again, and renewed his promise. Though he was a seventy-five year old man, Abram believed God and left Haran with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and Lot's wife, and came into the land of Canaan. There, at Beth-el, the Lord appeared to him again and, again, renewed his promise.

A SON AND A SAVIOR

In Genesis 15, after his lapse in Egypt, after the strife between his herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen, after the slaughter of the kings, after the appearance of Melchizedek, the Lord graciously appeared to Abram again, this time more fully than before, and again renewed his promise. Abram asked and God specifically promised to give him a Son, a Son who would be his Savior, a Son through whom he would be made righteous, a Son in whom all the world would be blessed. Then, we are told, "*Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*"

THE ARM OF THE FLESH

Still, Sarah was barren. After ten long years in the land of Canaan, Sarah devised a plan. She gave her servant, Hagar, to Abram. She seems to have thought, "The Lord has not fulfilled his promise. He must intend for us to do something. So," she appears to have reasoned, "it only makes sense that if we are to have children, if God is going to fulfill his promise, it will have to be by means of a surrogate." Therefore, she said to Abram, "*Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her.*" And "*Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai*" (Gen. 16:2). What folly! What presumption! God does not need something from us to accomplish his purposes. We can never do good by evil means. The arm of the flesh can never accomplish the work of the Spirit.

Yet, despite Sarai and Abram's unbelief, presumption, and sin, God proved himself gracious, wise, and faithful. As we have seen already (Genesis 13), our God even over rules evil for good, making all things work together for the salvation and everlasting good of his elect. The Lord used these events to reveal himself to Hagar. Though the Lord over ruled the evil for good, Sarah and Abraham had to live with the consequences of their actions for many years. The fruit of their unbelief and sin was Ishmael. Abraham loved Ishmael, as any father loves his son; but Ishmael was the source of great and constant pain to him and, at last, had to be put out of the house.¹¹

¹¹ We must never endeavor to accomplish the purpose of God by the arm of the flesh. This is a lesson for God's servants in every age. We long for seed, spiritual seed, God's promised seed. We long to see chosen sinners born into the kingdom of God. Far too often, men who themselves believe God (as did Sarah and Abraham), employ carnal means to accomplish what God alone can accomplish. The result is always trouble. Let us rather wait on him who is "the Almighty God" to perform his work. The best our efforts can produce is Ishmael. The fruit of grace is Isaac.

DELIBERATE DELAY

When we come to Genesis 17, it has been thirteen years since the Lord last appeared to Abram. We have no record of God speaking to his servant in any way for thirteen long years. Spiritual barrenness is always the result of disobedience and unbelief. But we must never imagine that the man's unbelief nullifies the purposes and promises of God. Though it often appears that the Lord God is not working, that his purpose is being hindered, that his promise has fallen to the ground, that is never the case. God's delays are always deliberate. Not only is it true that God always knows best and does best, he always does it at precisely the best time. He always fulfills his promise in "*the fulness of time.*" He is never late; and he is never early. God is always on time.

Why did Abraham have to wait so long for God to fulfill his promise? It was twenty-five years from the time the Lord first appeared to Abram and promised him a Son, a Seed in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed, until the birth of Isaac. Why? The reason is simple. Abraham had to be brought to the end of himself. He must be brought to his wits' end. He must be made to know that God's work is in no way dependent upon or determined by him. The simple fact is, God never acts in grace until he convinces us that our only hope is for him to act in grace. God does not show us his omnipotence until he shows us our impotence. Only when Israel is in utter desperation does the Lord speak, and say, "*Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD.*" It was not until Abraham saw the deadness of his own body as well as the deadness of Sarah's womb that God gave him a son.

Read Genesis 17 carefully. It is a very instructive portion of Holy Scripture. In this chapter the Holy Spirit has

recorded for us the covenant God made with Abraham and shows us that the basis upon which the covenant promises were made to Abraham and the basis upon which he believed those promises was the omnipotence and all-sufficiency of God our Savior.

We do ourselves a great disservice and misinterpret the Scriptures, if we read this (or any other passage of Inspiration), as no more than a historic record. Everything in this passage is as applicable to believing sinners today as it was to Abraham (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:15-16). The promises made to Abraham are the promises of God to all who, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, are the children of Abraham. With those things in mind, I want to show you four things in this chapter. May God the Holy Spirit, whose Word we hold before us, inscribe the lessons of this chapter upon our hearts by his grace.

GOD'S CHARACTER

Genesis 17:1 "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God."

Here the Lord God reveals himself to Abram as El-shaddai, "*the Almighty God*." This is the first time God made himself known by this great name. None but the Almighty God could perform for Abram the things he here promises. This was a ninety-nine year old man. His wife was ninety. Yet, El-shaddai promised him a Son; and what he promises he can and will perform, because he is "*the Almighty God*". "*With God all things are possible*."

This great attribute of God's being, his absolute omnipotence, strikes terror in the hearts of the wicked; but to the believer nothing is more consoling. "*The name of the LORD*

is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Pro. 18:10). Since our Savior is the Lord Almighty, we can confidently forsake all and follow him (2 Cor. 6:17-18). Because our Savior is El-shaddai, "*He is able to succor them that are tempted.*" Because he who loves us with an everlasting love is the Almighty, nothing can ever separate us from his love (Rom. 8:39). Because our God is the Almighty God, he "*is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.*" Because he is God Almighty, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, is able to keep his sheep in his omnipotent hand (John 10:28). Because he is the Almighty God, our Savior is able to raise our bodies from the grave in resurrection glory (Phil. 3:21). Because he is El-shaddai, the Lord Jesus is able to keep you from falling and present you, and me, and all his own faultless before the presence of his glory in the end (Jude 24-25).

Everything in this passage was written for the edification, comfort, and benefit of God's elect, as much for believing sinners today as for that believing sinner to whom these words were first spoken. He who appeared to Abraham and said, "*I am the Almighty God,*" is the Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. Let believing sinners rejoice! He who is our God is El-shaddai -- "*the Almighty God*".

GOD'S COMMAND

Look at verse one again. "*And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*" Our translators have, in the marginal reference, told us that this word "*perfect*" means "upright" or "sincere". Though the word is sometimes used in that way, that is not the case here. The holy Lord God cannot and will not accept our sincerity or uprightness. He who is God indeed, perfect, holy, and righteousness, that One who is Light and in whom is

no darkness at all, requires and demands perfection. It is written, "*It shall be perfect to be accepted*" (Lev. 22:21).

This is what God required of Abraham, and requires of us – "*Walk before me, and be thou perfect.*" This is his commandment. There is only one way in which we can walk before the Lord God in perfection. If we would walk before the holy Lord God, if we would be accepted before his august, majestic holiness, we must do so by faith in Christ, like Enoch of old (Heb. 11:5-6). This is what God requires of men (1 John 3:23).

Perfection is what God requires of sinners and what he gives to sinners in Christ (Matt. 5:20; 2 Cor. 5:21). Perfection, absolute, perfect holiness in thought, word and deed, is the standard every believers seeks, though we know it is unattainable in this life (Phil. 3:12-14). Perfection, absolute perfection of character and conduct, is what every child of God shall have in heaven's glory (Ps. 17:15).

GOD'S COVENANT

Abraham fell on his face in utter awe before the Lord God, the Almighty God, who stood before him, "*And God talked with him.*" I am interested in what God said to this man. Aren't you? We do not have to guess about it. The Holy Spirit tells us that the Lord God, the Almighty God, El-shaddai here talked to him about a covenant (Gen. 17:2-16). In these fifteen verses of Inspiration, the Lord God tells us six things about his covenant with Abraham. Again, I remind you, these things are recorded for us. They speak to us. They speak about God's covenant, "*ordered in all things and sure,*" for us.

1. *First*, understand this. – As it is revealed here, God's covenant with Abraham was a covenant made with one man for the benefit of many.

The promised blessings of the covenant extended to all Abraham's descendants. The blessedness promised reach to the four corners of the earth. As Andrew Fuller observed, "Surely these things were designed to familiarize us with the great principle on which our salvation should rest. It was the purpose of God to save perishing sinners. Yet, his covenant is not originally with them, but with Christ. With him it stands fast; and for his sake they are accepted and blessed. Even the blessedness of Abram himself, and all the rewards conferred on him, were for his sake."

God's covenant of grace and salvation, that covenant of which David said, "*this is all my salvation and all my desire,*" was made for us (his elect) with Christ our Surety before the world began. It is this covenant of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 1:3-7.

2. *Second*, God's covenant is a covenant of righteousness.

Let it be understood that God always, first and foremost, deals with sinners upon the ground of strict, unwavering, inflexible righteousness, justice, and truth. God's promised blessings of grace and everlasting salvation cannot be bestowed upon any, except those who stand perfect before him (Lev. 20:7; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). The blessings of grace and salvation come to chosen sinners by the merits of a perfect Surety, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. These covenant blessings come to us upon the grounds of righteousness established and brought in by the perfect obedience of Christ in his life. He is "**THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**" and justice satisfied by the sin-atonement death of God's own dear Son as our Substitute (Rom. 3:24-26).

3. *Third*, God's covenant with Abraham, and his covenant with Christ as our Surety, is a covenant of grace.

In verse nineteen, the Lord God told Abraham plainly that his covenant would be established not with Ishmael (the child of works), but with Isaac (the child of promise and of grace). We know that this is the meaning of the Lord's words to Abraham because the Holy Spirit tells us so in Galatians 4:22-31.

4. *Fourth*, God's covenant is a "*covenant of circumcision*" (Acts 7:8).

Circumcision was here instituted by God as the outward, ceremonial sign and seal of God's covenant with Abraham. This Old Testament rite of circumcision was a picture of that circumcision made without hands in the hearts of God's elect by the Holy Spirit in regeneration (Rom. 2:29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:10-15).¹²

Circumcision in the flesh meant exactly the same thing to Abraham and his descendants that the new birth means to us. It was a mark by which God's covenant was sealed to his people (Eph. 1:14; 4:30). It was a mark distinguishing God's people from the rest of the world. It was a painful mark. – The experience of grace is painful to the flesh. It was a purifying

¹² The Old Testament rite of circumcision has absolutely nothing to do with the New Testament ordinance of believer's baptism. There is not a single passage of Scripture in which the two are connected. Circumcision, as it is explained in the New Testament, pointed to the work of God the Holy Spirit in the hearts of chosen redeemed sinners. It was a picture of the new birth. As circumcision was the seal of God's covenant with Abraham to his children, so the coming of the Holy Spirit in his saving operations of grace is the seal of the new covenant to God's elect, Abraham's true children (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). Circumcision is a picture of regeneration. Believer's baptism is a picture of redemption (Rom. 6:3-6).

mark (Acts 15:9-11; 1 John 3:3). It was a permanent mark. It could not be reversed (Rom. 11:29; Ecc. 3:14).

5. *Fifth*, God's covenant is a covenant immutable and sure.

When the Almighty God says, "*I will*," he shall. Nothing can prevent him from doing what he says he will do. All power is his. He is El-shaddai, the Almighty, all-sufficient God. Seven times in this chapter he says, "*I will*." Hear his word of promise and rejoice (vv. 6, 7, 8, 19, 21). God's *shalls* and *wills* make his covenant immutable and sure (2 Sam. 23:5).

6. *Sixth*, we are told that God's covenant is a covenant kept by his people.

Without question, all the terms, stipulations, and conditions of the covenant were kept for us by Christ our God and Savior, the Surety of the covenant. He fulfilled all for us. We could never have fulfilled God's requirements. Yet, the Lord God demands in verse nine that we keep his covenant. "*And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.*" The word "*keep*" does not mean to keep by fulfilling, but to keep by guarding, by holding fast. The reprobate and unbelieving despise God's covenant. Needy sinners take hold of it and hold it fast (Isa. 56:4-6).

GOD'S CHILD

In verses 17-27, Abraham displays the character of one who is indeed God's child. He believed God (v. 17). Abraham prayed for his son, Ishmael (v. 18). Abraham bowed to the will of God (vv. 20-22). Though Ishmael was his firstborn son, though he loved him dearly, though he prayed for him earnestly, Abraham recognized that Ishmael had no claim upon God's grace. Humbly, he bows to his God, even

regarding his beloved son, Ishmael. Like Eli, he seems to have said in his heart, "*It is the LORD, let him do what seemeth him good.*"

Abraham obeyed the Lord (vv. 23-27). What an example of obedience this old, old man sets before us. What the Lord commanded he did. In his old age, Abraham continued to walk before his God as an obedient child. Old men commonly talk about the things they have done, while finding excuses to justify the neglect of present responsibilities. Not Abraham. Unto his dying day, in the tenor of his life, he readily received instruction from his God, and yielded implicit obedience to him, leaving the consequences of his obedience to God whose will he sought to obey and for whose glory he lived.

What a shining example he was. This man was justified by faith alone, without works. But he justified his faith by his works. His obedience was prompt. He consulted not with flesh and blood. His obedience was precise. He did exactly what the Lord God told him to do. His obedience was painful. Obedience to God is always painful to the flesh.

Here is God's Character – "*The Almighty God.*" Here is God's Command – "*Walk before me and be thou perfect.*" "*This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,*" in whom and by whom alone sinners stand perfect before God. Here is God's Covenant – "*I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.*" Here is God's Child – *Believing, Obedient and Blessed.*

Chapter 23

LOT

"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

Genesis 19:15-23

The Sodomites were a reprobate people, hardened by the perverse practice of grievous, vile sin. In Sodom, homosexuality had become the normal, dominant way of life. Men with men and women with women, leaving the natural use of the body, commonly practiced such wickedness that God determined he would destroy Sodom in his holy wrath.¹³

Sodom was a city under the judgment of God. However, there was one righteous man in that city; and God, who will not destroy the righteous with the wicked, would not destroy Sodom until he had delivered righteous Lot from the city. The historical record of that deliverance is found in Genesis 19.

Two angels came to Sodom to destroy the Sodomites and to deliver Lot and his family (vv. 1-3). The men of Sodom, moved by perverted lust, attempted to rape those two men (angels in human form) who had come as God's messengers on the first night they were in town (vv. 4-11). Lot appealed to those beasts not to do so wickedly; but they paid no attention to him. Until this time Lot had managed to get along with the Sodomites by compromise. That is the only way a righteous man can get along with godless men. So Lot, thinking that the prostitution of his daughters would be less vile than the homosexual rape of the men in his house, offered to give his virgin daughters to those vile reprobates! They laughed in his face and started to break into his house. When they did, the two men God had sent, pulled Lot inside and struck the men of Sodom with blindness. Then those messengers of mercy warned Lot to take his family and flee from the city, saying, "*The Lord hath sent us to destroy it*" (vv. 12-13). Lot, being

¹³ Homosexuality is still an abomination to God. It is the perverse practice of wicked men with perverted hearts and minds, acting in a manner that is against nature. Wherever homosexuality becomes commonly accepted, reprobation is evident. Any society that permits, accepts and condones the practice of homosexuality is under the judgment of God (Rom. 1:24-32).

aroused with fear, went to warn his sons-in-law, but he seemed to them as one who mocked (v. 14).

What a sad, sad story. When Lot spoke for God, when he attempted to convey the message of God to his daughters and sons-in-law, they thought he was trying to pull a joke on them! Having seen his life, they could not hear his words! Yet, Lot stands before us in Scripture as a marvelous picture of God's grace. This is particularly set before us in Genesis 19:15-23.

In verses 15 and 16, we see **the blessed violence of grace** (vv. 15-16). When the angels of God hastened Lot and commanded him to flee from Sodom, *"he lingered!"* Therefore, the angels took Lot, his wife, and his two daughters by the hand, and brought them out of the city. Grace snatches men and women from destruction (Jude 23; Psa. 65:4; 110:3). Lot hesitated; but grace hastened. If God had not been merciful to him, snatching him from the city, Lot's lingering would have been his ruin. The same is true of every believer. We escaped the clutches of Satan only because God our Savior snatched us from the kingdom of darkness and translated us into his kingdom of light.

In verse 17, there is **a word of instruction for all believers**. Though he had been delivered from Sodom, Lot was still in danger. He must not rest in the plain. He must escape for his life to the mountain. You and I who have been delivered by God's almighty grace from the bondage and dominion of sin are here given an urgent word of instruction. *"Escape for thy life!"* Ever flee from sin, Satan and the world. *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."* Never imagine that you have apprehended that for which you have been apprehended by Christ, as long as you live in this world. *"Look not behind thee!"* Forgetting those things which are behind, reach forth unto those things which are before. Count

all things but loss for Christ. Do not hanker after the world. Flee from it. *“Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.”* *“Set your affection on things above.”* *“Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* Having put your hand to the plow, do not look back. It is written, *“If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”*

Verses 18-21 show us something about **the weakness of faith**. What a sad picture this is. It was a great weakness in Lot that he preferred Zoar, the city of his choosing, to the mountain of God's choosing. Fearing that he could not make it to the mountain, he desired to dwell in Zoar. He recognized God's grace in his deliverance from Sodom; but he did not trust God's grace to take him all the way up to the mountain. Even now, Lot wanted to enjoy the ease and comfort of the world. Here is a sad, painful fact, but a fact nonetheless, a fact that every child of God will learn by painful experience in this world -- True faith is mixed with much unbelief.

Verses 21-23 show us **the cause of God's longsuffering**. God is longsuffering with and preserves the wicked in life for the salvation of his own elect (2 Pet. 3:9). There are some sinners in this world who must and shall be saved. God will save his own elect. Christ will have his redeemed. The Holy Spirit will regenerate and call every sinner chosen by God in eternity and redeemed by Christ at Calvary. Until the last of God's elect are called, he will not destroy this world (Rev. 7:1-3). “What care,” wrote Matthew Henry, “God takes for the preservation of his people. The winds (of judgment) are held till God's servants are sealed.”

Two words found in verse 16 pretty well summarize the life of this man, Lot - *“He lingered!”* The angels of God stood before him, calling him to take his family and flee from Sodom. Yet, as God was preparing to rain fire and brimstone upon the

city, even then, we are told - *"He lingered!"* Those two words are most solemn. They are full of food for thought. They ought to sound like the blasts of a trumpet in our ears. They should cause us all to sit up and pay attention.

WHO WAS THIS MAN, LOT?

Many seem to think that Lot was a bad man, a wicked worldling, a child of the devil; but he was not such a person. Lot was a righteous man, made righteous by the grace of God, born of God, washed in the blood of Christ, robed in his righteousness, though he often behaved horribly.

Lot was a man with a very good beginning in the way of faith (Gen. 11:31). Very few begin as well as Abraham's nephew, Lot. He clearly learned much, sacrificed much and showed great promise. If Lot had only continued as he began, we would not question the excellence of his character. He left Chaldea with his godly uncle Abraham. He forsook his youthful companions, believing the promise of God. He worshipped God with Abraham. Whenever Abraham built an altar to the Lord God, Lot worshipped at that altar. Whenever God spoke to Abraham, Lot anxiously and carefully listened as Abraham taught him the word of the Lord. Lot entered into the land of promise with Abraham.

Lot was a true believer, a child of God. He was a converted man, a justified soul, or heir of heaven. Lot truly was a righteous man. The Holy Spirit places this matter beyond all controversy (2 Pet. 2:7-8). God himself has given us good evidence of his grace in Lot. He was a man who lived in a wicked place, *"seeing and hearing"* the evil around him. Yet, he was not a wicked man. Lot had his faults, plenty of them; but he was distinctly different from the men of Sodom. *"He vexed his righteous soul with the unlawful deeds"* he beheld around him. He was wounded, grieved, pained, hurt,

and angered by the deeds of his neighbors. Lot had the same attitude toward the society in which he lived as David did in his (Psa. 119:136, 158).

Furthermore, Peter tells us that he “*vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.*” Many of us are shocked by certain acts of evil the first time we see them, but after a while we become accustomed to the abomination. Not Lot. He was continually grieved by the wickedness he beheld around him.

This is the thing I want you to see. God's saints in this world have many blemishes. We are sinners still. We do not despise the gold because it is mixed with dross; and we must not undervalue the grace of God in a man because it is accompanied by corruption. Lot suffered much, because of his lingering, and his family even more; but he was a true believer. Though he lingered in Sodom, he is seated today in the blessed circle of the redeemed around the throne of Christ. There he sits, elect, chosen of God, and precious. -- Redeemed, washed and forgiven by the blood of Christ. -- Born again, sanctified and glorified by the Spirit of grace. -- Side by side with and heir of the same glory as Abraham.

WHAT DID LOT DO?

Moses tells us, “*He lingered!*” What a short sentence that is to tell us so much about this man. Consider these words in the context in which they are found, and I am sure you will agree that Lot's behavior was shocking. - “***He lingered!***” This, it seems to me, is the most shocking thing revealed about him. His greed and covetousness, his drunkenness, his incest are all less shocking than this - “*He lingered!*” Lot knew the awful condition of the city in which he lived. “*The cry*” of its abomination was “*great before the face of the Lord*” (19:13). Yet, “*he lingered!*” Lot knew the fearful

judgment coming down upon all within the city (19:13). Yet, *“he lingered!”* He knew that God is a God of righteousness, justice, and truth. Yet, *“he lingered!”* He knew and believed that judgment was both real and imminent. He tried to persuade his sons-in-law to flee the wrath of God (19:14). Yet, *“he lingered!”* Lot saw the angels of God standing by, warning him and his family to flee. Yet, *“he lingered!”* He heard the command of God by his messengers (19:15). Yet, *“he lingered!”*

C. H. Spurgeon wrote, “Lot was slow when he should have been fast, backward when he should have been forward, trifling when he should have been hastening, loitering when he should have been hurrying, cold when he should have been hot.” This seems incredible. It is shocking beyond imagination. *“He lingered!”* This shocking behavior of Lot is written in the Scriptures for our learning.

There are many in the church of Christ today who are very much like Lot. We all know far more than we practice. We all linger too much here. We say we believe in heaven, but pursue the world. We say we believe in eternal punishment, but seem to be bothered little by the fact that thousands are going to hell, even many of our own families. We know that *“the time is short,”* but live as though it was long. How little we *“redeem the time.”* We know that there is a warfare between light and darkness, but appear to be at peace. We know that there is a race to run, but we seem to be content to sit still. We know that judgment is coming, but we appear to be fast asleep.

We all appear to live as though consecration to Christ is extreme and burning zeal for his glory is fanaticism. We all shrink from self-denial, personal sacrifice, and wholehearted commitment. Our Lord says, *“take your cross and follow me.”* He commands us to cut off the right hand that hinders us and

pluck out the right eye that is set upon the world. He tells us that the gate is strait and the way is narrow that leads to life everlasting. Yet, we try our best to make the cross lighter, to nourish the hindering hand, salve the worldly eye, widen the gate and broaden the way. Like Lot, we linger! We try constantly to hold both the world and Christ. We know what is right. We know the command of Christ. We have heard our Savior say, *“Love not the world!”* *“No man can serve two masters!”* Yet, we linger!

Does this apply directly to you? does it apply directly to me? Let us be honest with ourselves before God. Perhaps at one time you ran well. But now you linger. Once your heart burned with love for Christ. Now, though your hearts awakens, you sleep (Song 5:2). Like Lot, you linger. Like Peter, you follow the Lord afar off. Your soul is miserable. Linger no more (Lam. 5:16-21).

WHY DID LOT LINGER?

This is an important question. If we would learn and be warned by Lot’s lingering, we must know the cause of it. To know the cause of a problem is the first step to finding its cure. Maybe you have no fear of lingering. Let me refresh your memory with Lot’s history. If you choose Lot’s path you are sure to reap his character.

The Scriptures show us several things that led up to Lot’s lingering. Let me mention just two, two things that led to Lot’s lingering in Sodom. *First*, he made the wrong choice early in life. Abraham and Lot had a falling out because of Lot’s greed (Gen. 13:9-10).¹⁴ When they parted company, Lot

¹⁴ Strife between brethren is often, if not usually, about money, wealth, and earthly possessions. Abraham was a godly man. He chose the way of peace. Lot was a greedy man. He chose the way of prosperity. His choice was indescribably costly!

chose the land near the town of Sodom. The men of Sodom who would be his neighbors were wicked beyond thought, but the pastures were fertile and green. He chose by sight, not by faith. Like Eve before and Achan after, he saw, he coveted, and he took. He did not seek the counsel of the Lord. He looked only upon the things of time. He seems to have thought little of eternity. He was concerned for profit, but thought little of the glory of God, the welfare of his soul, and the salvation of his household. There was nothing in Sodom to help Lot or his family toward heaven. There was no prophet to minister to his soul, no place where God was worshipped, and no brethren to encourage him or for him to encourage. Lot made his choice solely upon the basis of carnal lust. The move toward Sodom just seemed most profitable.

Second, Lot mixed with godless, unbelieving men when there was no need for him to do so. He chose for his companions the men of Sodom. First, we are told that he pitched his tent toward Sodom. Then we see him living in Sodom. Perhaps he moved to Sodom, to please his wife, perhaps to please his daughters, perhaps to please himself. We do not know. But this is certain -- We never lack an excuse to do what we are determined to do.

This is the cause of Lot's lingering. He made the wrong choice early in life. And he chose the companionship of the ungodly. When a child of God does these two things, we are sure to hear unfavorable accounts concerning his soul. There is no surer way to danger than to make the wrong choices early in life and to take upon yourself a yoke of companionship with ungodly men and women (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

"Remember Lot," is the warning Christ gives to all who would follow him. Beware of Lot's choices and the consequences of them, when choosing a companion, a

career, deciding where to live and raise your family, or you are thinking about taking a better position.

We have no indication that Lot approved of the Sodomites, or ever participated in their wickedness. He loved the riches of Sodom. Yet, in order to have the riches of Sodom, he was willing to spend his life among the Sodomites. What a pity! If you lay your head in the lap of the world, you need not be surprised if you awake one day like Samson and discover that your strength is gone, that the Spirit of God has left you!

WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF LOT'S BEHAVIOR?

What does it matter if Lot lingered in Sodom? After all, he was saved, he was justified, he went to heaven when he died. Let me show you the folly of such wicked reasoning.

Lot, though a righteous man himself, did no good among the inhabitants of Sodom. He lived in Sodom for many years. He had great opportunity to do much good. But he had no influence upon the men of the city for good. No one there had any respect for him. No one respects a man who compromises himself, his principles, and his God for gain. Not one righteous person could be found in Sodom, other than Lot himself. None of his neighbors believed his testimony. None of his friends honored his God. None of his servants feared their master's God. In short, his life had no influence for good, his words carried no weight, his faith was not followed, his God was not honored.

Lot did not help any of his family toward heaven. Not one person in his household believed God. He brought no honor to Christ, his God and Savior, in his generation. I cannot find one large-hearted, noble-minded, or self-sacrificing thing he ever did in his entire life. When he died,

Lot left nothing behind that would indicate that he ever knew God at all. If we did not have Peter's record, if all we read was the account Moses gives of his life, we would be forced to conclude that Lot was a lost man. We should not be surprised that Lot's life turned out like it did. Worldly, lingering souls, are never useful instruments for good to others. They have no influence for good among men. They bring no honor to Christ while they live.

WHAT SHOULD WE LEARN FROM LOT?

Lot was a sad character, a frustration and a disappointment; but, if ever there was a man who stands before us in Holy Scripture as a picture of grace, that man is Lot. His life declares, "**Salvation is of the Lord!**" The only righteousness he had was the righteousness which God, by his grace had given him. Grace imputed the righteousness of Christ to him. Grace imparted the righteousness of Christ to him. Grace preserved righteousness in him. Lot was delivered from divine judgment, not by his free-will, but by God's free-grace. Truly, the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation (2 Pet. 2:10).

If we are God's children, be assured, he will have our hearts. He may break our hearts, but have them he will. He may bring us to earthly ruin, but he will have our hearts. He may take away all earthly comfort and joy, but he will have our hearts!

Linger no more (Eph. 5:14-18). For the glory of Christ, linger no more. If you would be useful to Christ, linger no more. Oh, let us now return to our God (Jer. 3:11-14, 22). Life does not linger. Death does not linger. Judgment does not linger. Hell does not linger. Let linger no more. *"It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand:*

let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:11-12). Linger no more!

Chapter 24

SARAH AND HAGAR

"And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. (10) Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

Genesis 21:9-10 and Galatians 4:21-31

The Bible is not a Book about history. It is a Book about Christ and the redemption of sinners by Christ. However, whenever the Bible deals with historical facts, it is always accurate in every detail. The historical facts revealed in Holy Scripture are given, not just to fill in the gaps, but to convey and illustrate the message of redemption by Christ. In that sense, all of the events recorded in the Old Testament are to be interpreted allegorically. An allegory, or an allegorical interpretation of Scripture, is the use of historical facts and events to portray and teach spiritual, gospel truths.¹⁵

Creation is a historical fact. Yet, it is also a picture of grace. The flood and Noah's ark are historical facts. Yet, they are also a picture of grace, a picture of our redemption and salvation in Christ. Bible stories are much more than examples of God's miraculous power. They are examples of God's merciful acts toward the sons of men. We now have

¹⁵ We do not have the liberty to take any historical event revealed in Scripture and make it teach what we want it to teach, or think it might teach. But we do have a responsibility to honestly interpret every historical event revealed in Scripture in the light of revealed gospel truth, making every event typical, or an allegory, of redemption by Christ.

before us one story in the Scriptures that is plainly declared to be an allegory. The story of Sarah and Hagar is a beautiful and instructive picture of the grace of God. The historical facts of this story are recorded in Genesis 21:1-14. The allegorical interpretation of those facts is found in Galatians 4:21-31.

The purpose of this allegory, as Paul uses it, is to show us the believer's complete and total freedom from the law. The allegory is about two women, Sarah and Hagar, and two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Sarah represents the covenant of grace. Her son, Isaac, represents the children of promise, all who are born again by the promise and power of God's grace. Hagar represents the covenant of works. Her son, Ishmael, represents all who go about to establish their own righteousness by the works of the law and will not submit to the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus. These are children of bondage who know not God.

No two things in all the world are more diametrically opposed to one another than law and grace. Yet, all men by nature attempt to mix the two together. The mixing of law and grace is the heretical assertion that salvation is both by our works and by God's free grace through the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must understand the difference between these two things. Any mixture of law and grace, any intermingling of the covenant of works with the covenant of grace is deadly. Those who mix law and grace teach a doctrine that is damning to the souls of men. We must distinguish between our doing for salvation and another doing in our place for salvation. Salvation is not by our doing at all, but by the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ for us! "This doctrine lies at the very heart of the gospel, and is so important that he who grasps and understands it, is a master in divinity, while he who does not properly distinguish here remains in doubt and perplexity and walks in darkness, knowing not at what he stumbles." (G. S. Bishop).

It is the universal assertion of Holy Scripture that all true believers are totally free from the law (Rom. 6:14-15; 7:1-4; 8:1-4; 10:4; 1 Tim. 1:9-11). It is the purpose of God the Holy Spirit to show us that fact most emphatically in the book of Galatians (Gal. 1:6-9; 2:16, 21; 3:13, 19-25; 5:1, 4, 12; 6:14).

TWO COVENANTS

The Holy Spirit tells us plainly that Sarah and Hagar represent two covenants which are diametrically opposed to one another, the covenant of grace and the covenant of works (Gal. 4:24). God almighty deals with men upon the basis of a covenant. A covenant is a contract made between two or more parties in which certain promises are made in the anticipation of specified conditions being fulfilled. We see this illustrated in David's covenant with Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:11-17).

Understanding the nature of a covenant, we recognize that there could only be two possible covenants between God and man. (1.) A covenant of works, founded upon what man shall do for his salvation, or (2.) A covenant of grace, founded upon what God shall do for man to save him -- a covenant of law, or a covenant of grace.

Hagar, Sarah's handmaid and servant, represents the covenant of law, works, and ceremonies, revealed and given to Israel by God through his servant Moses at Mt. Sinai. In the law God says to man, "Do this and live!" John Gill asserted that the Jews in the Mosaic age were "in bondage to the moral law, which required perfect obedience of them, but gave them no strength to perform; showed them their sin and misery, but not their remedy; demanded a complete righteousness, but did not point out where it was to be had; it spoke not one word of peace and comfort, but all the reverse; it admitted of no

repentance; it accused of sin, pronounced guilty on account of it, cursed, condemned, and threatened death for it, all which kept them in continual bondage." Hagar represents the bondage of legalism.

Sarah, Abraham's true wife, represents God's eternal covenant of grace with Christ for the salvation of his elect. "The covenant of works stood between God and Adam. Adam fell, and it now lies hopelessly broken. The covenant of grace stood between God and Christ. Christ has fulfilled it, and it stands established forever!" (G. S. Bishop).

The covenant of works was written out in the law in stone at Sinai. However, it was the same covenant which Adam broke in the garden. And it is the covenant (the law) which is written upon the hearts of all men by nature, a covenant which all men constantly break (Rom. 2:14-15). But, blessed be God, the covenant of grace cannot be broken!

The covenant of grace was made long before the covenant of works (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). It was made from eternity and cannot be nullified by anything done in time (Gal. 3:16-17). The covenant of grace was made between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and cannot be broken by man (Heb. 7:22; 13:20; John 17:2-3). The covenant of grace says, "Do this, O Christ, and thy people shall live forever!" (Psa. 2:8; 110:3; Isa. 53:10-12). The covenant of grace took into consideration the failures of God's elect and made promises of grace concerning us, even in the teeth of our sins (Psa. 89:19-37; Jer. 31:31-34; 32:37-41). This is a covenant of pure, free, immutable grace, ordered in all things and sure (2 Sam. 23:5; Rom. 8:28-34; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). Sarah represents the covenant of grace. Hagar represents the works of the law!

Though Hagar bore the first son, Sarah had a prior claim to all the inheritance, because she was Abraham's original wife. Sarah told Abraham to cast Hagar and Ishmael out upon the basis of her prior claim upon him. And, though the covenant of works was revealed first, the covenant of grace has a prior claim upon God's elect and upon the inheritance of life. Long before we sinned, the covenant of grace was made. Before we became sinners, Christ stood as our Surety. Before ever we needed atonement, Christ was the Lamb of sacrifice slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 1 Pet. 1:18-21). Long before we were cursed by the law, we were blessed with God's salvation in the covenant of grace (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9).

It was never intended that Hagar should be Abraham's wife, or that Ishmael should be the promised seed of grace. Hagar was Sarah's handmaid. Nothing more! The law, which Hagar represents, was never given, or intended to be, a means of righteousness and salvation for anyone. No one was ever saved by keeping the law. The law was only a handmaid to grace. The only purpose of the law is to point men to Christ (Gal. 3:21-29). "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" (Rom. 10:4). When the Word of God asserts that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, the Spirit of God means for us to understand that...

1. Christ is the end of the law as the object of it.
2. Christ is the end of the law as the fulfilment of its purpose, pictures, and requirements.
3. Christ is the end of the law as the conclusion of it.
4. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, both for justification and for sanctification. We do not go to Calvary for justification and then run back to Sinai for sanctification. Both justification and sanctification are found in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

5. Christ is the end of the law in the sense that death is the end of all covenants (Rom. 7:1-4).

The law identifies sin and condemns men for sin; but it can never remove sin, justify the sinner, or sanctify a believer. The law is good, if a man uses it lawfully (1 Tim. 1:9-11); but when it is put in the place of grace, it must be cast out, like Hagar and Ishmael. The law is holy, just, and good; but when it is made to be a means of winning, keeping, or improving God's favor, it is used unlawfully.

TWO SYSTEMS OF RELIGION

Sarah and Hagar also represent two systems of religion: grace and works (Gal. 4:25-27). There are but two religions upon the earth: grace and works. These two systems of religion mutually annihilate one another. If a person is saved in anyway, either in whole or in part, by his own works, then he is not saved by God's grace. If we are saved by God's grace, then we are not saved, in whole or in part, by any works of our own (Rom. 11:6). There is no in between ground, where grace and works live together. Read Galatians 5:1-4. Then read it again. If we do anything by which we hope to get God's favor, keep God's favor, or improve our standing in God's favor, we have missed Christ altogether.

All churches, religions, and systems of doctrine which teach salvation by the works of the law are represented by Hagar. Any teaching which says we are justified, sanctified, preserved, given favor with God, or inherit heavenly glory upon the basis of our own works of obedience to God is legalism, antichrist, and damning to the souls of men. That is what Galatians. 5:1-4 declares.

Now, look at what Paul tells us about Hagar, the religion of the world, the religion of works (Gal. 4:25). She is in

Arabia, -- outside the land of promise. She is in bondage. -- The law can give nothing but bondage. There is no liberty to be found at Sinai. Her children are all yet in bondage. – Those who live under the tyranny of the law, are yet wearing the iron shackles of slavery and imprisonment. They are in bondage to sin. They are yet the captives of Satan. They are under the curse of the law. They are yet under the sentence of death. There is nothing else to be found in the house of bondage.

Sarah represents that church, that religion, that system of doctrine which declares salvation by grace without the deeds of the law (Gal. 4:26-27). The kingdom of God is a kingdom of grace. The gospel of God is the gospel of grace. And the church of God is the true Jerusalem, the city of grace and peace. The gospel of grace is from above. The people of God are free (Rom. 6:14-15). The church of God is the mother of all who believe. The church of God, the kingdom of grace, shall be triumphant and glorious in the end (Gal. 4:27; Isa. 54:1).

Hagar never was free; and Sarah never was a slave. Ishmael, being the son of a slave, never could be a free man. Isaac, being the son of a free woman, never could be a slave. All who seek salvation by their own works are forever in bondage, and must be cast out into outer darkness. All who trust Christ alone, being saved by pure, free grace, abide in the house of grace forever, forever free, forever heirs of grace. When Isaac was born, Ishmael had to go. Hagar and her son were driven out of Abraham's house, but not Sarah. So too, as soon as the gospel of grace is revealed, the covenant of works is driven away (Heb. 10:1-10).

Two Sons

The Holy Spirit uses the two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, to represent lost religious legalists and sinners saved by the

grace of God (Gal. 4: 28-31). Ishmael was born after the flesh. Isaac was born after the Spirit. Legalism, all legal religion, is of the flesh, fleshly. Grace is of the Spirit, spiritual. Ishmael was the child of works, the child of unbelief. Isaac was the child of promise, born supernaturally, by a work of God. Ishmael mocked and persecuted Isaac. Ishmael was cursed. Isaac was blessed.

There is no room for legalism in the house of grace. *"We are not under the law, but under grace."* We are not justified by the law, but by grace (Rom. 3:19-24). We are not sanctified by the law, but by grace (Gal. 3:1-3). We are not ruled by the law, but by grace (Tit. 2:11-14). We are not motivated by the law, but by grace (2 Cor. 5:14). The difference between the believer and the legalist is not their conduct, but their motive. We shall not be glorified by the law, but by grace (Jude 24, 25).

Why are the Scriptures so dogmatic about this matter of the believer's freedom from the law? Legalism would rob Christ of the glory of his grace. Legalism would rob the believer of the joy of faith, the joy of assurance, and the joy of all service to Christ. Legalism would rob the world of the hope of salvation. If salvation depends upon something done by man, then all men must forever perish without hope. Blessed be God, that is not the case. *"Salvation is of the Lord!" "By grace are ye saved!" "So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy!"*

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). The only way any sinful man can honor the law is by faith in Christ. Christ fulfilled the law in the room and stead of his people. We, believing on him, fulfil the law by faith.

Chapter 25

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Genesis 22:1-18

In Hebrews 5:8 we read that our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."* And that which was true of our Redeemer, when he walked upon this earth as a man, is true of us. If we are the children of God, as long as we live in this body of flesh, we will be required to learn obedience. And we learn obedience by the things which we suffer by the hand of God's wise and good providence.

The life of the believer is a series of trials, by which his faith is tested, proved, and strengthened. Christian character is developed by discipline. And God will develop the character of his saints. It appears that frequently there is one great trial of faith, for which all other trials seem to be preparatory. Certainly, that was the case with Abraham and the great trial of his faith revealed to us in Genesis 22.

This is one of the great chapters of the Bible. Here, for the first time, God shows us, in a vivid picture, the necessity of a human sacrifice for the ransom of our souls. Because it was a man who brought sin into the world, sin must be removed by a man. Because man had sinned, a man must suffer the wrath of God and die. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. But the Man, Christ Jesus, *"after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of*

God...For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:4, 12, 14).

Genesis 22 records Abraham’s greatest trial and the greatest revelation of the gospel which God made to Abraham. I am sure our Lord was referring to this chapter when he said, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad”* (John 8:56). This chapter is full of Christ and full of redemption. Someone suggested, “It could rightly be called, ‘The Gospel of Moriah’.” Many, with good reason, believe that Mt. Moriah and Mt. Calvary were the same place.

Everything in this chapter portrays God’s great sacrifice of his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the place of sinners. We have before us examples of great faith in Abraham and in Isaac. God’s great purpose of grace in Christ is displayed in Abraham’s confident declaration, *“God will provide himself a lamb,”* and in his calling the name of the place *“Jehovah-jireh.”* However, the dominant theme of the chapter is the picture set before us of substitutionary redemption and God’s great provision for his people in Christ. As the ram caught in the thicket was sacrificed in Isaac’s stead and God provided in that ram everything Isaac needed, so Christ died in the room and stead of his people, and God has given his elect all we need for time and eternity in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

THE TIME

Notice first the time when this trial was brought upon Abraham (v. 1). *“And it came to pass after these things”* - After all the other trials, hardships, heartaches, and difficulties he had already endured, perhaps Abraham had begun to think, “At last, the storms are over.” This is the man who had been called to leave his home and family. -- This is the man who

had buried his father, Terah, in Haran. -- This is the man who had to endure the family strife with Lot. -- This is the man who had to go to war with the heathen kings to save Lot. -- This is the man who had to wait 25 years for God to fulfil his promise in giving him a son, the son he is now required to sacrifice. -- This is the man who had seen his brother Lot's family swept away in God's wrath. -- This is the man who had been required to cast his son out of his house.

Abraham must have thought to himself, after all he had been through, "Now the worst is over. Now I will live in peace. Ishmael is gone. Hagar is gone. Lot is gone. But I have Sarah and Isaac. All is well." But it was not so. *"It came to pass after these things that God did tempt,"* test, try, and prove, "Abraham." Abraham had been tested again and again. But now the Lord seems to say, *"My son, give me thine heart"* (Pro. 23:26).

THE TEMPTER

The one who brought this trial upon Abraham was the Lord his God. -- *"God did tempt Abraham"* (v. 1). The word tempt here means, "to try," "to test," or "to prove" (James 1:2, 3, 12). God brought this trial upon Abraham, not because he was angry with him, but because he loved him. The purpose of the trial was to prove to Abraham the reality of his faith and to reveal to Abraham the glory of God's grace in Christ. When the trial was over, Abraham knew himself better than he did before; and he knew Christ better than he did before.

All through his life God had been preparing Abraham for this event. Now, *"it came to pass after these things."* Our great, sovereign God does all things *"in due time"* (Rom. 5:6), *"in the fulness of time"* (Gal. 4:4). *"After these things"* - After the fall, the flood, the exodus, the tabernacle, the law, the prophets, the kings, and the priests had all run their course, it

pleased God to fulfil every prophecy, pattern, and promise of Holy Scripture by the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. All that came before were preparatory events, picturing and pointing to the hour when Christ would die (Acts 10:43; Lk. 24:27, 44-46).

God's providence is always on time. "*All things are of God*" (2 Cor. 5:18). God does all things well. Let us learn these three things, and we will learn to live in peace:

1. Our trials always come from our heavenly Father.
2. Our trials are brought upon us by God to prove and improve our faith.
3. Our trials reveal Christ and make him more precious.

Read verse 2 and try to realize something of the magnitude of this great trial, which God's friend and faithful servant was here called upon to endure. "*And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*"

The words of this verse, taken one by one, reveal the greatness of Abraham's sacrifice, the love behind it, and the agony he endured through it. Can you imagine Abraham's grief when he received this command? Who can enter into the sorrow he suffered as he contemplated the death of his son by his own hand? What great love he must have had for God to willingly sacrifice his darling Isaac? No mere man ever man such a supreme sacrifice to God.

Every word in this verse must have been like a sword in his heart! Yet, there is a greater Sacrifice than that of Abraham. Here the Lord God himself is telling us what he has done for us. "*Take now thy son*" - The Lord Jesus Christ, whom God sacrificed for us, is himself the Son of God. "*Thine*

only son" - Our Savior, whom God gave for the ransom of our souls, is God's "*only begotten Son*" (John 3:16). "*Isaac*" - Isaac means "laughter", or "delight." And Christ is the one, the only one, in whom God is well pleased. "*Whom thou lovest*" - God said, "*This is my beloved Son.*" Yet, he sacrificed his darling for us, the very chief of sinners! "*And offer him for a burnt offering*" - Not just a sacrifice, "*a burnt offering!*" The Lord Jesus Christ is our burnt-offering, our sin-offering, sacrificed for us by the hand of God, according to the will of God (Isa. 53:10; Heb. 10:9-10). "*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!*" (1 Cor. 9:15).

Try to imagine the difficulties Abraham had to overcome to obey God's command. There were many things Abraham might have argued as reasons for disobedience; but he "*consulted not with flesh and blood.*" God called Abraham to sacrifice his son, but gave him no reason for requiring such a sacrifice - All Abraham had was God's command. The commandment was contrary to nature, reason, and love; but it was crystal clear. The commandment appeared to be contrary to the promise of God; but it came from God who made the promise. If Abraham obeyed God, as he knew he must, he was sure to suffer much ridicule, persecution, and reproach for it. What would he tell Sarah? What would he say to the Egyptians?

Matthew Henry correctly informs us that, "God's commands must not be disputed, but obeyed. We must not consult with flesh and blood about them (Gal. 1:15-16), but with a gracious obstinacy persist in our obedience to them." "*Whatsoever he saith to you, do it!*" (John 2:5).

Now read verses 3-10. As you do, turn your thoughts away from Abraham. This is a picture of God's whole purpose of grace and his work of redemption by the sacrifice of Christ.

“Abraham rose up early in the morning,” and prepared everything with great care (vv. 3-4).

Abraham had three long days to think about what must be done. As they journeyed those days and slept through those nights, the burden and sacrifice constantly lay upon his heart. But our heavenly Father planned, purposed, and ordained the sacrifice of his Son for us, not three days, nor three thousand days, but from eternity, before ever the world was made (Rev. 13:8; Eph. 1:3-4). And he never thought about altering his purpose!

Abraham carefully prepared everything for the sacrifice. And our great God carefully prepared everything for the sacrifice of his darling Son for us (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). *“Abraham saw the place afar off.”* So the Lord God, from everlasting set his heart and mind upon the place of sacrifice - Mt. Calvary.

Abraham and Isaac went to the mountain of sacrifice together alone (vv. 5-8). Redemption was the work of God alone, a transaction between God the Father and God the Son. *“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself”* (2 Cor. 5:19). Twelve went with the Son of God to the Passover. Eleven went with him to the garden. Three went with him to pray. But when he went to the cross, our Savior was alone (Heb. 1:3). The wood was laid upon Isaac’s back. Christ carried his cross. The instruments of death were in the father’s hands.

In verse seven, Isaac asked, *“Where is the Lamb for a burnt offering?”* He knew that God could not be worshipped without a blood sacrifice (Ex. 12:13; Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). His father answered, *“God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering”* (v. 8). This is clearly a prophecy of Christ, the Lamb of God. Christ the Sacrifice for God. He is the Sacrifice

from God. God requires only what he gives; and he will always accept that which he has given. Jesus Christ is here described as that Sacrifice who is God!

At last Abraham and Isaac came to the place of sacrifice (vv. 9-10). Abraham built the altar and laid the wood upon it. He bound his son and laid him on the altar. Isaac willingly submitted to his father's will. Abraham stretched forth his hand to kill his Son. No explanation is needed. This is a picture of our great Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was delivered to death by the will of God, and put to death as our Substitute by the hand of divine justice (Acts 2:23; Isa. 53:8-10; Zech. 13:7). Yet, he freely volunteered to be our sin-atoning sacrifice (John 10:17-18; Heb. 10:5-14; 1 Pet. 2:24).

Once Abraham's faith was proved, God intervened to save Isaac; and the type changes. Verses 11-13 reveal the beautiful, blessed picture of substitutionary redemption. When God spoke, Abraham looked . When he looked, he saw a ram caught in the thicket, which he offered "*in the stead of his Son!*" (2 Cor. 5:21). That ram represents Christ.

"Abraham called the name of that place, Jehovah-jireh" (v. 14). That name might be properly translated in three ways. Each translation reveals blessed, soul cheering, gospel truths by which the believer's heart is encouraged and comforted throughout his earthly pilgrimage. Jehovah-jireh means, "The LORD will see." He sees all our needs. Particularly, he sees our need for righteousness and atonement. Jehovah-jireh means, "The LORD will provide." He who is our God provides all that we need in his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). And, Jehovah-jireh means, "The LORD will be seen." In the provision he makes for his people, in the substitutionary sacrifice of his dear Son for the salvation of his people, the Lord God reveals the glory of his

great Being ((2 Cor. 4:4-6; Rom. 3:24-26; Psa. 108:6; Eph. 2:7).

When the whole work was done, Isaac, the object of his father's love, was exalted (vv. 15-18). He was promised a great posterity - "*He shall see his seed!*" He was made to be a great ruler, "*possessing the gate of his enemies.*" He became the source of universal blessedness. In all these things, Isaac portrays that greatness, glory, and exaltation given to our Lord Jesus Christ as our Mediator, when he had finished his work of redemption upon the earth and put away the sins of his people (Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 10:10-14; John 17:2; Psa. 2:8; Eph. 1:3).

In the light of these things, considering what the Lord God has done for chosen sinners in the sacrifice of Christ for the ransom of our souls, lets us lay to heart the following three question.

1. What trial is too great for me to endure for him who endured such great agony for me?
2. What sacrifice is too costly for me to make for my Savior, a sinner redeemed by the precious blood of Christ?
3. What work is too demeaning or too demanding for one who has been purchased by a Savior so demeaned in obedience which demanded his death under the wrath of God as my Substitute?

Chapter 26

Jehovah-jireh

"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen."

Genesis 22:14

Pay no attention to those who teach that it is never God's will for his children to suffer, or that all suffering is an indication of God's displeasure. Genesis 22 writes this message out in bold letters: **TRUE FAITH MUST BE PROVED BY TRIALS**. Here the Holy Spirit has recorded Abraham's most severe trial. Abraham was the friend of God. But, in God's wise and good providence, Abraham was called upon to endure the most heart-rending trial any man ever had to face in this world, other than the Man of Sorrows. Faith must be proved; and it is proved only when it is put to the test.

However, the primary thing to be seen in this chapter is not Abraham's trial, but God's provision for Abraham and his son upon the mount. The Lord God provided a ram as a substitute to die in the place of Isaac. There Abraham raised up an everlasting memorial to his God. The name by which God revealed himself to Abraham, "Jehovah-jireh," may be translated in three ways. It could be translated "The LORD will See," or "The LORD will Provide," or "The LORD shall be Seen." However we translate this name of our God, Jehovah-jireh expresses the idea of God seeing and being seen. For God, to see is to provide. You know how we sometimes say, "I will see to it," when we mean, "I will take care of it," or "I will provide for it." That is the meaning here.

The truth contained in this name of God, Jehovah-jireh, ruled Abraham's heart even before he uttered it and established it as a memorial in the place where God provided a substitute for Isaac. It was faith in Jehovah-jireh that sustained the old patriarch's heart throughout this ordeal. Faith in Jehovah-jireh, the Lord who will provide, enabled Abraham to render the prompt and unswerving obedience that is recorded in this chapter. Many things must have crossed Abraham's mind which might have caused him to disobey his God. As he took that painful journey to Moriah, he must have had many perplexing questions about Sarah, his relationship with her, the promises of God that were wrapped up in Isaac, Isaac himself, and the response of his friends and neighbors to his act of slaying his son in the name of God. Yet, the old man strengthened his heart, as he went up to Moriah. Determined to obey God, regardless of cost or consequence, Abraham said to himself, "The Lord will see and the Lord will provide. He will not break his promise. He will not alter his word. Perhaps he will raise Isaac from the dead. But even if he is not pleased to do so, by one means or another, my God will justify my obedience and vindicate his command. His name is Jehovah-jireh." This name of God, Jehovah-jireh, silenced every unbelieving thought and carnal objection.

Do not miss the practical application of this to your own heart. If you believe God, if you follow the Lord's bidding, he will see to it that you will not be ashamed or confounded (Rom. 10:11). If you come into great need by following his command, the Lord will see to it that you lose nothing by your obedience. If difficulties rise like mountains before you, so that your way seems to be completely blocked up, your God will see to it that the way is cleared. Walk in the way of obedience and, as you walk, every obstacle will fall before you. "*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*" (John 2:5). Confer not with flesh and blood, and the Lord will make a way for you to do his will (Gal. 1:16). The Lord will see us through the way of

faith and obedience, if we are willing to walk in it. He will see to our way, if we dare to walk in his way (Pro. 3:5-6).

“The Lord will see and the Lord will provide.” That is what Jehovah-jireh means. We should not be surprised to find Abraham declaring this truth and attaching it to the spot that was to be forever famous. His whole heart was saturated with it. His soul was sustained by it. His trial taught him more of his God than he knew before or could have known in any other way. In fact, it gave him a new name for his God. And Abraham’s grateful heart desired to keep this name of God as a memorial to all future generations, to encourage all who believe God to obey his will and persevere in his ways. Abraham says to all, “The name of our God is JEHOVAH-JIREH, the Lord will see and the Lord will provide.”

This was not the first time Abraham had used such language in speaking of God. In verse 14, “*Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh,*” because he had seen it to be the truth. This was something he had experienced for himself. The ram caught in the thicket had been provided as a substitute for Isaac. Not only had the Lord seen, but according to the promise made to Abraham’s faith, the Lord had provided as well. Even before he knew how this trial would end, Abraham confidently believed God, trusting him to provide what was needed (Rom 4:20). Read verses 6 and 7. Isaac said, “*Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?*” And Abraham answered with confident faith in his God, “*My son, God will provide!*” And in due time, God did provide. Then, in verse 24, Abraham honored God, repeating the words he had spoken to his son, with only one change. Instead of using the ordinary name for God, he used his special covenant name, Jehovah. He said, “Jehovah will provide.”

As these words were spoken prophetically by Abraham concerning Isaac and his substitute, they were also a direct prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Substitute whom God has provided for sinners. He was, by the Spirit of prophecy, saying to us, as God provided a substitute for Isaac, so he will provide a Substitute for all his covenant people in whom the Lord will be seen. That Substitute is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He was also telling us that, as God provided for him in his time of extremity, so he will provide for all who trust him. The God of Abraham lives today! He is the same today as he was in Abraham's day. In the hour of Abraham's great need, when there seemed to be no possible way of escape, the Lord appeared for him and was seen in the mount. So it shall be with all the children of Abraham. We shall be tried and tested, but in the hour of our utmost need our God will see us. Seeing our need, he will provide for us. And he will be seen in the provision he makes.

The name of our God is Jehovah-jireh. He is worthy of absolute trust and confidence. The Lord, Jehovah, is our preserver and our provider. Let this truth be firmly fixed in our hearts. God's provision for Abraham and Isaac typified the far greater provision of his grace, by which all believing sinners are delivered from sin and death. And God's provision for us in Christ, by his death at Mt. Calvary, has given us the sure guarantee that all our necessities, both carnal and spiritual, shall be provided by him for both time and eternity. A careful examination of the three translations of this name by which God revealed himself to Abraham, Jehovah-jireh, will clearly demonstrate that this name for our God reveals his glorious saving purpose toward his people.

THE LORD WILL SEE

Jehovah-jireh means "the LORD will see." Jehovah-jireh tells us that the Lord will see our great need. God constantly

sees the needs of his children and provides for them. The provision of the ram to die in the stead of Isaac was the significant type before Abraham's eye when he called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh. Our Lord tells us that "*Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad*" (John 8:56). Surely, if ever Abraham saw Christ's day and was made to rejoice for it, it was at that moment when the Lord provided a substitute for Isaac. Whether he understood the full meaning of what he said is not important. He spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not for himself, but for us. Every word he uttered was for our instruction (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

The teaching is clear: God, in the gift of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, made full provision for all the needs of his people. He sees us in our need, because of our own sin, and provides for all our needs in his Son. The Lord graciously beheld the needs of his sinful people long before we were even aware that we had any needs before him. The law of God demanded our punishment (Gal. 3:10). The gates of hell were opened wide, ready to swallow us up into perdition. We were all perishing, dead spiritually and condemned to die eternally. But our great and merciful God beheld our need and intervened to save us by his free grace (Eph. 2:5-9; Ezek. 16:6-8).

Just when Isaac was in imminent danger of death, the Lord stepped in to deliver him. The knife was lifted up by the resolute hand. Isaac was but a second from death, when the angelic voice was heard, saying, "*Lay not thine hand upon the lad*" (v. 12). God provided when the need pressed urgently. So it was with us. When God saw that the world had come into a state of great danger and misery, he sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. God sent his Son into the world that the world through him might be saved (John 3:17). "*In due time*

Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal. 4:4).

The same thing is true in the experience of grace in conversion. It is not until men and women feel themselves lying at hell’s door, with the anguish of their guilt and sin crushing them down into eternal ruin, that God the Holy Spirit reveals Christ, the sinner’s Substitute. No man will ever be saved until he is lost. No one will ever be clothed until he is stripped. No one will ever be filled until he is empty. Christ comes only to those who need him. But he always comes to those who need him.

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE.

Jehovah-jireh means “the LORD will provide.” If God sees our need, his provision is sure. This is what Abraham tells us by the name, Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide. Jehovah-jireh was Abraham’s testimony to the goodness and grace of God in providing a ram to take the place of his son, Isaac, upon the altar of sacrifice. This is the testimony of every sinner who sees Christ, as his Substitute, sacrificed upon the altar of divine justice at Mt. Calvary.

God’s provision upon the mount was made spontaneously. It was altogether voluntary and free. And the provision God displayed in the fullness of time at Calvary, when he gave his Son to die in the place of sinners, was also voluntary, free, and spontaneous. Christ died for us freely, unsought, undesired, and unwanted. God sent his Son to redeem us, and Christ came to redeem us by his death, simply because he loved us (John 10:15-18; I John 3:16; 4:9-10).

The provision God makes is always the very thing needed - “a ram!” Here is a substitute to take Isaac’s place.

This is just what was needed, a bloody sacrifice to die in the place of Isaac upon the altar. God knew what we needed; and only he could provide the needed Sacrifice. We needed a Substitute; and Christ our passover was sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Cor. 5:21).

This provision for our need was made by God himself. Where shall a redemption be found by which it shall be possible for the vast multitude of God's elect to be effectually redeemed from death and hell? Such a ransom could only be found by God himself; and he could find it only in himself. Since no one else could provide a ransom for our souls, God provided it and said, "*Deliver them from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom*" (Job 33:24).

One other thing that must be noted is this: God's provision is gloriously effective. Isaac did not die! Like the ram that was slain for Isaac, our Lord Jesus Christ is a burnt offering, acceptable and well-pleasing to God on our behalf (Eph. 5:2). By his one sacrifice, Christ put our sins away. Therefore God's elect, for whom he was slain, cannot die (Rom. 8:1).

THE LORD WILL BE SEEN.

Jehovah-jireh means "the LORD will be seen." He will be seen in the mount of sacrifice. He will be seen in the gospel of Christ, our crucified Savior. Go often to Calvary, for there the Lord will be seen. He will be seen in the mount of trial. Your trials may seem severe; but do not despair. In your greatest extremity, the Lord will be seen. He will be seen in Mount Zion. Look up to heaven, there the Lord will be seen in the person of Jesus Christ our Substitute. Would you know God? Then study Christ. Learn of him. Know him.

Soon all who are born of God, all who believe, all for whom the Son of God died upon the cursed tree, will see him as he is, and shall be seen with Him (Heb. 9:28). Jehovah-jireh shall see us with satisfaction; and we shall see him with satisfaction. Jehovah-jireh shall provide us with glory; and we shall provide him with pleasure. Jehovah-jireh shall be seen with us; and we shall be seen with him. The gift of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Substitute is a provision that secures all other provisions. *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?”* He will give us all things in providence. He will give us all things promised in the covenant. He will give us all things in heaven.

Chapter 27

ISAAC

"And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac."
Genesis 25:5

Isaac is presented to us in the Scriptures both as a type of Christ and as a type of the believer in this world. In Genesis 22, Isaac represents Christ in yielding himself up as a voluntary sacrifice unto God upon the altar. He also represents God's elect for whom the Lord God provided a Lamb of sacrifice, even his own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as a Substitute to die in our place under the wrath of God.

In Genesis 24, Isaac is a picture of Christ for whom an appointed bride is sought. Christ is our Bridegroom. God's elect are his bride, the church, sought out from among men by the preaching of the gospel. Isaac is also a picture of a believer waiting upon God to give him his chosen bride, the life-long companion of God's choice, from among his own people.

Again, in Genesis 25, Isaac stands before us as a type both of Christ and the believer - *"And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac"* (Gen. 25:5). Without question, this text speaks of Abraham's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, *"whom God hath appointed heir of all things"* (Heb. 1:2). Yet, the text also speaks of all who are the sons of God by electing love, adopting grace, and saving faith. Like Isaac, God's elect are possessors of all the wealth and privileges of the Father's house (Rom. 8:17, 21). As Isaac represents our sonship and our privileges as the heirs of God, he also represents our heavenly calling (Phil. 3:20).

Canaan represents both the believer's life of faith in this world and the heavenly glory and rest which awaits us. Isaac is never seen anywhere except in the land of Canaan. Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph all left the land, at least for a season; but Isaac never did. Every time you see Isaac, he is in the land of Canaan. So, too, the believer is always in the grace of God, the land of rest. We often fall in the land; but the believer never leaves the land of grace and is never expelled from it. *"Our conversation is in heaven."* God's elect are a people who have been called with a heavenly calling; and they live accordingly.

Yet, the believer's life is a life of trial, conflict, and struggle. Isaac pictures that, too. Though he lived in the land of Canaan, like us, Isaac had a warfare to wage (Eph. 6:12) with the world, the flesh, and the devil. That warfare is recorded in Genesis 26. Isaac was pre-eminently the man of the well. His life revolved around five wells. These five wells are specifically named, because, typically, they represent the experiences of every believer in this world. Here are five wells from which all believers drink:

1. The well called "Lahairoi" (Gen. 24:62) means, "The living One who sees me." What joy and comfort we have in the midst of trial when we realize that he who is the living God has his eye upon us at all times.
2. Esek (Gen. 26:21) means "Strife." Every child of God in this world lives in unceasing strife, strife from the world without and from his own flesh within.
3. Sitnah (Gen. 26:21) means "Hatred." It may well represent the world's hatred for Christ and his people.
4. Rehoboth (Gen. 26:22) means "Spacious and Abundance." *"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."*

5. Shebah (Gen. 26:33) means “Good fortune.” All things are ours in Christ; and all things work together for our good in him and by him.

The first thing we are told about Isaac, after the innocent ram was slain in his place upon Mt. Moriah (After he was typically redeemed), is this -*“Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi”* (Gen. 24:62). This well, which means, “Well of the Living One who sees me,” is intended to draw our attention to God the Holy Spirit and his gracious operations in the hearts of men (John 7:37-39). In God’s works of grace, election is followed by predestination, predestination is followed by redemption, and redemption is followed by regeneration (Gal. 3:13-14). Redemption was portrayed in Isaac on Mt. Moriah. The sure result of redemption is regeneration, the washing of the Holy Spirit. In the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by a dove, by oil, and by water. As Isaac’s well was *“a well of springing water”* (Gen. 26:19), “living water,” so the Holy Spirit springs up in the hearts of God’s elect as a well of living water.

As water is necessary for all natural life, so the “living water”, the Spirit of God operating through the Word, is necessary for our spiritual life. Without water any plant will wither and die, even if it has the best food packed around its roots. So, too, without the operations of God the Holy Spirit in our hearts, you and I would wither and die. We must have the food of gospel doctrine; but doctrine alone is not enough. We must have the living Spirit of Christ. Like Isaac, God’s saints are people of the well, people who live and walk in the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-17). Isaac’s life experiences provide us with some very important lessons about ourselves, about the life of faith, and about the grace of God.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF DIVINE WORSHIP

The first well with which Isaac was associated was Lahairoi - "The Well of the Living One Who Sees Me" (Gen. 24:62; 25:11). That well represents and speaks of the unfailing care of our ever-living, ever-present God. At the well Lahairoi, Isaac dwelt in the presence of God!

Where can you and I find such a well today? Where is the Living One who sees me to be found? The well of Lahairoi is the house of God, where his Word is opened, his ordinances are kept, his praises are sung, and his presence is promised.

The first thing we see in the life of Isaac is the blessedness of worshipping the living God. As long as Isaac dwelt at Lahairoi, all was well. His trouble did not begin until he left the place of God's manifest presence. As soon as he left Lahairoi, Isaac began to have trouble. The same is true of us (Heb. 10:25). The assembled church of God is the house and temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 3:15-16). God promises his presence in his house, where Christ, at the Mercy-Seat, is found (Matt. 18:20; Ex. 25:22). The church of God is the believer's home. It is the place of refreshing, refuge, safety, and instruction (Eph. 4:11-16).

Mere religious ritualists make too much of mere attendance at the house of God. They make worship idolatry. However, most people make far too little of public worship. The local church (a true, gospel church) is the place from which God sends out his Word and the place where he pours out his blessings upon his people. I am sure Isaac often wished he had never left Lahairoi, "The Well of the living One Who Sees Me;" but he did leave Lahairoi.

THE WEAKNESS OF THE FLESH

When a time of famine came, Isaac departed from Lahairoi and went down to the land of the Philistines in Gerar (Gen. 26:1). Here is a sad, but common picture. When Isaac was in a pinch, instead of continuing in the presence of God at Lahairoi, instead of abiding in the worship of God, he figured out a way to improve his circumstances; but his cunning cost him dearly.

Read Genesis 26:2. Obviously, Isaac was on his way down to Egypt; but God intervened and stopped him. God's saints in this world (all of them!) are sinners still, sinners kept and preserved by the power and grace of God in Christ (1 Pet. 1:5). Read verses 3-5 and understand this -- God's blessings of grace do not depend upon our obedience - Our obedience depends upon God's blessings of grace.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF UNBELIEF

Next, we read, "*And Isaac dwelt in Gerar*" (v. 6). Gerar was the borderland, midway between Canaan and Egypt. God told Isaac to "*sojourn in this land;*" but Isaac dwelt there for "*a long time*" (v. 8). In Gerar, Isaac is a believer who has lost the blessed joy of communion with God by his unbelief. This is ever the consequence of unbelief. Unbelief is the cause of disobedience to God; and disobedience breaks communion. Unbelief caused Isaac to leave Lahairoi. Unbelief caused him to dwell in Gerar. Unbelief caused him to lie to his neighbors (Cf. Gen. 20:1-2 and 26:7)¹⁶. Horrible as Isaac's actions were, when we consider what he was prepared to do, we must be made to see that what Isaac was, we are. There is nothing you and I will not do if God leaves us to ourselves, even for a moment.

¹⁶ Our sons and daughters are far more likely to imitate our vices than our virtues. Be careful how you live before them.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Let saved sinners ever rejoice and give thanks to God for his great faithfulness (vv. 12-14). Those who do not understand the character of God and the sovereignty of his grace have a very difficult time understanding these verses. They say, "How could God so bless Isaac even while he was behaving in such a manner?"

The blessings of God upon Isaac were unconditional, covenant blessings (Gen. 22:17-18; 26:3-5; Eph. 1:3-7). *"The gifts and callings of God are without repentance"* (Rom. 11:26). Our God rules and overrules all things, sovereignly making all things to work together for the good of his elect, even our miserable failures (Rom. 8:28). God is faithful (Lam. 3:26; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23). Because Isaac would not leave Gerar, God arranged to have him cast out of the land (v. 16). When Isaac was cast out of Gerar into a dry valley, God sweetly forced him to dig again the wells of water which he had dug with his father Abraham (vv. 17-19). When God's providence appeared to turn against him, it was working for him, bringing him again to the *"wells of living water!"*

THE LIFE OF FAITH

Read verses 19-22. Here we are taught what it is to live by faith. Instead of standing up for his rights and contending for himself against his enemies, Isaac chose the path of peace, now trusting God to provide for him. True faith makes men and women content and peaceful in the midst of difficulty (1 Pet. 2:19-20). Nothing was at stake but water, and he could easily get more. God's truth was not at stake. His glory was not at stake. The welfare of his people was not at stake. The only thing at stake here was water. It was not worth needless aggravation.

THE RESTORATION OF GRACE

God brought Isaac to Beersheba, “the well of good fortune” (vv. 23-25 and 32-33). Beersheba was also “the well of the oath.” Look what happened when Isaac returned to the place of his oath and allegiance to God. He found good fortune indeed. On the very night that Isaac returned to Beersheba, “*the Lord appeared unto him*” (v. 24). There Isaac built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. He came back to the house of God, the place of worship, and the place of sacrifice (v. 25). There, at Beersheba, he found water (life refreshing, cleansing, reviving, soul-cheering water -- v. 32). Isaac pitched his tent at Beersheba, to dwell in the presence of God (v. 25). There God made Isaac’s enemies to be at peace with him (vv. 26-31; Pro. 16:7).

THE GRIEF OF DISOBEDIENCE

In verses 34-35, we see sad consequence of Isaac’s disobedience. May God give us grace and wisdom to learn by his grief. It is true that the Lord God forgave Isaac for his sin, and even overruled his sin to do him good. Yet, Isaac saw and felt the grief of his own disobedience in his son Esau who married a Hittite.

“God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap!” As Isaac went down to the world for help in time of famine, Esau, following his father’s example, went down to the world to find himself a bride; and Esau never knew God. This was a grief to Isaac. But it was, in great measure, a grief he brought upon himself by disobedience to the will of God. When he should have been careful, Isaac was careless; and it brought grief to his soul. It always does.

Chapter 28

JACOB

"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran."

Genesis 28:10-22

Blessed is that man who possesses the key with which to open the Treasure Chest of Holy Scripture. That key is Christ. No one understands the Word of God, in whole or in part, who does not understand that the Book of God is all about the Son of God (Lk. 24:27, 44-47). In our Lord's days upon this earth the religionists, those who claimed to believe the Word of God, kept sabbath days, and zealously defended their religious traditions, doctrines, and practices, were totally ignorant of the message of the Old Testament Scriptures which they claimed to believe. When he who is the Truth stood before them and told them the truth about God and themselves, they hated him, persecuted him and ultimately crucified him. Why? The Lord Jesus himself tells us, and you will see the reason - *"Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"* (John 5:46-47).

Things have not changed in the least. Like the Pharisees of old, the religious multitudes of our day, standing upon the Book, the blood, and the blessed hope, have missed the message of the Word of God. The message of the Bible is Jesus Christ himself. Every word written in Holy Scripture is inspired of God and intended by him to reveal who Christ is and what he did.

Our Savior said, *"Moses wrote of me."* The history, laws, types and pictures, visions and dreams, of which Moses wrote in the first five Books of the Bible, were designed to

reveal the redemptive purpose and work of God's grace in Jesus Christ. The events in the life of Jacob illustrate this beautifully. I grant that there are many things about Jacob which are difficult to understand; but the one thing we do know about him is the fact that he is a picture of God's grace. Jacob was a man loved of God and chosen by God to be an heir of eternal life (Gen. 25:21-23; 35:9-13; Rom. 9:10-13).

His name means "supplanter," one who takes the place of another through force or plotting (Gen. 27:35-36). That well describes Jacob. He tricked his brother Esau into selling him the birthright (Gen. 25:29-34). Then, through his mother's influence and help, he deceived his father Isaac, and tricked him into giving him the blessing reserved for the first-born (Gen. 27:19-24). He supplanted his brother Esau. After such wicked, deceitful behavior, being a coward by nature, Jacob took the birthright and the blessing and fled from his father's house, hoping to escape the wrath of his brother, Esau (Gen. 27:41-44).

As he fled from Esau, when he was alone in the desert, God met Jacob in grace. What a night that must have been! There, in the desert, God spoke to Jacob, promised him his presence and his covenant mercies, and revealed to him the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way to God, the only way of salvation, grace, and eternal life. Everything Jacob experienced that night in the desert, between Beersheba and Haran, portrayed the work of God's sovereign, saving grace upon chosen sinners.

A LOST SINNER

Verses 10-11 reveal Jacob's lost condition. Here is Jacob, alone in the desert, afraid and helpless. He has no pillow upon which to lay his head, but the cold, hard rocks of the earth. There is no more time for plotting, scheming,

manipulating, and supplanting. He is alone, isolated, and weary. There are two reasons why Jacob was in such a horrible condition.

First, Jacob was in the mess he was in, because of his sin. The same is true of all the sons of Adam. We are what we are, proud, covetous, unhappy, and depressed, because of our sin; and we are where we are, separated from God, under the curse of the law, without help, without strength, and without hope, because of our sins. Lost man has no one to blame for his lost condition, but himself! *“Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you”* (Isa. 59:2). Like us, Jacob was completely unworthy and utterly undeserving of God’s grace. God is just in condemning sinful men. He is altogether clear when he judges us (Psa. 51:3-4). Do you understand this? It is essential that you do. God will never save a man until he brings him to know his lost condition, until he stops his mouth, and causes him to take sides with God against himself, justifying God in his own condemnation.

Second, Jacob was brought into this lowly, hopeless condition, because God was about to be gracious to him. The time of love had come, and God was about to speak to his heart (Hos. 2:14). Therefore, he brought Jacob down. God knows how to bring sinners down (Psa. 107). Like the prodigal, Jacob came to the end of himself. Blessed is that man whom God bring down. If he abases, he will exalt. But he will exalt none, except those who are abased by him. He strips; and he clothes. But he will clothe none with the righteousness of Christ, except those whom he strips of self-righteousness. He kills; and he makes alive. But he will make none alive in Christ, except those whom he slays by his law.

A SAVING REVELATION

The Lord revealed his mercy to Jacob in a dream (vv. 12-14). When it pleases God, he reveals his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ in his people. In his Son, he reveals his mercy, love, and grace (Rom. 5:6-8); and that revelation brings life to chosen sinners (Eph. 2:1-7). Here is Jacob, the sinner, quiet and still, at last subdued by sovereign grace. God deals with him. There is nothing for him to say or do. As God spoke, he revealed a ladder set up upon the earth, reaching into heaven, That ladder is Christ.

1. The ladder was set up upon the earth, but the top of it reached into heaven. So the Lord Jesus Christ, although he stood upon the earth in the flesh, never left the bosom of the Father. He became a man. Yet, he never ceased to be the most high God (John 1:14, 18, 33-34; Phil. 2:6-8).
2. The angels of God went up and down on the ladder. As the ladder represents Christ our Mediator, so the angels of God ascending and descending upon it tell us that the only way sinful men and women can ascend up to God and find acceptance with him is by Christ the Mediator (John 14:6); and it is only by and through Christ that God comes to us. *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.”*
3. The Lord God stood above the ladder and made all his rich promises of grace to Jacob (v. 14). All the blessings and promises of grace, eternal life and heavenly glory are made and given to sinners in Christ and for Christ’s sake (Eph. 1:3-7; 4:32; 2 Tim. 1:9). As all the blessings of God come down to us by Christ, all our praise goes up to and is accepted of God through Christ (1 Pet. 2:5).

GRACE PROMISED

Those promises which God made to Jacob (v. 15) are the promises of God to all the sons of Jacob, the promises of

God to every believer; and the promises of God are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Here are four things promised to God's elect, four things every believer can be assured of by faith in Christ.

1. *"I am with thee."* God is with us, always with us, in covenant mercy, redemptive grace, and constant love (Phil. 3:3-4). He is with us to save us, protect us, and do us good in all things (Rom. 8:28-39).
2. *"I will keep thee."* Not one of those sinners chosen by God in eternity, redeemed by Christ at Calvary, and called by the Spirit in grace shall ever perish. We are kept by the power of God (Mal. 3:6; John 6:37-45; 10:24-30).
3. *"I will bring thee again into this land."* Canaan was a type of heaven. Christ, our Surety and good Shepherd, will bring God's sheep home to glory (John 10:16). There is plenty of room in heaven for all who will to enter in by Christ Jesus; but when all things are finished and time shall be no more, there will be no vacancies. Every place prepared by Christ will be occupied by the one for whom it was prepared (John 14:1-3).
4. *"I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."* Of Christ it is written, *"He shall not fail...The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand"* (Isa. 42:4; 53:10-11). *"He shall save his people!"* (Matt. 1:21). (See Phil. 1:6 1 Thess. 5:24). God's elect are secure in Christ, as secure as the very throne and veracity of God himself!

CONVERSION AT BETHEL

Verses 16-19 describe Jacob's awakening and conversion by the grace of God. As soon as Jacob was

awakened he sensed the presence of God and was filled with the fear of God. He found himself in the house of God, at the gate of heaven. There he built an altar for the glory of God and worshipped.

Jacob called the place where he was Bethel, though the name of the place before was Luz. Luz means "separation." Bethel means "House of God." God calls us to separation from the world, but as we leave the world we enter the house of God (1 Cor. 6:14-7:1). That is a blessed separation, a separation by which we lose nothing and gain everything.

The House of God is the place of God's presence. The house of God is not brick and mortar stacked together in ornate, stately buildings. The house of God is God meeting with his people in any place. The church of the living God is the assembly of Christ with his people. Our Lord prayed and preached in private homes, in the open air, on the mountain side, by the seashore, and in a fishing boat, as well as in the temple and synagogue.

Today, we place far too much emphasis upon the place of worship and far too little emphasis upon the presence of God. Until the third century, there was no such thing as a "church building." God's saints gathered wherever they could, and God met with them. Nothing makes any place sacred but God's presence. Wherever God is present with his people, that is the house of God! In the days of its apostasy, God brought this indictment against Israel - "*Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples*" (Hos. 8:14). It is an indictment which might well be brought against the church of our day. The House of God is the place of God's presence. If we have that, we have everything! If we miss that, we have nothing. The house of God, the assembly of his saints is the

place of worship. It is a place of reverence for him. It is the very gate of heaven!

A VOW MADE

Jacob's vow of consecration (vv. 20-22) is the first time in Scripture we read of a vow being made to God. It is worthy of our notice. This vow of consecration was made by Jacob in response to what he had seen, heard, and experienced in his soul of God's sovereign, saving grace in Christ. Believer's baptism is a good parallel to this. Symbolically, when the believer rises up from the watery grave, he consecrates himself to walk with Christ in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4-6).

The word "if" is poorly translated in verse 20. Jacob is not here laying down mercenary, legal conditions upon which he is consecrating himself to God. The word should be translated "since". It is an argumentative word. He is saying, "Since God has promised such grace to me, I'll live for him" (! Cor. 6:19-20). His vow of consecration was remarkable (v. 22).

"This stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house." He was saying, I will worship the Lord God of this house and him only (Gen. 35:1-7). He had many faults, but Jacob kept his vow.

"Of all that thou shall give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." He vowed to honor God with the substance of his increase. It is written, *"Honor the Lord with thy substance, with the firstfruits of thine increase"* (Pro. 3:9). The law of tithing had not yet been instituted. Jacob was under no obligation to give a tithe, except the obligation of love and gratitude. This was a voluntary act of his heart (2 Cor. 9:7). It was directly connected with the worship of God and the house

of God. Here, God's servant, Jacob, teaches us some very important, needful lessons about giving.

1. By this promise of the tithe Jacob acknowledged that all he had came from God and belonged to God.
2. In giving the tithe, he demonstrated his faith in God to supply his needs.
3. The tithe was given to maintain the worship of God wherever he went.
4. What he gave, Jacob gave for the glory of God, the God of Bethel.

Jacob stands before us as a picture of grace. What a good picture he is. He was lost by nature. Christ was revealed to him and in him. He was possessor of all blessedness by the promise of God. This lost sinner was converted by the grace of God. Being converted by the grace of God, Jacob consecrated himself to the Son of God.

Chapter 29

JACOB'S LADDER

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed."

Genesis 28:12-13

The ladder Jacob saw in his dream was our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that this is the true and proper interpretation of this text, because our Lord himself gave this interpretation of it (John 1:51). When the Lord God revealed his Son to Jacob, he revealed him as a ladder. What an instructive and helpful representation that is of our Savior. The Lord Jesus Christ is made of God unto us a ladder!

We all know what a ladder is and how it is used. When you need to get from a low place to a high place, or you need to move something from a high place to a low place, you need a ladder to do it. Nothing will serve your purpose so well as a ladder. Everyone knows how to use a ladder. In spiritual things, Christ is a ladder. Blessed are those who learn to use him as a ladder. Take careful notice of what the Book of God says about Christ our Ladder in Genesis 28.

1. This ladder stood upon the earth, but the top reached into heaven. So Christ, the Son of God, though he stood upon the earth in human flesh, is yet the most high God. Though he stood upon the earth as a man, he never ceased to be

God. He never left the bosom of the Father (John 1:18; 3:13).

2. The angels of God went up and down on the ladder which Jacob saw. Even so, we are able to ascend to God in heaven only by the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6); and it is by and through Christ that God comes down to us. God almighty meets with, deals with, and blesses sinners only in Christ.
3. The Lord God stood above the ladder and made all his promises of grace to Jacob. This shows us that all the promises of God's grace come to sinners through Christ. All spiritual blessings, all the promises of eternal life, all the glory of heaven is in Christ. All things come to chosen sinners through Christ, the Mediator, our Ladder (Eph. 1:3-14).

WHAT KIND OF LADDER IS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?

There are many kinds of ladders for many different uses: step ladders, long ladders, extension ladders, strong ladders, and shakey ladders; but Christ is in all respects an extra ordinary Ladder. There is none other like him. *Phillip Henry*¹⁷ gave the following sixfold description of Christ as a ladder.

1. Christ is a *living* Ladder. As he is called "*a new and living way*" (Heb. 10:20), in the same sense, he is a new and living Ladder. Other ladders are dead things; but this Ladder lives. It is true, he once died, but he is alive again and lives for evermore (Rev. 1:18). Because he lives, all who are in him live also.

¹⁷ Phillip Henry, *Christ All in All*, Reiner Publications, Swengel, PA p 308

2. Christ is a *long* Ladder. Here is a Ladder that reaches from earth to heaven. Jacob saw the foot of it upon the earth, *“and the top of it reached to heaven!”* This represents the two natures of our Redeemer. He is both God and man in one glorious Person, as fully God as though he were not man and as fully man as though he were not God.

As a man, he was set up on the earth (Gal. 4:4-5). As God, he was always in heaven. He was always in heaven, the eternally begotten Son of God, infinite, eternal, incomprehensible, and unchangeable (John 1:14; 3:13; 1:18). The union of these two natures, God and man, in one Person is the mystery of all mysteries (1 Tim. 3:16). That the glory of Christ's Godhead did not destroy the weakness of his manhood, nor the weakness of his manhood destroy the glory of his Godhead is incomprehensibly mysterious. The incarnation of Christ is like the bush Moses saw, burning with the glory of God, but not consumed with the fire.

Why was the foot of the Ladder upon the earth? Why was it necessary for the Son of God, our Redeemer to become a man? If Christ would redeem us, he had to have a body in which to bear our sins, to suffer and die as our Substitute. He had to have a body and nature like ours. A man he must be who would redeem man, because it was man who sinned. Because man sinned, man must suffer for sin. For this reason, God the Holy Spirit prepared a body for God the Son in the womb of the virgin (Heb. 10:5).

Why was it necessary that the top of the ladder reach into heaven? Why must our Savior be God as well as man? It was our Savior's Godhood which gave infinite merit, virtue, and efficacy to the sufferings of his manhood. Someone said, “Christ is both God and man, because God could not suffer and man could not satisfy; but the God-man both suffered the wrath of God and satisfied the justice of God when he bled

and died as the sinners' Substitute upon the cursed tree." Moreover, it was Christ's Godhood which supported and sustained his manhood in all his sufferings. Manhood could never have born the agony of Gethsemane and the torments of Calvary had it not been that the man who suffered is also the eternal God.

In addition to these things, it was necessary that our Mediator be both God and man so that he might bring God and man together. He must be God that he might deal with God, which man, as man, is not fit to do. He must be man that he might deal with man, which God in his holiness could not do without consuming the sinful creature. *"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"* This is the meaning of our Savior's incarnation. Immanuel is God with us, God in our nature. Were he not both God and man, he could not be Jesus our Savior (Matt. 1:21-23).

3. Christ is a *lasting* Ladder. Other ladders wear out with use; but here is a Ladder which lasts forever. Christ himself is immutable (Heb. 13:8), the immutable God (Mal 3:6). The righteousness he brought in, by his obedience to God as our Representative and covenant Surety, is everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24). The redemption he accomplished, by his sin-atonement death at Calvary as our Substitute, is eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). Sinners, from the beginning of time, have made use of this Ladder. It has never failed one who used it, and never shall. *"He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him"* (Heb. 7:25); and the salvation he gives is eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9).

4. Christ is a *free* Ladder. That is to say, he is open to all who come to him; and whosoever will may come to this Ladder and make use of it. All who come are welcome. The promise of the gospel is proclaimed in broad, general terms

(Isa. 55:1; Matt. 11:28; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17). Christ is the Fountain opened, not the Fountain shut (Zech. 13:1). He the Door is open, not the Door closed (Rev. 4:1). If you do not exclude yourself by unbelief, God has not excluded you. Predestination does not shut sinners out of heaven. Predestination threw open the door for sinners and built a Ladder for sinners, by which men and women who could never come to God may now come to him. The Door is Christ. The Ladder is Christ.

5. Christ is a *firm* Ladder. Steady and strong, Jacob's ladder was seen standing upon the earth, unshaken, unmoved, immovable. That is a good picture of our great Savior. Christ Jesus is God almighty to save. He is that God who saves his people from their sins. He saves all his people from all their sins, completely. He saves from the guilt of sin, the dominion of sin, the penalty of sin, the consequence of sin, and ultimately the very being of sin.

6. Christ is a *fitted* Ladder. He is a Savior suited to every purpose for which he is intended and for every need his people have. Christ is the only Ladder there is which reaches from earth to heaven. There is no other way to God. Papists vainly imagine that there are many ladders, many mediators, many ways to God. Arminians, free-willers, will worshippers convince themselves that they need no ladder. Work mongers, like old Nimrod, foolishly imagine that they can build a ladder for themselves. God declares, "*Christ is the Ladder!*" (2 Tim. 2:5).

HOW ARE WE TO USE CHRIST AS A LADDER?

Christ is a Ladder suited to every purpose for which he is intended. Let us ever use him as such. All the blessings of God descend from heaven to poor, needy sinners upon Christ the Ladder (Eph. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 1:9). It is written, "*God shall*

supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). All grace comes (John 1:16), all pardon (1 John 1:7), all providence (John 17:2), and all the answers to our prayer come down this Ladder (John 16:23).

It is by Christ the Ladder, only by Christ the Ladder, that believing sinners ascend to heaven and find acceptance with the holy Lord God (John 14:6). The distance between earth and heaven is infinite; and it is an uphill climb. How can we possibly get there? "*Behold, a Ladder!*" How am I to climb such a Ladder? By faith. Faith is the hand by which we take hold of the Ladder and the foot by which we climb. "*Reach hither thy hand*" and climb (Heb. 11:6). The only way we can come to God is Christ. "*No man cometh to the Father*" but by him. We cannot come to God's kingdom, God's presence, God's glory, but by Christ. His blood purchased salvation for his elect, and obtained it (Eph. 1:11; Heb. 9:12). His Spirit makes chosen, redeemed sinners fit for glory in sanctification. And his intercession brings us there at last (1 John 2:1-2). The only way any of our performances can ascend to God is upon Christ the Ladder (1 Pet. 2:5; Matt. 17:5). God bathes our prayers, our praises and our works in the blood of Christ, and accepts both us and what we do for him for Christ's sake.

WHY DID JACOB SEE THE ANGELS OF GOD ASCENDING AND DESCENDING UPON HIM?

The angels of God are "*ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation*" (Heb. 1:14). The purpose of this vision was to comfort Jacob and all God's elect, (the sons of Jacob), in the face of danger. The angels of God ascend up to heaven by Christ to get fresh orders from him (Zech. 1:10-17), to give account of what they have done (Job 1:6), and to carry the departed souls of God's saints into Abraham's bosom (Lk. 16:22). Those angels descend upon Christ the Ladder, too, to surround and protect,

to provide for and preserve, and watch over God's Jacobs and bring them safely home.

WHAT ARE THE RUNGS OF THE LADDER?

There are two ways to count the rungs of a ladder, from the top down, or from the bottom up. First, we must count the rungs of the Ladder from the top down, as we think of Christ coming down to us. The rungs of the Ladder are our Lord's covenant engagements from eternity, the prophecies and promises, types and pictures of the Old Testament, his incarnation, his obedience in life, and his sin-atonement death. Then, we must count the rungs of the Ladder from the bottom up as we find them in experience. First we are given faith in Christ. Believing on Christ, we know that we are born of God and have been effectually called by his Spirit. We make our calling and election sure by believing on the Son of God. All who are born again and have faith in Christ, have been called. All who have been called have been redeemed and justified by the blood of Christ. And these shall be glorified by his grace, according to the purpose of God (Rom. 8:28-30). It is no fanaticism to carry the type a little further. Every ladder has two side pieces to which the rungs are connected, giving it strength and stability. So does this one. On one side there is God's eternal purpose of grace. On the other side there is God's immutable, preserving grace.

WHY IS THE WORD "BEHOLD" USED IN CONNECTION WITH THIS LADDER?

It is common, in both the Old Testament and the New, when Christ is spoken of, to use the word "*behold*" (Isa. 7:14; 42:1; John 1:29). This word, "*behold*," suggests that which we are responsible to do. We are to admire and wonder as we think of him whose very name is Wonderful (Isa. 9:6). Behold the Ladder and bless God for it (2 Cor. 9:15). To behold Christ

is to believe him (Isa. 65:1; 45:22). That is what we must do. We must believe on the Son of God. As the Israelites bitten by the fiery serpents were bidden to look to the serpent of brass upheld upon the pole, so we are bidden to look to Christ crucified. Life begins with looking to Christ (John 12:32). We persevere in life looking to him (Heb. 12:2). And our spiritual, eternal life shall consummate in looking upon the Son of God (1 John 3:2). Blessed, blessed day that shall be when we see him face to face!

Here are four special times when we are to behold Christ our Ladder: (1.) When we attempt to do anything for God, behold the Ladder. Christ is our strength, our guide, and our acceptance. (2.) When we have done anything against our God, let us still behold the Ladder (1 John 2:1-2). When guilt stares us in the face, when we need pardon, cleansing, and reviving, let us ever look to Christ - *"Behold, a Ladder!"* (3.) When distress, trouble and danger are before us, behold the Ladder. When the Esaus of the world surround us and we have no earthly comfort, when we need peace for our hearts and a pillow for our aching heads, lay down upon God's promises, look up to heaven, and *"Behold, a Ladder,"* and see the angels ascending and descending. (4.) When death is near, when the cold sweat of death is on our brows and the rattle is in our throats, *"Behold, a Ladder!"* (Acts 7:56).

Chapter 30

JACOB – AN OBJECT OF GRACE

"And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Genesis 28:15; 31:3, 5; and 48:21

Here are four passages of Scripture, each revealing a specific aspect of the grace of God in the life of Jacob. However, if all we see in these texts is the history of God's dealings with Jacob, we miss the purpose of God the Holy Spirit in giving us the inspired volume of Holy Scripture. These things were written for our spiritual learning, for our comfort, and to encourage our hope in Christ (Rom. 15:4). Believers should always appropriate the Word of God to themselves. We should never look upon the Book of God as a mere record of either historical, or doctrinal, or prophetic facts. Therefore, as we look at these four passages of Holy Scripture and see the grace of God in the life of Jacob, the sons of Jacob ought to appropriate each text to themselves and see the hand of God's grace in their own lives.

PRESENT GRACE

In Genesis 28:15, God's grace is set before us as grace for the present. The Lord God says to his servant Jacob, *"Behold, I am with thee,"* right now, presently. Grace is the present heritage of every believer. We rejoice to know that grace is eternal (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9). Our hearts delight in the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has by his blood purchased for his people all the inheritance of grace and glory. In Christ, grace is our purchased possession (Eph. 1:11). And we thank God

for past experiences of grace. Grace experienced in the past fills our hearts with sweet memories of God's goodness to us. Grace sought us out of a fallen race. Grace called us from death to life. Grace revealed Christ in us and gave us faith in him. Grace caused us to come to Christ in the beginning; and grace has kept us coming to him. But living bodies cannot live on yesterday's bread. We must have some bread today. Neither can we feed our souls on yesterday's grace. We must have grace today. Child of God, I want you to see that grace is yours this very hour. God says to Jacob, "*Behold, I am with thee!*"

Jacob was the son of a long line of men chosen by God; and he too was chosen as the object of God's grace (v. 13). Grace does not run in blood lines; but sometimes God does call many from the same family. That was the case with Jacob. His father Isaac and his mother Rebecca were believers. His grandfather Abraham and his grandmother Sarah were believers. What a blessing! To have for your father and mother, for your grandfather and grandmother, men and women who walked with God is the most distinguished hereditary honor in the world. Well might Jacob rejoice to hear the God of his fathers say to him, as he had said to them, "*Behold, I am with thee.*" The believing sons and daughters of believing parents are possessors of an indescribably rich heritage. Yet, none should foolishly imagine that grace is a matter of heredity, passed on from father to son (John 1:11-13). Grace comes to chosen sinners according to the sovereign will and pleasure of God alone (Rom. 9:16).

This word of grace, "*Behold, I am with thee,*" came to Jacob at a time when he greatly needed it. He had just left his father's house. He was about to be faced with a very great trial. Nothing could have so effectually prepared him for twenty years in Laban's house as this promise from God.

This word of grace came to Jacob when he needed it most. It was at the moment when Jacob was totally alone, a family outcast, friendless, and a pilgrim in a strange land, that God almighty spoke to him and said, *“Behold, I am with thee!”* I defy anyone to measure the height or depth, length or breadth of that infinite blessing. What more could God say than this - *“I am with thee”*?

When God is with you that guarantees infinite love, mercy, and grace. God will not dwell with those he hates. He is not with those to whom he is not merciful. He does not abide where he does not dispense grace. But to each of his people, he says, *“Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine...I have loved thee...Fear not: for I am with thee”* (Isa. 43:1-5). As a man delights to be with his friends, so our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, delights to be with those whom he has chosen, redeemed, and called.

“I am with thee” means I will help you (Isa. 41:10). C. H. Spurgeon said, “Whatever we undertake, God is with us in the undertaking; whatever we endure, God is with us in the enduring; whithersoever we wander, God is with us in our wandering.” *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* If God is with us, what can we not do, or endure, or overcome? This is what Paul meant when he wrote, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”* Let every son of Jacob, every believer, hear the promise as a promise coming directly from God himself to you. God is with you, my brother, my sister, so completely with you that he is in you. The whole Godhead is with you, in the entirety of his Being!

When God says, *“I am with thee,”* he promises, with his presence, his sympathy. Our Savior is so touched with the feeling of our infirmities he feels what we feel, suffers what we

suffer, and endures what we endure. If we have a load to bear, he is with us. If we have a work to do, he is with us.

How precious, rich, and full this word of grace must have seemed to Jacob as he lay under the stars in the wilderness. His bed was the cold earth. His curtains were the bushes around him. The heavens were his canopy. His pillow was a rock. He was alone, afraid, and helpless until the Lord God appeared to him and said, "*Behold, I am with thee!*" If you are a believer, if you are washed in the blood of Christ and born again by the Spirit of God, you are one of Jacob's sons; and God says, "*Behold, I am with thee.*" That is God's present assurance of grace.

FUTURE GRACE

In Genesis 31:3, we read God's promise of future grace. He says, "*I will be with thee.*" Whatever else the future may hold for us, let every believer be assured of this, it holds grace, rich, free, abundant grace in Christ.

Were it not for the weakness of our flesh this promise would be unnecessary. When God says, "*I am with thee,*" you can count on it, he will be with you. God does not change. He will never forsake his people (Heb. 13:5). Some people believe in a god who loves today and hates tomorrow, who pardons one day and condemns the next. Such a god is no God at all. Our God is the God of Jacob, who changes not (Mal. 3:6).

Jacob had lived with Laban for twenty years. In those years he endured many troubles. It was now time for him to leave Laban and return to his home in Canaan. He needed the word of grace renewed to his heart, so the Lord God said to him, "*I will be with thee.*"

Jacob began to take root among the worldlings. So God called him away. Then he forced him to obey. Laban had begun to despise Jacob (v. 2). Laban's sons were envious of him (v. 1). Those upon whom he had relied turned against him. Those whose good he had served opposed him. Those who were most indebted to him were envious of him. So it is with God's elect in every age. Therefore, the Lord God said, "*I will be with thee!*"

The journey Jacob was about to take was a dangerous one, and he knew it. Laban would not willingly let him go. Esau was sworn to kill him. Such a journey with such a large family would be very difficult. But God called; and Jacob must obey. Therefore, the Lord God said to him, no matter what you have to face, "*I will be with thee!*" Your future is full of grace!

ACKNOWLEDGED GRACE

In Genesis 31:5, we see the grace of God experienced and acknowledged by Jacob. "*The God of my father hath been with me.*" Every believer's life is, from beginning to end, an unceasing experience of God's grace. Right up to the time that he left Laban's house, Jacob said, "*The God of my father hath been with me.*"

He had not been a very gracious man; but God was with him nonetheless (Psa. 89:30-33). The Lord chastened and corrected him; and the Lord protected and blessed him. Though Laban cheated him out of his wages ten times, God blessed Jacob! Everything done against him worked good for him. Our great God is a God who ought to be trusted with implicit confidence. He is faithful. His grace and his faithfulness are unconditional.

Poor Jacob, though he was a believer, though he had experienced so much grace, when he was fleeing from Laban and heard that Esau was coming after him, he was distressed and full of fear, yet the Lord was with him (Gen. 35:3). Thank God, he does not leave his people because of their fears. If he did, we would have all been castaways long ago.

On the night of his wrestling with the Lord, when he was humbled, broken, and made to confess his name, the Lord God was with him. He says, *“God was with me in the way which I went!”* Jacob was the object of God’s everlasting love, the eternally chosen object of his grace (Rom. 9:11-13). God was with him in his mother’s womb. God was with him in his youth. God was with him when he fled from his father’s house. God was with him when he broke his thigh and broke his spirit. God was with him in Laban’s house. God was with him when he returned home again. And on his death bed, old Jacob confessed more fully than ever that the Lord God had been with him all his days (Gen. 48:15-16). He had lost Rachel; but God was with him. He had endured famine; but God fed him. He had lost Joseph; but the Lord God was with him. At the time he said, *“All things are against me;”* but now he eats his words. He now realized that God had never been more fully for him! Now he says, *“The Lord God redeemed me from all evil.”* If you are a believer, this will be your verdict upon your life at the end of your days - *“God was with me!”* He hath *“redeemed me from all evil”*. Every believer’s life is from beginning to end, an unceasing experience of God’s grace!

TRANSMITTED GRACE

In Genesis 48:21, we see the grace of God transmitted from one generation to another. *“Behold, I die: but God shall be with you.”* Those were Jacob’s dying words to Joseph. He was saying, God will yet be gracious. So it shall be, from generation to generation, so long as the world stands. The

grace we have received and experienced at the hand of our God shall be transmitted to the generation that succeeds us.

We all tend to fret and worry needlessly about the future. We fret about our children. We worry about the future of God's church. We concern ourselves too much about what will become of those who depend upon us. God will not cease to be gracious when we die. He still has an elect remnant. He will be gracious to them. He will be with them as he has been with us.

This has special application to every believer's family. We can and must trust our sons and daughters to the sovereign goodness of our God. God's grace does not run in bloodlines. We cannot save our children, or oblige God to save them. But we can believe God. Long before my only child was born, I gave her to my God. On the night she was born, as I gave thanks to God for her, I gave her back to him. On the day my wife and I brought her home from the hospital, together we dedicated that child to our God and committed her to his hands. We trained her in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. What is the significance of that? Just this -- God never has yet rejected a child given to him in faith. Samuel, Samson, Solomon, and John the Baptist all verify God's faithfulness in this regard. I do not suggest that God has not cast away the children of believing parents. Eli's sons and David's children tell us otherwise. But I do say, God has never cast away any child given to him in faith.

This is what I am saying - I believe God. Anything we refuse to give to him he will take from us. Anything we give him for the honor of his name he will receive. Does the Word of God confirm this or does it deny it? Let no one misunderstand. The Book of God does not teach proxy faith. We cannot believe God for someone else, not even for our children. Each one must personally trust the Son of God for

himself. Yet, God honors and uses the faith of others in bringing chosen sinners to himself. The Canaanite woman's faith had something to do with her daughter's healing (Matt. 15:22-28). Jarius' faith had something to do with his daughter's resurrection from the dead (Lk. 8:41-42, 49-56). When the Lord Jesus saw the faith of four men who carried a desperately needy soul to him, he said to the palsied man, "*Man, thy sins are forgiven thee*" (Lk. 4:20).

This also has special application to every gospel church. The time will come when the pastor will be taken away from his flock; but God will be with his church. The church of God does not depend upon the preacher. The cause of God, the truth of God, the kingdom of God does not depend upon any preacher, or any man, no matter how great, how gifted, or how useful he is in his day.

Someone once asked Mr. Spurgeon, "What will become of the Tabernacle when you are gone?" He replied, "It will probably be the greatest of blessings when it happens. Many good men have clung to their places longer than they should have done, and have pulled down much that they had built up. It is well when the Lord says to such, 'Friend, come up higher'." George Muller was once asked what would become of the great orphanage he had built for homeless children when he was gone. Muller replied - "God will use George Muller as long as he likes, and when he chooses to put him aside, he will use somebody else." When Abraham dies, God will be with Isaac. When Isaac dies, God will be with Jacob. When Jacob dies, God will be with Joseph. When Joseph dies, God will be with Ephraim and Manasseh. And when we die, God will have a people to bear his name; and he will never lack a champion to bear his banner among them. And the Lord will be with them. When Elijah was taken up, Elisha picked up his mantle and cried, "*Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*" And God was with him.

1. Grace is ours now - God says, *"I am with you!"*
2. Grace shall be ours in the future. The Lord's promise is, *"I will be with you!"*
3. Grace has been ours all the days of our lives. With Jacob we look over the days of our lives and say, *"The God of our fathers hath been with us."*
4. And the grace of God shall be with those who follow us in faith - *"God shall be with you."*

Chapter 31

Jacob at Peniel

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank."

Genesis 32:24-32

Though this passage of Scripture is often used as a picture of conversion, this was not Jacob's conversion experience. It teaches us many things about conversion, as we shall see. And we know that conversion to Christ is a life-long experience. We are continually coming to Christ (1 Pet. 2:4). Yet, this was not the point in Jacob's history when he

first came to know the Savior. Christ was revealed to him twenty years earlier at Bethel as the only ladder by which God could come down to man and upon which man must ascend up to God. At Bethel, Jacob met Christ the Mediator and learned to worship him (Gen. 28:10-22). This is the Mediator who was typified in all those blood sacrifices he had seen offered by his father, Isaac, as he worshipped God.

Frequently, this passage is also used as a picture of a man wrestling with God in fervent prayer. But that too is a mistake. In our text, it is not Jacob who wrestles with God, but God who wrestles with Jacob. Genesis 32:24-32 sets before us a picture of the Lord God subduing the proud, sinful flesh of his believing people by his almighty grace.

LEFT ALONE

“And Jacob was left alone” (v. 24). Was there ever a man more alone than Jacob? His whole life had been filled with trouble and disappointment. Now, as he was returning home, he feared for his life. When he heard that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men, he was confused, and frightened, and alone.

Jacob's was a life of trouble and confusion. All his life long he had played second fiddle to his brother Esau. He was born second to Esau. He was, by all measures, an inferior man to Esau. His father, Isaac, preferred Esau, and Jacob knew it. Instigated by his mother, Jacob deceived his father on his deathbed and stole the birthright. He had lived with the guilt of his deeds in exile for twenty years.

When Esau threatened to kill him, Jacob fled into exile. As he fled from Esau, God met him at Bethel, promised his covenant blessings to him, and confirmed what I am sure his mother had told him from his youth (Gen. 25:22-23; Rom.

9:10-13). God himself made Jacob to know that he was loved and chosen by him from eternity . God saved him. God blessed him with his grace and assured him that he would yet be greatly blessed of him.

As he had deceived his father Isaac, so he had been deceived by his uncle Laban and tricked into marrying a woman he did not want (Gen. 29:16-26). Then, the Lord God appeared to him and told him to return home with this promise: *"I will be with thee"* (Gen. 31:3).

No sooner did he start home in obedience to God's command than he discovered that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men (Gen. 32:6-8). Earlier in the day, he kissed his wives and his children good-bye, took them across the brook Jabbok out of harm's way and waited to die by the hand of his angry brother. Now, we read, *"And Jacob was left alone."* He was now more alone than ever.

Alone, confused, helpless, and afraid Jacob sat down and waited for death. His plotting, scheming, and manipulating was over. He is shut up to the sovereign power and will of God. Like Israel at the Red Sea and Jonah in the whale's belly, Jacob was totally dependent upon God to deliver him, and he now knew it (Ex. 14:13; Jon. 2:9).

God knows how to bring his Jacobs down; and he always does. Those whom God is pleased to save, to whom he will reveal his mercy and grace in Christ, must be brought down and made to know their utter helplessness and inability. God's grace and God's work leaves no room for boasting and glorying in the flesh (Ps. 107:1-6; 11-13; 1 Cor. 1:26-31). *"Jacob was left alone."* He seemed to be in a miserable condition, helpless and alone; but he was truly in a most blessed condition.

“To be left alone with God is the only true way of arriving at a just knowledge of ourselves and our ways. We can never get a true estimate of nature and all its actings until we have weighed them in the balances of the sanctuary, and there we may ascertain their real worth. No matter what we may think about ourselves, nor yet what man may think about us, the great question is, what does God think about us? And the answer to this question can only be learned when we are *‘left alone’*. Away from the world, away from self, away from the thoughts, reasonings, imaginings, and emotions of mere nature, and *‘alone with God,’* - thus and thus alone, can we get a correct judgment about ourselves” (C. H. MacIntosh).

Isolation is always the forerunner of revelation, grace, salvation, and blessing. Before God saves, he separates (Hos. 2:14; John 8:9; Acts 9:3-8).

WRESTLING

“And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day” (v. 24). About the time the sun went down, suddenly a man appeared out of nowhere, laid hold of Jacob, and wrestled with him until the morning sun began to rise. This was not a vision, or a dream, but a real struggle, both physical and spiritual. It was not a brief encounter, but one that lasted all night long.

There is no question at all about the fact that this man was also God (v. 30). This man who wrestled with Jacob was the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, the angel of the covenant (Hos. 12:4), through whom all the blessings of covenant grace come to God’s elect¹⁸.

¹⁸ Christ frequently appeared to the saints of the Old Testament in human form. These pre-incarnate appearances were tokens and pledges of his incarnation.

This man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, wrestled with Jacob. We are not told that Jacob wrestled with the man, but rather, *“there wrestled a man with him.”* Those who use this story as an example of importunate prayer miss the mark. Jacob was not wrestling with this man to obtain the blessing. This man was wrestling with Jacob to give the blessing.

It is the object of a wrestler to bring his opponent down, to pin him to the ground, to render him helpless; and that was the object of our Lord here. He wrestled with Jacob to pin him down, to conquer his spirit, to subdue his flesh, to render him helpless. The Lord wrestled with Jacob to reduce him to a sense of his own nothingness, to make him see what a poor, helpless, worthless creature he was. You see, God’s purpose in all our trials is to make us strong in grace and strong in faith; and the way he makes us strong is to make us to know, recognize, and acknowledge our weakness - *“When I am weak, then am I strong”* (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

This man wrestled with Jacob *“until the breaking of the day.”* There were issues involved which had to be resolved. They had to be resolved in Jacob’s heart. They had to be resolved permanently. And they had to be resolved at this time. This was not a brief, passing encounter. It was not an indifferent decision made on the spur of the moment. Great issues were at stake. Eternal matters had to be settled. What were the issues? Jacob must acknowledge Christ as his Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). He must bow to the will of God. Jacob had to lose his life to Christ. He had to surrender to Christ in all things, in his heart, willingly (Ps. 110:3).

God was determined to bless and use Jacob. His purpose could not be defeated. But he would not grant his blessing and he would not use him until Jacob was conquered, broken, and subdued by his almighty grace. This

conquering of the flesh, this breaking and subduing is not a once for all experience. It is a life-long battle. It continues throughout the night of our sojourn upon this earth. It is a warfare in our hearts (Rom. 7:14; Gal. 5:17). If we are his, our Lord will conquer us; and he will make us willing to be conquered. If we are his, Christ will prevail over us (Rom. 7:25).

MADE WILLING

“And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him” (v. 25). Without question, God could have easily subdued Jacob. This conflict was ordered and instigated by God. The outcome was never in doubt; but God’s people are not puppets or robots. We must be made to see, feel, and experience the frailty of our flesh, the emptiness of this world, and the glory of God in Christ, so that we desire his presence and his salvation above all things. *“Thy people shall be willing!”* Grace makes God’s elect willing, in the day of his power, to bow to him. This is the purpose of all that God reveals to us. This is the purpose of all the trials we endure. This is the purpose of all God’s dealings with us. Let us ever thank God for the sharp, painful blows of providence and grace that bring us down before him. At last, Jacob was brought to the end of his own resources. One swift stroke from the hand of God rendered him utterly powerless.

“This is the purpose God has before him in his dealings with us. One of the principal designs of our gracious heavenly Father in the ordering of our path, in the appointing of our testings and trials, in the discipline of his love, is to bring us to the end of ourselves, to show us our own powerlessness, to teach us to have no confidence in the flesh, that his strength may be made perfect in our conscious and realized weakness” (A. W. Pink).

FAVOR SOUGHT

“And he said, let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (v. 26). Now, the Lord had accomplished his goal. Jacob was helpless. With his leg out of joint, he could no longer wrestle. All he could do was cling to his Master. Until now, Jacob had tried to order his own life, planning, scheming, devising, and deceiving to get what he wanted. Now, he is rendered helpless. All his strength was taken away; and he clings to Christ, saying, *“I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”*

“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee!”

Not only did he say, *“I will not let thee go;”* he said, *“I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”* “The battle is not over for Jacob until he is assured of the Lord’s permanent blessing upon him and his peace within him. This was a life or death struggle for Jacob, a battle that would not be fought again. He had heard the promises of God’s blessings. Now, he wanted them in truth. He was still Jacob, his past clouded with sin. He was a wanderer in a strange country and must still face Esau, his angry brother. He knew he was no better off for this experience unless the Lord gave him his approval, acceptance, and presence.” - (Henry Mahan). The one great blessing Jacob sought from Christ was the assurance of God’s favor!

“Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find!”

A NEW NAME

“And he said unto him, what is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (vv. 27-28). Jacob was compelled to confess his name. When the Lord said, *“What is thy name?”* it was not for his information, but for Jacob’s humiliation and instruction. God forced Jacob to acknowledge who and what he was. *“My name is Jacob.”* I am a cheat, a supplanter, a deceiver. I hold the birthright by my own efforts. And all my efforts are sin. I am Jacob, the sinner.

God gave him a new name - *“Israel.”* This name, Israel, implies royalty, sonship, acceptance, and favor with God. It means, *“Prince with God.”* Israel is one who has power with God, because he has favor with God. This was not the result of Jacob’s will, his works, or his worth. It was the gift of God’s free grace (John 1:11-13; Rom. 9:15-16; Eph. 1:3-7). The name Israel also means, *“God commands.”* Israel is one whose life is commanded and ruled not by self, or by Satan, or by the world, or by circumstances, but by God.

As a prince, Jacob had power with God and with men, and prevailed. His new name, Israel, was a constant reminder to Jacob that his success, his strength, his blessings, indeed, all that he had and experienced, which made him to differ with and prevail over men, was the gift of God’s grace, the result of God’s command, not the result of his own excellence (1 Cor. 4:7).

“And Jacob asked him, and said, tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there” (v. 29). Jacob was a subdued man; but his flesh was not yet destroyed. In curiosity, he asked and tried to pry into that which was not yet revealed. Pride dared to seek familiarity with the Almighty. God refused to tell him his name. Jacob must believe God within the scope

of his revelation. Faith demands no more than God reveals. Yet, in spite of this sinful curiosity, the Lord confirmed his blessing to Jacob - The blessings of grace are unconditional and free!

FACE TO FACE

“And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (v. 30). Jacob had met the living God. The hand of God had touched him. He had personally encountered his Redeemer. And God, who might have justly killed him, blessed him with life (Rom. 8:33-34). What a small thing it would be for him now to meet Esau! He who has met God and lived has no need to fear anything or anyone!

“And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh” (v. 31). As Jacob left Penuel *“the sun rose upon him.”* This was a token of God’s favor. *“The Sun of Righteousness”* rises and shines upon those who are blessed of God (Mal. 4:2). *“The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day”* (Pro. 4:18). Yet, while Jacob walked with God, he *“halted upon his thigh.”* The sinew of his thigh “shrank,” but it was not removed. And though God, by his grace, subdues our flesh, he does not remove it while we live in this world. We will go halting through this world, forcing us to lean upon Christ. God will not allow us to trust ourselves!

The chapter closes with a sad, sad fact. Religious men and women who never experience God’s grace will always substitute idolatrous superstition and works for the knowledge of Christ and his grace (v. 32). John Gill informs us that the Jews have an entire chapter in the Misnah giving rules concerning the eating of the sinew of any animal which is upon the hollow of the thigh, telling men how to cut it out, and

demanding that any who eat a piece, even the size of an olive, are to be beaten with forty stripes. *“Keep yourselves from idols”* (1 John 5:21).

Chapter 32

JOSEPH -- A TYPE OF CHRIST

"And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy

brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.”

Genesis 37:1-11

Most every Sunday School child has heard the story of Joseph and his brothers many, many times. Who is not familiar with the instructive narrative? Who does not know about Joseph's coat of many colors? Who is unaware of the fact that his brothers hated him and sold him into slavery? There are numerous moral lessons and warnings to be drawn from the story.

Joseph, in his character and conduct, shows us how we ought to live in this world for the glory of God and how that God honors those that honor him. Joseph's wicked brothers, in their character and conduct, represent everything that is base, vile, and malicious. They were wicked, covetous, self-centered, self-serving men. Obviously, Joseph represents all that we should be and do. His brothers represent all that we should avoid.

These lessons might be readily perceived by any natural moralist. Yet, there is much more here than lessons about moral conduct. In fact, if that is all we learn from the story of Joseph and his brothers, we have never yet understood the last fourteen chapters of Genesis. This story, like everything else in the Old Testament Scriptures, is intended by the Spirit of God to be a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in type and picture.

- Adam typified Christ as our Covenant Head.
- Abel showed forth the death of Christ as our Sacrifice.
- Noah represented Christ in the saving of his household.

- Abraham and Isaac portrayed the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on Mount Moriah.
- Melchizedek revealed Christ as our great High Priest.
- Isaac pictured Christ the promised Seed, in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed.
- Jacob saw Christ as a Ladder, the only Mediator between God and men.

However, the fullest, most complete and striking type of Christ to be seen in the Book of Genesis is Joseph. A. W. Pink, in his *Gleanings From Genesis*, shows 100 points in which Joseph is a picture of our Savior. I heartily recommend Pink's excellent, much more detailed study of Joseph as a type of Christ. Looking at just a few of the highlights of Joseph's life, we see him as a beautifully, instructive type of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we have observed, the Book of Genesis is the Book of Beginnings. Here, God revealed his purpose of grace in the salvation of sinners, and showed fallen men how he would save his elect by the sacrifice of his own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph is one of the many pictures we are given of God's grace and salvation in Christ.

HIS NAME

1st. Joseph was typical of Christ in his name. Actually, he was given two names - Joseph and Zaphnathpaaneah (41:45). Zaphnathpaaneah is the name which Pharaoh gave him when he made him Lord over all of Egypt. In this he was like our Savior who has two names given to him, a divine name and a human name. His divine name is Christ, which means "Anointed of God." His human name is Jesus, which means "Savior." He has two names given to him, because he is both the Son of God and the Son of Man.

The names given to Joseph are very significant as the type of our Savior. Joseph means "Adding" (30:24). Adam was a subtracter. We lost everything in Adam. But Christ, the Second Adam, is the Adder. Christ is the One who adds to heaven the sons of God. To this end, he came into this world, lived in righteousness, and died upon the cursed tree (John 12:24; 14:3).

Joseph's second name, Zephnathpaaneah, has a twofold meaning. It means Revealer. Christ is the Revealer of God (John 1:18). It also means Provider. And Christ is our great Provider. He is Jehovah-jireh, the Lord who provides. He provides his people with all things temporal and physical, as well as all things eternal and spiritual.

HIS RELATIONSHIP

2nd. Joseph is typical of Christ in his relationship to his Father. *"Israel loved Joseph more than all his children"* (v. 3). How Jacob loved Joseph! His happiness all his life long was wrapped up in Joseph. He rejoiced when Joseph was born. He distinguished Joseph from the sons of Leah, making for him a coat of many colors. His heart broke when he thought Joseph was dead. He took a long journey in his old age to see Joseph's face. He committed himself to Joseph (47:29-31).

As Joseph was the object of his father's love, so the Lord Jesus Christ is the object of His Father's love (John 3:35). The Lord God delights in his Son (Pro. 8:22, 30; Matt. 3:17; 17:5). God has given all things into the hands of his Son (John 3:35). Christ, the Son of God, has pre-eminence over all things and in all things (Col. 1:18).

Joseph was the object of Israel's love, because he was the child of Israel's old age (v. 3). Here again is a picture of Christ. From all eternity, he is the Son of God. He was not

born in time. He is the eternally begotten Son of the eternal Father, very God of very God, equal with and of the same substance as the Father (John 1:1-3). The Lord Jesus Christ is not a creature of God. He is God the Creator. He is not a mere emanation of God. He is God, the One in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells (Col. 2:9). He is infinitely more than a manifestation of God. He is *"God manifest in the flesh"* (1 Tim. 3:16).

HIS OCCUPATION

3rd. Joseph represents the Lord Jesus Christ in his occupation. He was a shepherd, *"feeding the flock"* (v. 3). No representation of Christ is more beautiful than that of a Shepherd. *"The Lord is my Shepherd"* (Psa. 23). He is set before us as the Good Shepherd in his sin-atonement death (John 10:11-16; 1 Pet. 2:21-25). He is the Great Shepherd in his resurrection glory (Heb. 13:20-21). And he is the Chief Shepherd in his glorious second advent (1 Pet. 5:4). What can be more beautiful than the comparison of Christ to a Shepherd? The figure suggests his tender care, his unceasing devotion, his constant provision, his watchful protection, his blessed patience, his peaceful presence, and his matchless love. Our Joseph is our Shepherd, the *"Shepherd of Israel"* (Psa. 80:1).

HIS COAT

4th. Joseph is a picture of Christ in his coat of many colors (v. 3). There has been much debate about this coat of many colors. Some find fault with Jacob for making it, and some find fault with Joseph for wearing it. Yet, it cannot be denied that this coat was providentially and prophetically significant. It was not, as Dolly Parton's song implied, a coat of many rags. This coat was made with great care and given to Joseph by his father as a mark of distinction and honor. It

separated Joseph, the son of Rachel, from his brothers, his half brothers, the sons of Leah. It identified Joseph as one of noble birth, distinct from all others (Judges 5:30; 2 Sam. 13:18).

Did not the Lord God so distinguish his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, from all other men? At his birth the angels sang and a star appeared. Never was there such a birth. At his baptism heaven opened, God spoke, and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove. This never happened before or since. Our Lord washed his disciples feet with water; but his feet were anointed with precious ointment. When he died upon the cursed tree, the Lord God made it apparent to all that he was no ordinary man. The three hours of darkness covered the earth. The earth itself shook and quaked at the death of the God-man. The veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom when by his blood the Lord Jesus opened the way for sinners to draw near to and be accepted by the holy Lord God. After the Lord Jesus died, one of the Roman soldiers, who had observed the whole day's infamy, declared, "*Truly, this man was the Son of God!*" And, after he arose from the dead, many of the saints arose with him. Throughout his life and ministry, God the Father put on his Son a coat of many colors.

HIS CHARACTER

5th. Joseph was an eminent type of Christ in his character. As Joseph excelled his brothers in every feature of his character, so Christ excels all the sons of men in the infinite excellence of his character. Joseph was obedient to his father, righteous in his behavior, faithful to God, kind to men, and patient in suffering. In all these things, Joseph typified the Lord Jesus Christ, who for his great love for us was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that he

might glorify God, his Father and our Father, in redeeming and saving his people from their sins.

HIS ACTIONS

6th Joseph was typical of Christ in his actions. As we read the life of Joseph, if we simply changed his name to Christ, we might think we were reading one of the four Gospels instead of the Book of Genesis. As Joseph was sent by his father into the wilderness to visit his brothers who treated him contemptuously, so the Lord Jesus Christ came into this dark wilderness, being sent by his Father, to visit and redeem his people. When he came here, our Savior, like Joseph, was hated without a cause. His own kinsmen conspired and plotted to kill him (John 1:11). As Joseph secretly fed and cared for his brothers in their time of need, though they knew him not, so the Lord Jesus secretly cared for, fed, and protected us when we knew him not (Hos. 2:8).

*Joseph suffered much by the hands of his brothers. His brothers betrayed him. They sold him into bondage. It was by the deeds of his brothers that he was imprisoned in Egypt. His own brothers delivered him up to die. So far as they knew, Joseph was dead. So it was with our Savior.

As Joseph did nothing but good for his brothers, though they fully deserved his wrath, so Christ, who was and is no greatly abused by us, does nothing but good for his elect (Rom. 8:28). In the time of love, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers (45:1-3). So Christ, at the time of love, reveals himself to God's elect (Ezek. 16:8; Gal. 1:15-16). As Joseph forgave his brothers of all their crimes against him and assured them that he was in the place of God for the salvation of his household (Gen. 50:19-21), so Christ forgives us and assures us of God's purpose of grace. Though we killed the Lord of glory, he is in the place of God to save his people. As Joseph taught his brothers to love one another ("See *that ye*

fall not out by the way" -- Gen. 45:24), so the Lord Jesus, above all else, teaches his disciples to love one another.

HIS EXALTATION

7th. Joseph was an eminent type of Christ in his exaltation. Joseph's two dreams, described in Genesis 37, prophetically made him as lord over the earth (vv. 5-8), lord over heaven (vv. 9-11), and thus lord over his brothers, just as the Old Testament Scriptures prophesied that Christ would be made Lord over all things as a man as the result of his accomplishments as our God-man Mediator (Isa. 53:10-12). After much humiliation and suffering, Joseph was highly exalted by Pharaoh (Gen. 41:39-41, 53-57). He was given the place of highest honor in the land. He was made to have dominion over all Egypt and all its stores. Everyone in Egypt was required to bow before him. And anyone who wanted anything from Pharaoh's bountiful store was required to "*go to Joseph.*"

So it is that the Lord God has highly exalted his Son as our Mediator (John 17:2; Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:8-11). What do you stand in need of? What is it that you want from God? Grace? Forgiveness? Righteousness? Peace? Eternal life? Strength? Comfort? Direction? Go to Christ. Christ is all. Christ has all. Christ gives all. Christ is our Joseph. He is in the place of God. He rules all things. He possesses all things. If we would live, we must "*go to Joseph.*" We must go to Christ.

Chapter 33

“Judah Went Down”

“And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.”

Genesis 38:1-30

If you read the Scriptures carefully, paying attention to what you read, you will sometimes come across a passage which seems totally out of place. When you do, do not just glance over it, or ignore it. That which seems out of place in the Word of God is put where it is to get our attention, to teach us something extraordinary.

Without question, anyone reading through the Book of Genesis, as he reads chapters 37, 38, and 39, and on to the end of the Book, has to stop, scratch his head, and ask – “What do the events in chapter 38 have to do with the story of Joseph’s betrayal, imprisonment, and exaltation?” The events recorded in this chapter have very little, if anything, to do with the history of Joseph. These thirty verses interrupt the history of Joseph. They seem to have been thrown into the story haphazardly. At first glance, the whole passage seems out of place. But that is not the case.

These thirty verses were given by Divine inspiration. Moses wrote this narrative exactly as God the Holy Spirit directed him. And the things here recorded “*were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*” (Rom. 15:4). May God the Holy Spirit, who inspired Moses to record this piece of sacred history, inscribe upon our hearts the lessons he here teaches.

We are told, in verse one, that “*Judah went down.*” However, his descent and degradation, shameful as it was,

was the bleak, black backdrop upon which the Lord God would display the wondrous glory of his grace. Here we see sin abounding, and grace super-abounding. What we have before us in this chapter is much, much more than a story of sin and degradation. This is a story of grace, marvelous, free, sovereign, amazing grace.

JUDAH'S SIN

The first thing, the most obvious thing, set before us in this chapter is the utter depravity of our race. Since the fall of our father Adam, one thing has always characterized the human race. One thing can always be counted on as a matter of certainty. One thing can be seen in the course of every son of Adam, in the life of every mortal, in the history of every family. There is one black mark by which every man is identified, one odious characteristic by which our race is identified, one horrible plague by which every heart is corrupted and every life is defiled. That one thing is sin. Sin is what we are. Sin is what we do. Sin is the thing that dominates our lives by nature. *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* We are all, by nature, *"children of wrath,"* a people deserving the wrath of God. We are a race of evil doers.

This is a fact which history verifies. The total depravity of man is verified in every news paper in the world every day. Preachers, like politicians, like to flatter people, and talk about man's innate goodness. But the Word of God speaks not of man's innate goodness, but his innate vileness. It is written, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."*

Though Judah was a chosen sinner, one predestined to eternal life, a man in the direct lineage of Abraham, one to whom the Lord God had sent the light of Divine revelation

when very few were given such light, Judah proved himself to be a wicked, sinful, depraved man. We are not told how or why it came to pass, but this chapter opens by declaring that "*Judah went down from his brethren*" (v. 1)

In direct violation of the revealed will of God, Judah chose to abandon the family of Abraham, the people of God, and took for his choice companion an Adullamite, by the name of Hirah. No doubt, he felt fully justified in his actions. He could easily vindicate his choice before any man. But I assure you, the path of compromise is the path of sorrow. It is written, "*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*" If you take fire to your bosom, you are going to get burned. If you sow to the wind, you will reap the whirlwind. Let's see if Judah's history does not verify this.

He chose a pagan for his friend. Then he chose a pagan for his wife. His two oldest sons (Er and Onan), following the example of their father, were slain under the wrath of God (vv. 2-6). We are not told what Er's wickedness was; but it was obviously something for which he was manifestly slain by the hand of God (v. 7). Onan's sin, however is specifically described (vv. 7-10).

"And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also."

There have been many things written about Onan's sin. Papists and others point to this as a proof text against birth control. But I am certain that God did not send this man to hell

simply because he spilled his seed on the ground. Onan, like Esau before him, despised the grace of God in Christ. He perished because he did not believe God, because he would not have Christ.

That which was later written in the law of God given to Israel (Deut. 25:5), was already clearly established as the revealed will of God to the children of Abraham. If a brother died without children, his brother next to him was required to take his wife and raise up a son in the name of his dead brother.

This, like all other aspects of the law given to Israel, was a messianic law, a prophetic law, pointing to the person and work of Christ. It was given to none but Israel. It applied to none but Israel. It was given to Israel, to Abraham's children, because the Lord God promised to send his Son, the Messiah, our Redeemer, through Abraham's seed. The promised Redeemer, the promised Savior, in whom all blessedness is found, and the heritage of grace in him, was the birthright of the firstborn son.

When Onan refused to raise up a child in the name of his brother, he showed contempt for God's covenant, despising God's Son. Just as Esau before him, Onan snubbed his nose at God's goodness and grace in Christ. It was for this that God killed him. God almighty has not changed. He still sends men and women to hell for snubbing their noses at his Son.

After the death of his first two sons, Judah promised Tamar that as soon as his third son, Shelah, was old enough, he would marry her. But, in verse 11, we are told that it was a promise he had no intention of keeping.

In verses 12-23, we read of Judah's shameful sin. It is here recorded as a warning beacon to all. What could be more terrible than the record here given of Judah and his family? Here is a man brought up in the midst of a favored people, blessed with godly influences, surrounded by examples of grace from his youth. Yet, Judah chose the rebel's path. The consequences of his actions are glaring. His sons were slain under the wrath of God. Still, Judah goes on, walking after the lusts of his flesh.

Between verses 11 and 12 many years had passed. Judah's wife died and Shelah was grown, and Judah After the death of his wife, Judah took his Adullamite friend with him to see about the shearing of his sheep. Tamar disguised herself as a harlot. Judah hired his daughter-in-law as a prostitute. He sent his companion in ungodliness to pay his harlot and retrieve his signet, his bracelets, and his staff. When Hirah could not find a harlot in the place, Judah thought the matter was over. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "That's that. Let her take those things and forget the matter, lest we be ashamed." This man who had no regard for the holy Lord God, did not want men to know what he had done, lest he lose face with mere mortals! But the story was not over.

When Judah heard that Tamar was pregnant, he was enraged, and said, "Let her be burned." That is to say, "Let her wear the mark of a whore (Lev. 21:9), so that all seeing her will know what kind of woman she is." – What hypocrisy! -- What self-righteousness!

JUDAH'S CONFESSION

At last, Judah acknowledged and confessed his sin *"And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And*

Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt. When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more."

This seems to be the time of Judah's conversion. I say that not only because he acknowledged his sin. He really had no choice in that matter. He was caught red-handed. But he did more. He stated plainly that Tamar, though guilty of incest, knowingly so, (which is certainly a worse crime than fornication with a prostitute), had acted more righteously than he.

How can that be? It appears that Tamar realized and believed the promise of God concerning the gift of his Son through Judah, the promise that up to this point Judah and his sons had despised. Being denied marriage to Shelah, she was determined to have Christ, no matter the cost. Her actions remind me of another woman who hazarded her honor that she might have the Kinsman Redeemer, who was the only hope and refuge of her soul (Ruth 3:8-9). Obviously the people who were present when Boaz took Ruth for his wife saw the same parallel (Ruth 4:11-12).

Tamar's incest cannot and must not be justified, or glossed over as an insignificant thing. What she did was horribly evil. Yet, Judah declares here that her actions were more righteous than his. In doing so, he acknowledges and confesses his sin and the gospel of God. And those who do that are forgiven sinners. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9). It seems to me that when Judah spoke of Tamar being more righteous than he, he was

saying, "This woman, though she and I have both behaved shamefully, believed God who I did not believe."

DIVINE ELECTION

Genesis 38 is, also, a plain declaration that Divine election is a matter of pure, free grace. Judah was chosen as the object of God's grace simply because God loved him. There was nothing good, noble, or righteous about this man by nature. Every choice he made was evil. He was not seeking the Lord, but serving the lusts of his flesh, when God stopped him in his path to destruction. Judah was no better than his sons; but God chose Judah. Judah was no more upright than his Adullamite friend, Hirah; but God chose Judah. This chapter was written to teach us, forcibly and plainly, that salvation is by grace alone. – Not by man's will, but by God's will. – Not by man's work, but by God's work. – Not by man's worth, but by Christ's worth. That which distinguished Judah from his neighbors and his own family, and that which alone distinguishes God's elect from the rest of the world is the distinguishing grace of God (1 Cor. 4:7; 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

GOD'S PURPOSE

A third thing displayed in this chapter is the absolute immutability of God's purpose. God had purposed from eternity that his Son would come into this world through the line of Judah. So it must be; and so it was. As surely as this chapter records the faithlessness of man, it records the immutable faithfulness of our God. God is always faithful to his purpose; and his purpose is the purpose of grace

We read in Matthew 9:10-11, that *"as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees*

saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" In his exposition of Genesis 38, Ralph Bouma wrote, "Not only does our Master eat and drink with publicans and sinners, but the twelve gates of heaven are named for them to encourage the chiefest of sinners to come unto Him (Rev. 21:12)"

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Here again, we see the wondrous mystery of divine providence. Once more, God overruled evil for good (Ps. 76:10; Rom. 8:28). Our God is always behind the scene. All the vast machinery of providence is under his control, absolutely. His finger directs all the circumstances of the universe. He who is Lord of all is above all, rules all, and uses all for the good of his people, the glory of his name, and the accomplishment of his purpose of grace in Christ. How sweet, how blessed, how comforting it is to the believing heart to trace all things back to the will of God our Father! All angels, men, and devils are his servants and execute his purposes precisely (Rom. 8:28-30; 11:33-36).

THE GLORY OF CHRIST

Not only does this chapter give us a genealogical record of Christ's ancestors, it shows us that our Savior's glory as a man was native to himself. It was not a glory derived from his ancestors. The Jews proudly boasted that they were not born of fornication (John 8:41), though in fact that is precisely how the nation was born. Our Savior's glorious righteousness as a man was not derived from his family tree, but was the glory of his own sinless nature and his own perfect obedience as our Substitute (John 17:4-5).

THE GRACE OF GOD

As God dealt with Judah, so he deals with all his elect in grace, free, sovereign, saving grace (Eph. 2:1-4). Genesis 38 stands before us as a most blessed display of God's amazing, free grace to sinners in Christ. Instead of casting Judah and Tamar into hell for their sin, God had chosen not only to save them, but to make them the direct progenitors of Christ. God's grace is not frustrated and cannot be frustrated. That which appears to be a hindrance to grace is but the instrument of grace. The Son of God, the Lord of Glory not only came down here to save sinners, he purposed from eternity to identify himself with sinners even in his ancestry through the tribe of Judah (Ruth 4:12-13; Matt. 1:1-3; Heb. 7:14). This is now, and shall forever be, the theme of his everlasting praise..

"The Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that

was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:5-12).

The history of Judah is written for us in these 30 verses of Inspiration to teach us that where sin abounds, grace super-abounds. In election, in redemption, in providence, in forgiveness, and in blessedness, our great God, in his great grace, rises above and over rules the sin and folly of man for the salvation of his elect and the glory of his own great name. Yes, he rises above and over rules our sin and folly for our salvation, to the praise of the glory of his grace. And when he gets done, every creature in heaven, earth, and hell will see the wonder of his work and praise him for everything that has been. *“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake” (Ps. 115:1).*

Chapter 34

“Joseph was brought down to Egypt.”

"And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither."

Genesis39:1-23

As Joseph was brought down to Egypt to save his people, so the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ was brought down to this earth as a man to save his people. This is the picture drawn by the Holy Spirit in Genesis 39. Certainly, there are other things taught in this chapter. There are other moral and spiritual lessons to be learned from these twenty-three verses. But the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit in giving us this piece of history is to show us a picture of Christ, our Redeemer. Realizing this fact, we do, I will simply direct your attention to the obvious, showing the blessed type picture here drawn of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen Joseph as a type of Christ before. In this 39th chapter of Genesis, the Holy Spirit continues with the history of Joseph, giving us several more aspects of his life in which he was a type and picture of our blessed Savior.

JOSEPH WAS A SERVANT

Verse 1 -- *"And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither."*

He who was the beloved son of his father's house was brought down to Egypt as a lowly servant. Here Joseph portrays Jehovah's righteous Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ

(Isa. 42:1-4; Ex. 21:5-6; Isa; 50:5-7; Ps. 40:6-10; Heb. 10:5-14; Phil. 2:5-11).

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law” (Isa. 42:1-4).

The Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily became his Father’s Servant to redeem and save his people (Isa. 50:5-7). He is that One to whom the law of God referred in Exodus 21:5-6). The bond slave who refused his freedom because he loved his master, his wife, and his children was typical of our Savior. In the covenant of grace, before the world began, the Son of God voluntarily made himself his Father’s Servant because he loved his Father, and his chosen family.

It was in this capacity that he spoke in Psalms 40:5-10. Hebrews 10:5-14 explains that the words of our Lord in Psalm 40 referred to his obedience unto death as our Substitute, by which the Lord of glory obtained the everlasting salvation of his chosen. Our great Savior came into the world in the fulness of time to fulfill his covenant engagements as Jehovah’s Servant. And when he had fulfilled those covenant engagements his people were redeemed, sanctified and perfected forever by his finished work.

“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he

said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. 10:5-14).

The basis of our Lord’s exaltation and glory, the means by which the God-man, our Mediator obtained the monarchy of the universe was his accomplishments as Jehovah’s Servant (Ps. 2:8; John 17:1-5; Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-3).

“THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH” (v. 2).

Behold, a greater than Joseph is here. Our Lord Jesus Christ is that man who is himself God almighty, Immanuel, the incarnate God, one with the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-3, 10-11, 14, 16-17). Not only was God with him and he with God, the incarnate Christ is God with us. *“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth...And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”*

“THE LORD MADE ALL THAT HE DID TO PROSPER IN HIS HAND” (v. 3).

Again, Joseph portrayed and typified our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, as Jehovah's Servant is that truly blessed Man, -- that Man who walked not in the counsel of the ungodly, -- that Man who stood not in the way of sinners, -- that Man who sat not in the seat of the scornful, -- that Man whose delight was in the law of the Lord. What does the Lord God tell us about that blessed Man?

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper...Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high...Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Ps. 1:3; Isa. 52:13; 53:10).

JOSEPH WAS A TRUSTED SERVANT.

Verse 4 *“And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.”*

Potiphar trusted Joseph with everything he had, and put everything into his hands. The Lord Jesus Christ is that Servant whom the Father has trusted with everything, into whose hands he has put everything he has. The Father trusted the Son as his Servant, putting his glory, his people, the world and all things in it into his hands (Eph. 1:12; John 17:2).

“THE LORD BLESSED THE EGYPTIAN’S HOUSE FOR JOSEPH’S SAKE” (v. 5).

Egypt was altogether insignificant, except for the fact that Joseph was there, his people must sojourn there, and

redemption must be accomplished there. Therefore, for Joseph's sake, God blessed the Egyptians in providence. So too, this world, all its nations and all its people, are altogether insignificant except for the fact that Christ has his people here. Here redemption and grace must be performed. Therefore, God blesses the world and preserves it for Christ's sake (Isa. 65:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:9); but his object is the salvation of his people. He does not hesitate to sacrifice men and nations for the people of his love (Isa. 43:3-4).

JOSEPH WAS A FAITHFUL SERVANT

When he was tempted to sin Joseph proved himself a faithful man, true to his master in all things (vv. 6-12). The Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, the Son of God was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He who was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, knew no sin. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

JOSEPH WAS FALSELY ACCUSED OF EVIL.

Verses 16-18 *“And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.”*

Joseph was accused of crimes he did not commit. When the chief priests, elders, and all the Jewish council did their best to find some charge against our Savior, they found none. At last, they hired two false witnesses to perjure themselves by bringing false charges against him, and accused the Lamb of God of insurrection (Matt. 26:59-61).

JOSEPH WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANGRESSORS.

Verses 19-23 *“And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.”*

It is obvious that Potiphar did not believe his wife's accusations. Had he believed her, he would probably have had Joseph executed for attempting to rape his wife. Yet, to save face before men, he delivered Joseph to prison. That is exactly what happened in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pilate knew that our Master was totally innocent of the charges trumped up against him. He knew that the Jews wanted him crucified simply because of their spiteful envy. Yet, to save face with men, he delivered the Son of God over to the hands of the soldiers to crucify him as a common criminal. Not only was our Lord Jesus Christ numbered with transgressors, he died in the transgressors' place, as our Substitute (Isa. 53:7-12).

In all these things, Joseph was a type of our Savior, the Man whom the Lord God sent to save us, whom he has made Lord of his house and Ruler of all his Substance. *“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. The*

king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance” (Ps. 105:17-21).

Chapter 35

Joseph Opening The Storehouses

"And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands

Genesis 41:55-57

Joseph was so hated by his brothers that they “*could not speak peaceably unto him*” (Gen. 37:4). Because he was so greatly loved by Jacob, they envied him. Because God revealed to Joseph that he would one day rule over them, his brothers were filled with jealousy. Therefore, being full of jealousy, envy, and hatred toward Joseph, his brothers sold him into slavery. But God was with Joseph. By several acts of divine providence, he wound up in prison in Egypt.

There he met the chief butler of Pharaoh’s court and interpreted his dream. Later, when Pharaoh had a dream which none of the magicians of Egypt could interpret, the chief butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him (Gen. 41:1-14). Pharaoh called for Joseph and asked him to interpret his troubling dreams; and Joseph did so. God revealed to Joseph that there would be seven years of great abundance in the land of Egypt followed by seven years of great famine (Gen. 41:28-32). Then, Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be ruler over all the land of Egypt, second only to himself (Gen. 41:39-46). The seven years of great abundance

came, then the seven years of great famine. We pick up the story at Genesis 41:55-57.

As we read the 41st chapter of Genesis, there are numerous texts of Scripture which come to my mind. The spiritual lessons to be gleaned from this chapter must not go unnoticed.

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

Here is an example of God's glorious sovereignty. It is written, *"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters: he turneth it withersoever he will"* (Pro. 21:1). It was no accident that Pharaoh dreamed what he did when he did. God's time had come for Joseph to be delivered from prison and exalted to a position of great honor. Pharaoh's dreams were but the instrument employed by God to accomplish his purpose.

The hand of God is manifest in the whole history of Joseph's life. God was behind the scenes, secretly, sovereignly accomplishing his own purpose. Nothing happened by accident. God who is above all, ruled and overruled all the events recorded in Genesis 37-50, all the creatures, and all their actions, good and bad, to accomplish his will and purpose concerning Joseph and his chosen people (Gen. 45:5; 50:20; Isa. 46:9-11; Acts 4:26-28; John 6:37-39).

God's sovereignty, as it is revealed in the life of Joseph, extends to all men and women, righteous and wicked, all the elements of nature, the weather, the crops of the field, and the cattle, all the nations of the world, and even to the dreams of men! *"Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased"* (Psa. 115:3). *"Whatsoever the*

Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places” (Psa. 135:6).

FOOLISHNESS

The story of Joseph also shows us that the wisdom of this world is foolishness. *“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Cor. 1:20). “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Cor. 3:19).*

In Joseph’s time, Egypt, the land of the Pharaohs, was the most advanced civilization of the world. It was the center of learning, science, education, culture, and philosophy. But the Egyptians were idolaters. Hence, they had no true wisdom. The light they had was darkness. The magicians of Egypt were impotent. All their wise men could not decipher the meaning of Pharaoh’s dream and tell him what God was about to do. So Pharaoh had to turn to Joseph, the only man in the land who knew God, for instruction.

FAITH'S WISDOM

Does that not demonstrate something of the wisdom of faith? Psalm 25:14 declares, *“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.”* God makes known his counsels, his purposes, and his truth, not to the wise, the mighty, the noble, and the great people of the world, but to them who believe him. *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”* All true knowledge begins with faith in Christ.

MYSTERY OF PROVIDENCE

Joseph certainly demonstrates the fact that *“all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).* How this story of Joseph demonstrates the goodness of God’s

providence toward his elect. How we need to lay this to heart! We, too often, become so occupied with our present circumstances that we forget the promise of God. That should never happen.

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace.
Behind the frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.”

Remember, *“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof”* (Eccles. 7:8). Believers should ever, be of good cheer, faint not. Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy *“cometh in the morning.”* So it was with Joseph. For a season he suffered wrongfully, but in the end God vindicated him and exalted him, so that he said, *“God hath made me forget all my toil,”* and *“hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction”* (Gen. 41:51-52).

FAITHFULNESS

Certainly, Joseph stands before us as an example of faithfulness to God. In the greatest trials, adversities, and surroundings, Joseph walked with God. Though he had no godly companions and lived in a heathen land among idolaters, he never became one of them. He maintained a strong testimony to the truth of God and the grace of God. Even in Egypt, Joseph glorified God, and there God honored Joseph, as it is written, *“Them that honor me I will honor”* (1 Sam. 2:30). Let us lay these five lessons to heart. Our God sovereignly rules all things. The wisdom of this world is foolishness. *“The secret of the lord is with them that fear him.”* *“All things work together for good”* to God’s elect. God honors those who honor him.

JOSEPH AND CHRIST

However, this story of Joseph and his opening of the storehouses is intended by God the Holy Spirit to reveal and magnify the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, and to show us the glory and grace of God in him. The parallels between Joseph and Christ that are to be found in this chapter are numerous.

1. As Joseph, in due time, was delivered from prison, so Christ was raised from the dead at God's appointed time (Ps. 16:9-11).
2. As Joseph was the revealer of secrets, so Christ reveals the things of God to his people (John 15:15).
3. As Joseph warned of coming danger, and urged men to make provision for it, so Christ warned sinners of the wrath of God and urged them come to him for salvation (Mk. 16:16).
4. As Joseph was wonderful in counsel, so our Savior's name is Wonderful Counselor (Isa. 9:6).
5. As Joseph was exalted over all of Egypt, so Christ has been exalted over all things (Rom. 14:9).
6. As Joseph was worthy of his exaltation, so Christ is worthy of his (Heb. 10:11-14)).
7. As Joseph was, upon his exaltation, invested with the glorious apparel of Pharaoh, so the man Christ Jesus exalted is clothed with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was made (John 17:1-5).
8. As Joseph's power and authority were publicly owned and acknowledged by all men, so all men shall one day publicly own and acknowledge Christ as Lord (Phil. 2:9-11).
9. As Joseph was given a wife by Pharaoh, so God the Father has given his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, a bride (John 6:37-40).
10. As Joseph's marriage was planned and arranged by Pharaoh, so the marriage of the Lamb was planned and arranged by the Lord God in eternity (Eph. 1:3-6).

11. As Joseph was 30 years old when he began his life's work, so the Lord Jesus Christ began his public ministry when he was thirty years old (Lk. 3:23).
12. As Joseph went forth on a mission from Pharaoh's presence, so Christ came into this world to do his Father's will (Heb. 10:5-10).
13. As Joseph's exaltation was followed by a season of great plenty, so Christ's exaltation was followed by a time of great grace, poured out upon the earth (Acts 2:16-21).
14. As the years of plenty were followed by years of famine, though Joseph was still on the throne, so these last days, these perilous times, are years of great famine, though Christ is still on his throne (Amos 8:11-12; Rev. 5:6; 10:1-11).
15. As in the days of famine, Joseph opened the storehouses of Egypt to all who came to him, so now the Lord Jesus Christ opens the storehouses of God's abundant grace to all who come to him (John 4:10; 7:37-38).

OPENING THE STOREHOUSES

Joseph opened the storehouses in Egypt by royal authority (41:41, 44, 45). Pharaoh gave all things into Joseph's hands, all food, all authority, all power. When the people came to Pharaoh for anything, he said, "*Go to Joseph!*" Even so, by God's royal design and decree, all things pertaining to life and godliness, all grace, all mercy, all salvation, all life, and all heaven, have been given into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father has put all things in Christ (John 3:35-36). All power and authority belong to Christ (John 17:3). All the fulness of the Godhead is in Christ (Col. 2:9-10). All the fulness of grace and glory are in Christ (John 1:16; Col. 1:19). The only way any sinner can get anything from God is to go to Christ. He has everything (Eph.

1:3-4). Why? *“For it pleased God!”* God is determined *“that in all things Christ might have the preeminence!”*

Joseph was the only fit person to open the storehouses (41:53-55). He was the only one who knew what was going on and what must be done. Joseph had prophesied that the famine would come. No one else knew about it. Joseph planned the crops, and built the storehouses, and had them filled before the famine came (41:35-36, 49).

Even so, our Lord Jesus Christ is the only fit Person to open the storehouse of God's mercy, love, and grace to needy sinners. As Joseph foreknew the famine in Egypt, though he did not cause it, our Lord Jesus Christ foreordained the fall and famine of humanity, though he did not cause it. (Gen. 2:17). As Joseph built the storehouses and filled them in anticipation of the famine, so Christ, in the covenant of grace, provided for the needs of his people before the world began. The storehouse of grace is God's covenant (Eph. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:9). The provision is Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

Christ filled the storehouse. In the fulness of time the Son of God came to this earth in human flesh. He obeyed the law in order that his people might have perfect righteousness before God. He died on the cross that we might be justified through his blood. The storehouse is full. Let all who are hungry come. Sinners find grace abundant and free in Christ. He alone has the capacity to contain all fulness. He alone has the wisdom to distribute all fulness. He alone has all fulness forever, immutable and undiminished though all his people draw upon it continually (2 Tim. 1:12; Phil. 3:20-21).

“And Joseph opened all the storehouses” (41:56). Joseph became the savior of all people, Jews and Gentiles. He opened the storehouses and dispensed the

bread of life to the perishing multitudes. His resources to do so were immeasurable (41:49). What joy it must have given Joseph to see the people coming to him and to give them the bread they needed. That is why he built the storehouses in the first place and filled them, so that the people might eat and live. Christ became our Surety, our Substitute, and our Sin-Offering, so that sinners might be saved by him (Matt. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15; Lk. 19:10).

Though the storehouses were filled, they would have brought no glory to Joseph, and would have done no good for the people, if he had not opened them. Joseph's glory was not that he had plenty, but that he was delighted to distribute it. This is the glory of our Redeemer - "*He delighteth in mercy!*" He has plenty, and he delights to distribute it. His chief glory is his goodness (Ex. 33:18-19). Our Savior cries to men, "*Ho, everyone that is thirsty, come ye to the waters!*" Christ is the Bread of Life. He bids hungry sinner to eat and live. Christ is the Water of Life. He calls thirsty souls to come and drink.

Then, we are specifically told that Joseph opened the storehouses "*when the people cried for bread*" (41:55-56). When hungry sinners cry for bread, Christ opens the storehouse and feeds them (Matt. 7:9-11; Lk. 11:5-13). Lost sinners who cry to him will be heard (Rom. 10:13). Needy believers who cry to him will be heard (Heb. 4:16). As often as we cry to him for the bread of his grace, he gives it.

Joseph opened the storehouses to all who came (41:57). They were opened not to the Egyptians only, but to all nations. All who came to Joseph got bread. Even so, our Lord Jesus Christ opens the storehouse of grace to all who come to him, Jew and Gentile, black and white, rich and poor, male and female, old and young (Matt. 11:28). "*Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely*" (Rev. 22:17).

Jesus Christ is the mighty Savior, able and willing to save unto the uttermost all who come to God by him (Heb. 7:25).

As Pharaoh said to the people, "*Go to Joseph,*" so I say to you, whatever your soul's need is, "*Go to Christ!*" He has all power and authority. He alone can open the storehouse of heaven. He will open the storehouse to all who come to him. Eat the Bread he gives, and you will never hunger again. Drink the water he gives, and you will never thirst again.

Chapter 36

Joseph And His Brothers

“And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt”

Genesis 42:2-3

God in his wisdom uses the natural world, creatures and events to illustrate spiritual truths and make known to us his saving grace and redemptive work in Christ Jesus. Henry Mahan wrote, “The wonders which God performs in the heart can be seen in the wonders God performs on earth and records in his Word.” The smitten rock (1 Cor. 10:4), the brazen serpent (John 3:14), and Jonah in the whale’s belly (Matt. 12:40) are all examples of this fact.

Joseph’s dealings with his brothers in Genesis 42-45 is a typical picture of the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ deals with his erring brothers who were given to him by God the Father before the world began and redeemed by his own precious blood at Calvary.

I cannot fully expound the type before us in these chapters. If you read the history of Joseph twenty times, each time you read it you will see the type more clearly and fully. Then, when you read it again, you will still find some fresh parallels between the son of Rachel and the Son of Mary, who is God over all and blessed forever. The story before us of Joseph and his brothers beautifully portrays the experiences of sinners, awakened by the grace of God, as they come to Christ and have him revealed to them and in them in saving mercy.

FAMINE

God sent a very great famine (41:57). This famine was not only in the land of Egypt, but in all the lands, even in Canaan where the chosen family dwelt (42:5). And the famine was the work of God (41:32). Certainly, there is a sense in which this famine is a picture of the sin and spiritual death which is spread over all Adam's race, even over those who are chosen of God unto salvation. God's elect are born into this world in the same state and condition as all other men, fallen, depraved, and under the curse of the law. It is written, "*Death passed upon all men, for all have sinned*" (Rom. 5:12). "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). We were by nature "*Children of wrath, even as others*" (Eph. 2:3). Before God saved us, we were, like all other people, "*without Christ, having no hope and without God*" (Eph. 2:12). This is the condition of all men by nature, lost alienated from God, without life, and without hope. But this famine cannot be said to be the work of God. It is the fruit of sin.

The famine here spoken of was the work of God. It is a famine sent and caused by God to bring his chosen ones to Joseph. When God brings his elect to Christ, he does so by causing a famine in their souls (Psa. 107:4-6, 17-21). No man will ever come to Christ until he is made to see that by reason of his own sin he is altogether void of life. Then, "*hungry and thirsty,*" fainting and drawing near to death, "*they cry unto the Lord in their trouble.*" Joseph's brothers came to him, because God sent famine upon them. Had there been no famine, they would not have come. And no sinner will ever come to Christ, the Bread of Life, until God the Holy Spirit sends a famine in his soul and makes him hungry for that living Bread.

GOOD NEWS

When the famine came, when they were perishing, they heard some good news (42:2). Jacob called his sons together and said, "Boys, we don't have to die. I have heard that there is corn in Egypt!" This is the good news of the gospel preached to hungry, weary, dying sinners. You do not have to continue in your famine. Poor, hungry, dying sinners do not have to perish. There is life, mercy, and grace abundant in Christ. The Son of God calls thirsty sinners to come to him and drink (John 7:37). He fills the hungry soul with good things (Lk. 1:53). He who is the Savior of the world, says hungry souls, "*I am the Bread of Life*" (John 6:48-50).

Jacob could not be sure that the rumor he heard about corn in Egypt was true. But we are sure that Christ is the Bread of Life and the Water of Life, because we have the sure Word of God (1 John 5:9-11). Jacob did not know that Joseph was on the throne in Egypt. He very likely had doubts about whether in fact the ruler in Egypt would let him have the corn he so desperately needed. But we are sure that all who come to Christ for mercy and grace shall obtain the grace they need. We have God's Word for it (Heb. 4:16). Our heavenly Father has given all things to Christ, our Savior. Christ, who possesses all things, is the Friend of sinners. He loved us and gave himself for us. He possesses all things so that he might save his people.

Jacob could not be sure that he could get enough food for his whole family. There were 70 of them in all. But we are assured that God's grace is abundantly sufficient in Christ Jesus to save to the uttermost all them that come to God by him (Isa. 1:18; Matt. 11:28; 1 John 1:7-9).

A COMMAND

An urgent command was given (42:1-2). Jacob said to his sons, "Do not hesitate. Do not stand here looking at one another. There is corn in Egypt. Go down to Egypt and buy food that we may live and not die!" The command of the gospel is urgent. It calls for immediate response. If you are without Christ, you must not delay. *"Today is the day of salvation."* You are a sinner, without life, without hope before God. If you remain where you are, you will perish forever. There is life in Christ, who of God is made unto sinners all we need (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10). Come to Christ. Flee away to Christ. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. 45:20-25; John 5:39-40). Without Christ you are lost forever.

DOWN TO EGYPT

Hearing the urgent command of their father and knowing their desperate need, Joseph's brothers *"went down to buy corn in Egypt"* (42:3). Chapters 42-44 are very instructive. *"Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him."* And though Joseph knew what he would do for them before he would reveal himself to them, his brothers had to learn some things. Read these chapters in Genesis carefully. As I set the primary events of these chapters before you, I want you to see that Joseph's dealings with his brothers is a picture of our Lord's gracious dealings with us in saving grace.

First, Joseph's brothers tried to pay for what they received from him (42:3). The word "buy" occurs five times in the first ten verses of this chapter. These poor men had no thought of securing corn except by paying for it. How foolish. What could they give to Joseph? Yet, all men by nature, when first awakened to a sense of need, foolishly imagine that they can earn God's approval, win his favor, and merit his acceptance. When Naaman came to Elisha for healing, he brought gifts to pay for mercy (2 Kings 5:5). When the prodigal first came to himself, he thought he would ask his father to

make him a “*hired*” servant (Lk. 15:19). The rich young ruler thought he could do something to obtain eternal life (Lk. 18:18). The Philippian jailer thought he had to do some thing to be saved (Acts 16:30). All men are legalists and Arminians by nature, presuming that they can and should do something to cause God to favor them, just as Joseph’s brothers thought they could and should offer some payment for the corn Joseph possessed.

Second, these men knew they were perishing. Yet, they clung to their own righteousness before Joseph who knew them (42:11). They said, “*We are true men.*”. When Joseph spoke roughly to them (42:7, 9), they resented it and defended themselves. It is ever the nature of fallen man to justify himself.

Third, Joseph put his brothers into prison for three days (42:17). This is exactly what they deserved. Joseph had no intention of destroying them. He put them in their proper place, the place of shame and condemnation, so that they might know their guilt and acknowledge their sin. He abased them because he was determined to exalt them. So it is with our Savior. He always abases before he exalts. He shuts us up before he sets us free. He slays before he makes alive. He will never save a sinner until he gets him lost and makes him know that he needs saving.

Fourth, when they were shut up under the law, Joseph’s brothers began to remember their sin (42:21). The terrors of hell are the terrors of an awakened conscience without repentance. And the first terrors of a soul under conviction are the terrors of an awakened, guilty conscience (Rom. 5:19). This is the law’s purpose. It identifies sin and condemns the sinner, shutting us up to Christ.

Fifth, when they began to know and acknowledge their guilt and their desperate need, Joseph began to show his brothers that deliverance is by grace alone (42:25-26). The Bread of Life cannot be purchased. It must be accepted as a free gift if it is received at all (Eph. 2:8-9).

Sixth, Joseph's brothers found a brief satisfaction and reprieve (42:26). They got their corn. They went home. They enjoyed a time of peace. But Joseph was still unknown. This is what religion gives sinners - Peace without Christ. But God will not allow his people to rest until they rest upon Christ.

Seventh, Joseph's brothers soon had their superficial peace shattered (42:27-28). Their hearts failed them. They were filled with fear. When they had eaten their corn, the famine was still there (43:1-2). This was all by Joseph's wise arrangement. What wisdom and grace! So it is with Christ our Savior. He so arranges all the affairs of chosen sinners that they are both compelled and fully willing to come to him at the appointed hour. (Psa. 65:4; 110:3).

Eighth, Joseph's brothers still retained their legal spirit (43:11, 15). They doubled their efforts to please Joseph. How little they knew him. He prepared a feast for them. He said, *"These men shall dine with me"* (43:16). He provided everything. Is not this the word of the gospel? *"Come, for all things are now ready!"* Christ is the Provider. We are only receivers.

Ninth, Joseph graciously forced his brothers to take their proper place before him and confess their sin to God. There could be no fellowship between Joseph and his brothers until they fully confessed their sin and guilt. And he graciously forced them to do it (Psa. 65:4; 110:3). He arranged everything to secure his purpose (44:1-2; Rom. 8:28-30). He sent his steward to fetch them to him (44:4), just

as our Lord sends his Spirit to call chosen, redeemed sinners in the time of love. His brothers came fearful, broken, helpless, and bowed before him (44:13-14). Standing is over. These once proud, boasting men now bow in terror before Joseph. Judah, speaking for the rest, acknowledged that God had found out their iniquity, and sought mercy (44:16).

JOSEPH

When his brothers confessed their sin and sought mercy, bowing before his feet, Joseph could not refrain himself. *“Joseph made himself known unto his brethren”* (45:1-3). What a touching scene this is. It was Joseph who made himself known to his brothers. He cleared the room. The Lord Jesus always gets the chosen sinner alone with himself when he is about to make himself known (Hos. 2:14; John 8:9). He spoke personally to his brothers. No priests, personal workers, or mediators were used. When Christ makes himself known to chosen sinners, he does so by his Spirit, through the Word of his grace, without the witchcraft of religious inventions.

There is a wealth of instruction in the way Joseph made himself known to his brothers. In everything he did, he typified Christ. If you did not know better, you would think he had already read the New Testament, and was deliberately acting as a type of Christ. The fact is, though he knew it not, that is exactly the case. God raised him up specifically to portray redemption and grace to sinners in Christ. First, he declared his name - *“I am Joseph.”* Then, he declared his relationship to them - *“I am Joseph your brother!”* (45:4). Next, he invited them to come near to him (45:4). At last he comforted them.

Look at the way he comforted them. He assured them of forgiveness (45:5). He explained what God had done (45:7-

8). He told them of the provision he had made for them (45:10-11). He promised them all the fulness of his grace. He said, "You will always be near me. I will sustain you and nourish you. No evil shall befall you. You have my word for it." Then Joseph kissed his brothers (45:15). His kiss was the assurance of his love, his forgiveness, and of complete reconciliation. The fame of this was heard throughout all of Pharaoh's house (45:16). And that day shall soon come when the fame of God's goodness and grace to chosen sinners will forever reverberate through all creation (Eph. 2:7).

Joseph, who represents our Savior, was pleased. His brothers, who represent all saved sinners, were pleased. Pharaoh, who represents God the Father, was pleased. This thing even pleased all his servants of Pharaoh's palace, just as the salvation of God's elect and the glory of Christ revealed in saving them pleases the Spirit of God and all the servants of God, all the heavenly angels, every faithful gospel preacher, and all the affairs of providence.

Then, Joseph sent his brothers on an urgent mission to bring all the chosen family to him (45:18). The mission was simple. His brothers were to go tell all the family that Joseph was alive, that he was Lord over all, that everything they needed was in his hands, and that he bids them all to come to him. That is exactly the mission our Lord has given us (Matt. 28:18-20). As he sent them out on their mission, knowing the depravity of their hearts, Joseph gave his brothers one word of admonition. He said, "*See that ye fall not out by the way*" (45:24). It is a sad fact, but a fact, nonetheless, that saved sinners, sent as we are to carry the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ to other sinners, still need this admonition (Eph. 4:1-7). Joseph's brothers were faithful to their commission. Let us ever be faithful to ours. They did not invent a message of their own, or alter the message Joseph gave them. They just told others what Joseph told them and

did for them. Good preaching and good witnessing is simply telling sinners what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you and taught you by his grace. As God owned and honored their message, for the salvation of all Israel, he will own and honor the gospel today, and by it all Israel, that is to say all God's elect, shall be saved (Isa. 55:11).

Chapter 37

A SURETY FOR BENJAMIN

"And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever:"

Genesis 43:8-9

God the Holy Spirit is anxious for every believer to enjoy the comforting assurance of salvation in Christ. He is our Comforter. That is the work he was sent to perform. His method of comfort is to take the things of Christ and show them to us (John 16:7, 13, 14). He knows that the more fully we know Christ, and the more clearly we see him, the more we shall enjoy the comfort and assurance of our salvation in him.

Therefore, the Spirit of God always points us to Christ, especially in the inspired volume of Holy Scripture. He not only tells us who Christ is, what he has done, and what he is doing for us, he also uses metaphor after metaphor to show us pictures of our great Savior, pictures designed to assure God's believing people that all is well between us and our God.

We have seen this repeatedly throughout the Book of Genesis. When Adam and Eve were naked, God provided them with the skins of an innocent victim, and clothed them (3:21) portraying Christ as our Righteousness, Redemption, and Salvation. When the flood came, God saved Noah by an ark (7:15-16), portraying Christ as our Ark of refuge from the

wrath of God, and our salvation by his Substitutionary sacrifice. As the ark bore all the wrath of God so that Noah and his family bore none, so Christ bore all the wrath of God for his people and we bear none (Rom. 8:1). As Noah and his family suffered all the wrath of God in the ark, so God's elect have suffered all the wrath of God in Christ (Gal. 3:13). When Isaac was bound to the altar on Mt. Moriah, God provided himself a lamb for a burnt offering (Gen. 22:8, 13), typifying Christ as our Substitute (John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21). When Jacob was alone, helpless, and afraid, God showed him a ladder by which he could ascend to God (28:12-13), picturing the Lord Jesus Christ as our Mediator.

Here (Gen. 43:8-9), the Spirit of God gives us another beautiful and instructive picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the grace of God in him. As Judah became surety for Benjamin, assuming all responsibility for Him, so the Lord Jesus Christ, who sprang from the tribe of Judah, became Surety for God's elect before the worlds were made, in the covenant of grace, assuming total, absolute responsibility for the salvation of his people (Heb. 7:22). In this study, I will try to set forth what a surety is and how the Lord Jesus Christ performs the work of a surety on our behalf.

WHAT IS A SURETY?

A surety, is one who binds himself to stand good for another. A surety is one who approaches one person on behalf of another person. He is a representative man who lays himself under obligation to another person for the one he represents. In this sense, Christ is our Surety. He drew near to God the Father on our behalf, before the world began, and laid himself under obligation to God for us (Psa. 40:7-8; John 10:16-18).

A surety is one who strikes hands with another in solemn agreement. Suretyship, to a man of honor, is a voluntary bondage (Pro. 6:1-2). When Christ became our Surety, he voluntarily placed himself in bondage to his Father until his service was performed (Isa. 50:5-7; John 10:16-18; Heb. 10:5-14).

This is what the Lord Jesus Christ did as the Surety for God's elect, in the everlasting covenant of grace, before the world began. He drew near to God the Father on behalf of his elect (Pro. 8:30-31). Because justice must be maintained, even in the exercise of mercy, (Pro. 17:15), our great Surety promised to faithfully perform all that God required for the salvation of his people. Our Savior pledged himself, according to the will of God, to bring in an everlasting righteousness for us, satisfy all God's law and justice on our behalf, to put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself, to give the chosen a new, holy nature in the new birth, to raise them up in glorification and perfection, and at last present them to the Father in the perfection of holiness to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Upon this pledge of suretyship, our Savior, the Son of God, struck hands with his Father in solemn agreement. Ephesians 1:3-14; Romans 8:28-30, and 2 Timothy 1:9-10 simply cannot be understood except in the light of this fact. God the Father trusted his Son to fulfill his suretyship engagements (Eph. 1:12). He entrusted his elect into the hands of his dear Son as their Surety, as a man entrusts sheep to the care of a shepherd (John 10:14-18). As Israel said to Judah, so God the Father said to our Surety, "Take them, and go! Bring them again to me in the perfection of holiness" (John 6:39). The matter of our salvation was then and there settled forever (2 Tim. 1:9). The experience of salvation is the reception of the promise of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised and gave his elect in Christ before the world began (2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 9:14-17). All the

blessings of grace come to chosen, redeemed sinners in the form of a testament, or a will; but they were promised as the reward of Christ's obedience as our covenant Surety.

HOW DID CHRIST BECOME OUR SURETY?

With men a surety is a mere guarantor, a co-signer, one who is jointly responsible with the principle debtor for the payment of a debt. This is not the kind of surety Christ is. He did not merely agree to meet our obligations to God's law if we, by some circumstance or condition, became incapable of meeting our own obligations. Christ, as our Surety, took upon himself all responsibility for the totality of our obligation to God's holy law and justice.

With men, a man may be legally forced into suretyship. A father is legally responsible for the debts and liabilities of his minor children. A husband is legally responsible for the debts and liabilities of his wife. But Christ willingly, voluntarily, cheerfully placed himself in servitude to God the Father, to obey his will and fulfill his law, as the Surety of his elect. And at the moment he became our Surety, he became servant to God his Father (Isa. 42:1; 49:3; John 10:17-18). Our Savior's subordination to the Father as our Surety does not imply any lack of equality between the Father and the Son in the Godhead. It is a voluntary subordination. The Lord Jesus Christ is an absolute Surety by voluntary consent.

When Christ became our Surety, he took the whole of our debt upon himself. He became responsible for our obligations to God. As soon as he was accepted as our Surety, we were released from all our debts and obligations to God's holy law. As soon as God the Father accepted his Son as our Surety, he set us free. He ceased looking to us for satisfaction. He freed us from all the curse, penalty, and obligation we would incur by reason of sin, and looked to his

Son alone for the satisfaction of our debts (Job 33:24). This is beautifully illustrated for us in the case of the apostle Paul and Onesimus (Phile. 8).

When Christ became Surety for us, all the sins of God's elect were imputed to him in the mind and purpose of God. By divine imputation, our sins were placed to his account. He became responsible for them. Christ was made to be sin for us when he hung upon the cursed tree; but he became responsible and accountable to God for our sins when he became our Surety. They were laid to his account from eternity (Isa. 53:6; Psa. 40:12; 69:5; 2 Cor. 5:19).

When Christ became our Surety, we were redeemed, justified, pardoned, and made righteous in the sight of God. God's forbearance, patience, and longsuffering with this world is due to the suretyship engagements of Christ. God's eye has always been upon the blood. It is the blood of Christ, our Surety, that held back the hand of God's judgment when Adam sinned. The Old Testament saints were pardoned and justified upon the basis of Christ's obedience as our Surety, though he had not yet actually rendered that obedience (Isa. 43:25; 45:22-25; Rom. 3:24-26). Those men and women had knowledge of and faith in Christ as their Surety (Job 19:25-27; Psa. 32:1-4; 119:122; Isa. 38:14).

The Lord Jesus Christ became our Surety by his own voluntary will. He was accepted as our Surety in the covenant of grace before the world began. And we were accepted of God in him (Eph. 1:6).

WHAT DID THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AGREE TO AS OUR SURETY?

When Christ became our Surety, he made certain promises to God the Father in the name of his covenant people which he is honor bound to perform. The promises

were voluntarily made, without any constraint or force, except the constraint of his love and the force of his grace. But now, having made the promises, he is bound, bound by his own honor, to perform them. What are those promises? What did Christ agree to do as our Surety? Basically, our eternal Surety agreed and promised to do two things.

First, he agreed to fulfill all our responsibilities to God. Standing as our Surety, in an absolute sense, Christ did not simply assume part of our responsibility in a given area, leaving us to make up the balance. He willingly became absolutely responsible for his people in all things.

He agreed to render that perfect obedience to the law of God, which we were obliged to do, establishing perfect righteousness for us. He worked out and brought in an everlasting, perfect, legal righteousness for his people (Rom. 5:19; Jer. 23:6; John 17:4). Our Savior also agreed to satisfy the penalty of the law as our Substitute (Gal. 3:13; John 19:30). By his perfect obedience, in life and in death, the Lord Jesus Christ magnified the law and made it honorable in the redemption of God's elect (Heb. 10:5-14).

Second, Christ our Surety agreed to bring all his elect safe to glory (John 10:16-18). This is the Father's will which he came to perform (John 6:39-40). Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ became responsible to bring God's Benjamins safely home. *"If I bring them not to thee, and set them before thee,"* he said, *"then let me bear the blame forever."* It is because of his suretyship engagements for his elect that the Son of God says, *"Them also I must bring."* What our Surety has sworn to do he must do (Heb. 2:13).

He reconciled us to God by his sin-atonement death. He entered into heaven as our Covenant-Head, and claimed our eternal inheritance in our name as our Surety. He will, in the

last day, present all of his elect faultless before the throne of his Father's glory with exceeding, great joy (Eph. 5; Jude 1; Heb. 2:13). In that day, He will appear without sin; and we (all for whom he is Surety) shall appear with him without sin. God the Father will say to Christ our Surety and to all his people, "*Well done!*"

Child of God, the suretyship engagements of Christ ought to cause your heart to leap with joy. The whole of our acceptance with God is in Christ, our Surety. Our relationship with the eternal God does, in great measure, determine what we do; but what we do does not, in any measure whatsoever, determine our relationship or acceptance with the eternal God, our heavenly Father. The whole of our assurance is Christ, our Surety.

In my Surety I am free! His dear hands were pierced for me!
With His spotless garments on, I am as holy as God's own
Son!

The whole of our security is Christ, our Surety. -- His covenant engagements, -- His redemptive work, finished at Calvary, -- His gospel promise ("*They shall never perish!*"), -- and his glory as our Surety and Mediator upon the throne of universal monarchy, -- These are the things, the only things, which give believing hearts peace before God.

Chapter 38

Jacob's Fear Removed

"And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

Genesis 46:1-4

When Jacob heard the report of his sons that Joseph was yet alive and that he was governor over all the land of Egypt, the old man fainted. Then, when he was revived, being assured that it was so, he said, *"It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."* Bold, confident, full of joy, Jacob packed up all his family and everything he owned, and started out for Egypt.

Along the way to Egypt, Jacob came to Beersheba. There he worshipped the Lord his God. But God saw what Jacob never expressed. As the Lord looked upon the heart of his worshipping servant, he saw an old man whose heart was tossed about with many fears. And the Lord God graciously removed the fears of his beloved servant. This is another picture of grace. As God removed Jacob's fear, so he graciously removes the fears of his people today by the revelation of himself to us, not in visions and dreams, but by his Spirit and through his Word.

FLESH AND SPIRIT

Jacob, like all believers in this world, was a man with two natures. As you read the text, did you notice that Jacob is called by two names? *“Israel took his journey.” “And God spoke unto Israel...and said, Jacob, Jacob.”* Israel was the name God gave him, the name of his strength. Jacob was the name his father gave him, the name of his nature, the name of his weakness.

It appears that Jacob started out for Egypt, inspired by the news concerning Joseph, without the least fear. The old man had the sparkle of joy in his eyes. But when he came to Beersheba, he seems to have halted by reason of fear. Beersheba was on the border of Canaan. When he left Beersheba, he knew he was leaving the land of promise and would be on his way to Egypt. Realizing what a momentous move he was about to make, the old man began to tremble. We should ever be aware of these two facts, the one very sad and lamentable, the other most blessed.

1. So long as we are in this world God's chosen people are men and women with two natures. Our name is both Israel, prince with God who prevails, and Jacob, supplanter, weakness and failure (Rom. 7:14-23; Gal. 5:17-23).
2. Our great God and Savior sympathizes and tenderly cares for us in the state of weakness. The Lord God saw Jacob's need and met it. He does not excuse, condone, or approve of Jacob's fear. But he does not cast him off because of his fear. *“He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust”* (Psa. 103:14; 78:37-39; 1 John 2:1-2).

WORSHIPPING

Before proceeding to Egypt, Jacob paused at Beersheba to worship God. Beersheba was to him a holy place. It held many memories for him. It was at Beersheba that God had met with Abraham and called upon him to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 21:31). As that was a critical turning point in Abraham's life, Jacob paused here to worship God, because he had come to a critical turning point in his own life. He was about to go where he had never been before. He was about to break new ground. So he came to Beersheba and offered sacrifices to God, the God of his father Isaac. What wisdom he displayed.

As he began a new era in his life, he consecrated himself anew to his God. When Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, we do not read of any devotion to God. But when Jacob was going to Egypt, before doing so, he consecrated himself to God again. He is wise who begins everything with God. Young people just beginning to set up their own homes, business men venturing a new enterprise, churches and pastors setting out upon a new sphere of ministry, believers beginning a new day, -- all should, first and foremost, begin with God.

Jacob "*offered sacrifices*" to the Lord. He did so for at least three reasons. *First*, he offered sacrifice to God to ceremonially and typically purge himself and his household of sin. By an act of faith, by blood atonement, Jacob both confessed his sin and sought cleansing for his sin and for his family. He knew that he could not walk with God, enjoy God's fellowship, or expect God's blessings, except his sins be purged from him by the blood of Christ, God's Sacrifice.

Second, his sacrifices were also thank offerings to his God for all that he had done. Benjamin had come back to him safe and sound. Joseph was yet alive and he was going to see him. Once he had said, "*All these things are against me.*"

Now, he is beginning to see that God had been working for him; and he humbly repents of his unbelief.

Third, I am sure that Jacob offered these sacrifices upon the altar at Beersheba that he might inquire of the Lord as to what he should do. He was in a great dilemma. Shall I go down to Egypt or not? He wanted to know God's will. So he sought God's direction. What trouble and heartache we might save ourselves if, before doing anything or making any decision, we sought direction from our God (Pro. 3:5-6).

TROUBLED

The reason Jacob needed God's special direction was the fact that his heart was troubled with fear at what lay before him. I would not put words into his mouth; but it seems that the cause of Jacob's fear is obvious. He was going down to Egypt!

His grandfather, Abraham, once went down into Egypt and found much trouble there. That is where he got Hagar. Abraham's journey into Egypt was probably the greatest mistake of his life. Isaac, Jacob's father, once started to go down into Egypt, but God stopped him. Jacob was now an old man, an experienced saint, experienced in his own frailty. He must have paused with fear asking himself, "Is it right for me to go to Egypt? What effect will this move have upon me and my family? How will this move affect the truth of God, the glory of God, and the people of God?" These were matters of great importance to Jacob.

He knew that Egypt was a notoriously idolatrous country. There learned, philosophical men worshipped everything from cats, calves, and crocodiles to the vegetables they grew in their gardens. His associations in Egypt would be very trying for Jacob and his family. He knew, too, that God

had told Abraham that his people would be afflicted in Egypt for four hundred years (Gen. 15:13-14).

Jacob knew that if he went down to Egypt, unless God went with him, he was headed for trouble. He knew that Joseph was there; but would God be there? He knew that corn was there; but would God be there? Everything seemed to draw him there; but would God be there? This was the matter of concern for Jacob. And this ought to be the matter of concern for us in every decision we make.

I am a man with only one child, a daughter. As she began to mature and I tried to direct her in the kind of man she should consider for her husband, I told her several things which I am convinced are of paramount importance. I told her to "Find a man who worships God. Settle in a place where you can worship God. Do nothing that will interfere with or keep you and your family from the worship of God." The worship and glory of God must ever be the dominant concern of the believer's life. All other things are indescribably less than secondary to this.

FEAR REMOVED

The Lord appeared to Jacob *"in the visions of the night"* to say to him *"fear not."* Jacob's fear had to be removed. It is both displeasing and dishonoring to God for his people to walk in carnal fear (Matt. 6:19-33). Fear, fretting, and worrying are things most unbecoming to men and women who claim to believe God. Fear robs us of joy (Phil. 4:4-5), and weakens us in the path of known duty and responsibility.

C. H. Spurgeon wrote, "Before we begin a new enterprise, fear may be seasonable; we ought to be cautious as to whether our way is right in the sight of God. But when we once know God's will and begin we must say farewell to

fear, for fear will be fatal to success. Go straight ahead. Believe in God, and carry the work through.”

Fear is an indication of a quarrel with God’s will. Jacob must go down to Egypt by God’s command; but he was afraid. He was afraid to obey God’s command. We must not judge him too harshly. Who has not been guilty of the same offense? God will never send us where he will not go with us. God will not require you to do anything he will not enable you to do. No believer will ever meet a trial or temptation in the path of obedience through which God will not sustain him (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24). His word to his servant is, “*Fear not.*”

The Lord removed Jacob’s fear in the most tender and gracious manner imaginable. Our God always deals with his children in grace. What a picture we have here of God’s grace dealing with poor, fearful Jacob, and with us. He removed Jacob’s fear by letting him know that he knew him. “*God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob.*” In essence, he said, “I know you, I know what you are going through, and I know what lies before you.”

Then he allowed Jacob to know by experience that he was in communion with God. When the Lord spoke to Jacob, Jacob spoke to God and said, “*Here am I.*” That is the language of a submissive heart in communion with God (Gen. 22:1; 1 Sam. 3:10; Isa. 6:8).

Next, the Lord assured Jacob of his covenant faithfulness. He said, “*I am God, the God of thy father.*” That means, “I am the God of the covenant. The blessing I have promised I will perform. I am the God who is for you” (Rom. 8:28-32).

Then the Lord promised Jacob that he would bless him in Egypt. *"I will there make of thee a great nation."* These things should ease us of fear, as we face the trials through which our heavenly Father is pleased to send us. Where God brings us, God will bless us. Peter, James, and John *"feared as they entered into the cloud"* (Lk. 9:34). But they were blessed of God in that place. And we shall be blessed of God in whatever place or circumstance we find ourselves by following his direction.

The Lord also assured Jacob of his presence, saying, *"I will go down with thee."* He further promised his servant that, no matter what happened in Egypt, his inheritance in Canaan was sure. He said, *"I will also surely bring thee up again."* This is precisely what he says to us to assure, comfort, and strengthen our hearts in the face of trial. Our inheritance in Christ is sure (Rom. 8:33-39).

The Lord gave Jacob one more word of promise by which he removed his fear. God told Jacob that he would die in peace with Joseph by his side. *"Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."* He has done the same for every believer. For the child of God, death is a covenant blessing. *"So he giveth his beloved sleep!"* At God's appointed time, the Lord Jesus shall put his hand upon your eyes. It is written, *"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!"* Therefore, the sons of Jacob are told to cease from fear (Isa. 43:1-5). For the believer, there is no cause for fear.

Chapter 39

Jacob's Prophecy Concerning Judah

"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk

Genesis 49:8-12

Before the written Word of God was given, God revealed himself to chosen sinners, and spoke to them both by word of mouth testimony and in various, supernatural ways concerning his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the great work of redemption and salvation he would accomplish (Heb. 1:1-3). We have no way of knowing how much those early believers knew about the Person and work of Christ; but they clearly knew and understood much more than most people seem to think!

Abel understood the necessity of blood atonement and brought a blood sacrifice to God by faith, showing that he knew salvation was by grace alone through the blood of Christ, the sinners' Substitute (Gen. 4). Enoch walked with God by faith in Christ and even prophesied of Christ's glorious second coming (Jude 14). Abraham knew and believed much

by God's special revelation (Gen. 22). The Lord Jesus Christ said of Abraham, "*He rejoiced to see my day*" (John 8:56). And Job, who probably lived about the same time as Abraham, spoke confidently of both redemption and resurrection by Christ (Job 19:25-27).

In this prophecy of Jacob concerning Judah, we see another example of the fact that these early saints were rich in knowledge and in faith. Jacob had called his twelve sons before him to tell them, by the Spirit of prophecy, how God would deal with the twelve tribes of Israel in the future. The dying patriarch had a word from God for each of his sons and the tribes that would descend from them. Judah was singled out and given special honor. Jacob praised him and prophesied many good things concerning him.

Particularly, we are told that Jacob prophesied that Messiah, "*Shiloh*," would spring from Judah. Both David and Solomon, Israel's greatest kings, sprang from the tribe of Judah. And the Lord Jesus, the great King of God's Israel, our Redeemer-King, is "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah*" (Rev. 5:5). When Jacob spoke to Judah and made this prophecy concerning him, he was, by the Spirit of God, speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ. Judah was a type of Christ. We see this in seven distinct ways.

1. Judah must be praised by his brothers (v. 8).

"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." The name Judah means "praise". Matthew Henry wrote, "God was praised for him (29:35), praised by him, and praised in him; and therefore his brethren shall praise him." Certainly, this speaks of Christ, our Messiah, Redeemer, and King. He is worthy of praise and shall have the sincere praise of his people.

Christ alone is to have our praise. *“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 1:31; Psa. 115:1).

“Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus our blessed Redeemer!”
Heav’nly portals loud with hosannas ring!
Jesus, Savior, reigneth forever and ever,
Crown Him! Crown Him! Prophet and priest and King!”

Believers delight to give all praise to Christ, because of the excellence of his person as the God-man, our Mediator. We praise him for the wonders of redemption, the abundant grace of God in him, and the goodness of his sovereign, providential rule.

As Judah’s brethren praised him, so all Christ’s brethren, all his people, give all praise to him. Some praise the pope, some praise the church, some praise preachers, and some praise themselves; but God’s saints praise Christ. They praise him forever in heaven (Rev. 5:9-10); but they learn to praise him on the earth! (Psa. 115:1). God’s people are a praising people. We do not merely offer him the pretense of praise, or the hypocrisy of lip praise. Believers give praise to God their Savior. Nothing is more inconsistent with our profession of faith in Christ than murmuring, complaining, and unhappiness. Murmuring is the fruit of unbelief. Praise is the fruit of faith.

2. Judah must be victorious over all his enemies (v. 8).

“Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies.” When a man has his hand securely in the neck of his enemy, he has subdued him. He can, at his pleasure, force him to the ground, snuff out his breath, and destroy him. This, too, speaks of Christ (1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 1:13; 10:13). He is in complete control of his enemies; and he will bring them down. Our Savior met Satan and defeated him. In the wilderness of

temptation (Luke 4:1-13), in the garden of Gethsemane, and upon the cross of Calvary, our Lord Jesus conquered and bound the devil, crushing his head, just as the Scriptures declared he would (Gen. 3:15; John 12:31-33; 19:30; Rev. 12:10; 20:1-3). Christ took our sins to the cross and vanquished them (Col. 3:15). The Son of God met death, bowed to it, and then conquered it (1 Cor. 15:51-58). There is no enemy of Christ, or of his people, that shall not be finally destroyed.

3. All his father's children must bow down before Judah (v. 8).

"Thy father's children shall bow down before thee." Without question, this prophecy refers immediately to the whole nation of Israel bowing before David and Solomon as their kings. But, behold, a greater than David and a greater than Solomon is here. This is a prophecy of that glory and honor which belongs to and is reserved for Christ alone. Christ is Lord of all. By virtue of his own deity (Rom. 9:5), by virtue of his Father's decree (Heb. 2:5,8), and by virtue of his sin-atonement death (Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:8-11), the Lord Jesus Christ is that great Lord King who rules the universe, before whom all men must and shall bow (Isa. 45:22-25). All of God's creation shall one day bow before the Lord Jesus Christ and confess that he is indeed Lord of all. All God's elect bow to him in faith as their Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). But all the universe shall bow before him and confess that he is Lord in the last day (Phil. 2:9-11).

4. "Judah is a lion's whelp" (v. 9).

Our Lord Jesus is compared to a young lion, because he is strong and courageous. The lion is "the king of the jungle". He goes where he wants to go, does what he wants to do, fears nothing, and is never in danger. Here is *"The Lion of*

the tribe of Judah.” Our Savior is not spoken of here as a lion raging and ranging, but as a lion couching and resting.

“*From the prey, my son, thou art gone up.*” Christ Jesus, the Son of God, left heaven and came to this earth to engage the enemy and redeem his people by his own mighty arm. Now, having accomplished his great work, he has “*gone up,*” ascended back into heaven again. “*The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed!*” (Rev. 5:5). There is no possibility of failure with Christ (Isa. 42:4). He is the Lion of Judah. He has prevailed, and shall yet prevail.

“*He stooped down.*” What a great stoop he made! (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 8:9). God became man. The Son of God became a servant to men. As a man, Christ was obedient to his Father in all things to establish righteousness for men. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law.

“*He couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?*” He stooped, he conquered, he took his prey, he ascended, he sat down, having accomplished his pleasure, having gotten what he sought, having fulfilled his mission (Matt. 1:21; Heb. 9:12; 10:10-14). Who shall dare rouse him? Who shall be able to disturb him? Behold, the sovereign serenity with which the Son of God sits in heaven!

5. “*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come*” (v. 10).

This tenth verse is a great and notable prophecy. All of the ancient Jewish writers said that this verse is a prophecy of the coming of Christ, by which God assured his people that the kingdom and civil government of Judah would continue until the Christ, the Messiah, came. That being the case, by their own instructors, the Jews should be convinced that

Jesus Christ is the Messiah, because the kingdom and civil government of Judah ceased when Christ came.

The name which Jacob used for Christ is “*Shiloh*”. Where did he get that name? God gave it to him. It was a special name, given by special revelation, for a special Person, who would come at a special time. It is a name full of significance.

- Shiloh means “sent” (John 9:7). Christ is truly the “sent One” (John 19:21).
- Shiloh means “Son” (Isa. 9:6-7). Christ Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Son of David. He is the Son of Man.
- Shiloh means “the one to whom it belongs”(Ezek. 21:25-27). The sceptre, the crown, the throne, the kingdom, the worship, the praise belongs to Christ alone. All others are imposters! (Col. 1:14-19).
- Shiloh also mean “peace”. It comes from the same word as “Salem, -- King of Peace.” Christ is our Peace. He made peace for us by the blood of his cross. And we have peace with God by faith in him (Rom. 5:1).
- Again, Shiloh means “prosperous”. It is written concerning Christ that “*the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand*” (Isa. 53:10).

6. “*Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be*” (v. 10).

The object of Christ’s coming into the world, the object of his covenant engagements with the Father as our Surety, the object of his death upon the cross for his people, was that he might redeem a people by his blood and gather them by the arm of his omnipotent grace to himself forever. The people God has chosen shall be gathered unto him (John 6:37-39; 10:14-16; 17:1-10). They shall, each one, at the appointed

time of love, be gathered to Christ by the irresistible power and grace of his Spirit, gathered to him in repentance and faith, and in love and willing devotion (Ps. 65:4; 110:3). And all God's elect shall be gathered unto him in glory.

7. Judah shall be strong and fruitful (vv. 11-12).

Without question, these two verses refer to the glorious work of redemption by Shiloh, the Lord Jesus Christ. When he came to redeem his people, he came into Jerusalem riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 22:2, 5). When he suffered and died upon the cross as our Substitute, his garments, his human nature, and the garments he wore were washed in blood (Isa. 63:1). Yet, his eyes sparkled with joy, the joy of blood bought redemption for his people, as he endured the cross, despising the shame (Heb. 12:2).

These two verses also refer to the manifold blessings of grace that are ours in Christ. Christ is the choice, true Vine, a Vine strong enough to have all burdens bound to him (v. 11). The blood of Christ is a fountain of cleansing and joyful refreshment for our souls (v. 11). Let us ever bind our burden to Christ. Cling to him. We find strength, when Christ is our Strength. And there is an abundance of grace in Christ to meet all the needs of his people (v. 12). Wine for joy and milk for purity, wine for men and milk for babes, every need of our souls, in all circumstances is found in him who is our All.

Chapter 40

Boundless Blessedness

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: (23) The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: (24) But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) (25) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: (26) The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

Genesis 49:22-26

In Genesis 49, we see Jacob on his deathbed; and here we see him at his best. He showed himself a noble man in many things; but his final scene is by far his best. Like the sun at sunset, Israel appeared most glorious when he was leaving this world. Spurgeon said, "Like good wine which runs clear to the very bottom, unalloyed by dregs, so did Jacob, till his dying hour, continue to sing of love, mercy, and goodness, past and future. Like the swan, which (as old writers say) singeth not all its life until it comes to die, so the old patriarch remained silent as a songster for many years, but when he stretched himself on his last couch of rest, he stayed himself up in his bed and, although with faltering voice, he sang a sonnet upon his offspring."

In verses 22-26, Jacob gives his richest, fullest benediction to his beloved son, Joseph. Without question, the benediction here given to Joseph speaks of the blessedness of him of whom Joseph was a type and picture, the Lord

Jesus Christ. Because the one spoken of here is Christ our Lord, the blessedness here bestowed upon him is also a declaration of that boundless blessedness which is the portion of God's elect. So, as we read these lines, I will endeavor to show you how that everything written in these verses applies first to Joseph, then to our Lord Jesus Christ, and then to all who are Christ's.

A FRUITFUL BOUGH

Verse 22 -- "*Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall.*"

Joseph was made to be a fruitful bough. This prophecy refers to Joseph's seed, his children, which are here compared to a tree so heavily loaded with fruit that its branches hang over the wall of the garden in which it stands. I do not doubt that the promise here given refers to Joseph's physical seed; but it goes beyond that. This is a prophecy concerning the boundless fruitfulness of our great Joseph, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fruit of our great Savior's substitutionary sacrifice at Calvary is a great, innumerable host of redeemed sinners who shall serve him forever. The Lord Jesus Christ was cut off in the prime of his manhood, a single man, with no children. The question is asked, "*Who shall declare his generation?*" It appeared that he would never have a seed to serve and honor his name; but that is not the case.

In fact, his death as our sin-atoning Substitute is the very means by which his bountiful, innumerable seed is born. His death, as an offering for sin, guaranteed the birth and everlasting life of his people.

"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" – (Isa. 53:8-11)

Therefore we read in Psalm 22:30-31, *"A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this."*

This promise is also a promise concerning each of God's elect in Christ. Every child of God, every true believer shall be a fruitful bough, bringing forth fruit unto God, by the power of his grace. The Lord God declares, *"From me is thy fruit found."* (Hos. 14:8); and he makes all his children fruit bearing trees. *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law"* (Gal. 5:22-23).

A HATED MAN

Verse 23 -- *"The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him."*

Joseph had to endure the envy of his brothers, by which he was grieved, the temptations of Potiphar's wife, the slander she heaped upon him, and the uncaused hatred of

them all. All God's Josephs in this world are marked, hated men.

Our Master, like Joseph, was hated without a cause. He was tempted in the wilderness, envied by the Pharisees, hated by the Jews, slandered by his enemies, grieved in his very soul, and at last slaughtered on trumped up charges as a common criminal.

Let none who follow the Son of God expect better treatment while living in this world. The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. Though blessed of God, boundlessly, everlastingly blessed of God, in this world, every child of God has the lot of Joseph. "*We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" Every believer must endure the temptations of Satan, the envy of men, the betrayal of friends, the slander of evil tongues, and the hatred of men, even the hatred of men whose interests they serve. This is our lot in this world; but it is as surely a part of our blessedness as the most pleasant things we experience (Luke 6:20-26).

A MAN MADE STRONG

Verse 24 -- "*But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel).*"

Joseph was a man made strong by the mighty God of Jacob. The text says nothing about Joseph's natural strength or superiority over his brothers. The text says he was "*made strong by the mighty God of Jacob*"

Though many archers took aim and shot their arrows at him, Joseph's bow abode in strength. That is to say, he was so strong that he never sought to retaliate. A warrior who

draws a bow must release his arrow quickly, else his hand will quiver, and he will miss his mark. Joseph was made strong, so strong that though his bow is drawn, he holds it steady and never fires a return arrow at his adversaries.

When his brothers falsely accused him, Joseph said nothing, either in defense of himself or against his accusers. When Potiphar's wife slandered him, he spoke not a word. When he was wrongfully imprisoned on trumped up charges, he said nothing. When the chief butler forgot his kindness to him, Joseph's bow still abode in his strength. His arm was still made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

That is how our Master suffered evil at the hands of men. He never once opened his mouth in defense of himself. Rather, he recognized that those who set themselves against him were but instruments by which his Father was performing his will for him, instruments by which his Father was accomplishing his covenant promise to exalt him above all.

By his great example our Lord teaches us patiently endure the assaults wicked men, without vengeance or retaliation, when we are the objects of their envy, slander, betrayal, and hatred. *"If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."* (1 Pet. 2:20-24).

The mighty God of Jacob still makes his Josephs strong by his grace. One of them, while a prisoner for the gospel's sake, displayed this same, remarkable strength of grace. He wrote from his prison, "*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (13) I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 4:12-13)

"From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd and Stone of Israel, is that One who was sent from "*the Mighty God of Jacob*" to redeem and save his people. I cannot imagine two more encouraging, assuring, comforting titles by which Judah could have described our Savior. The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of Israel. He is our almighty Protector and Provider, who carries his lambs in his bosom. He is also the Stone, the Rock of Israel, the One upon whom we build and upon whom we are built, our Foundation and Support.

BOUNDLESS BLESSEDNESS

In verses 25-26, Jacob pronounced a sevenfold blessedness upon Joseph, a sevenfold blessedness upon all who are God's. This is boundless blessedness indeed!

1. "Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee." – Here is a promise of help in every time of need. He who is the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he who is the God of Judah, who helped them and fulfilled his word to them, will help us and fulfill his word to us.
2. "*And by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above.*" -- Here the promise of all the blessings

of heaven, grace, salvation, eternal life, and heavenly glory in Christ (Eph. 1:3-6).

3. *“The Almighty shall bless thee with the blessings of the deep that lieth under.”* – Here is the promise that all the deep mysteries of providence, all the affairs of time, all the events of the world, the demons of hell, the beasts of the field, and the adversities of life shall prove to be a blessing from God to his people (Hos. 2:18; Rom. 8:28-30).
4. *“The Almighty shall bless thee with the blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.”* – This is a promise that *“goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”* The old patriarch, speaking by the Spirit of God, here declares that God’s elect are blessed in all things, all the days of their lives, even from their mother’s breasts. Every believer may confidently speak with David, and with the Lord himself, these words of praise to God: *“Thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me to hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts”* (Ps. 22:9).
5. *“The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors.”* – Here Judah declares that this blessedness is indescribably greater than the blessings any earthly father can bestow upon his sons. This is the blessedness of grace upon grace, the blessedness of all things, the blessedness of all fulness in Christ (John 1:16; 1 Cor. 3:21; Col. 2:9-10).
6. *“The Almighty shall bless thee...unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.”* – Yes, the very fulness of heavenly glory obtained by the man Christ Jesus, as our Mediator, all of it, nothing excluded, shall be ours forever (John 17:5, 22). This is boundless blessedness indeed!

7. *“They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.”* – This boundless blessedness is that which God freely bestows upon all who have been separated from the sons of Adam by election, redemption, and effectual calling, and made to be the sons of God by grace in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

Chapter 41

THREE LESSONS FROM JOSEPH

“And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them

Genesis 50:15-21

Joseph is held before us in the book of Genesis as a beautiful, instructive type and picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his betrayal, in his humiliation, in his exaltation, in opening the storehouses, and in the saving of his family, and in many other ways the typical instruction is crystal clear. A. W. Pink, in his *Gleanings in Genesis*, gave 101 comparisons between Joseph and Christ.

In Genesis 50, Joseph has finished the work God sent him to do. All Israel had been saved from death and dwelt in

the peaceable habitations of Goshen. Jacob was now dead. Nothing remained but for Joseph's brothers to dwell in the land in peace, pursuing their ordinary work as shepherds, with gratitude to Joseph for his goodness to them. They now had nothing to fear. All was well.

Yet, Joseph's brothers were uneasy. Their former transgressions made them fearful. Their guilt caused them to be suspicious of Joseph's goodness. In spite of all the kindness they had experienced at Joseph's hand, they were not assured of their acceptance with him. They feared that they might yet be made to suffer for what they had done to him. Therefore, they sued for mercy in the name of their father Jacob, whom they knew Joseph loved dearly.

They sent a messenger to Jacob with a message from Jacob (vv. 15-17). When Joseph heard their request, his tender heart broke and he wept (vv. 17), because of his love for Jacob and because of his love for his brothers, but probably their suspicions of him, more than anything else, broke his heart. What an evil thing it is for sinners saved by the grace of God in Christ to be suspicious of his great goodness. Yet, it is an evil of which we are all, far too often, guilty.

Then Joseph's brothers themselves came before him (vv. 17-18). They confessed their sin. They sought forgiveness in Jacob's name, upon his word. And they bowed before Joseph as his servants. This was the thing they had refused to do before. It was this very thing which had before been the cause of their hatred. When they heard that they must bow as servants to Joseph, they said, "*Shalt thou indeed reign over us?*" (Gen. 37:8). Then they sold him into bondage. But now they are humbled. Now, they bow and say, "*We be thy servants.*"

This is the issue that must be settled in the hearts of men. We must bow to Christ (Luke 14:25-33). He must be owned and acknowledged as our rightful Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). There is no salvation without the voluntary surrender of our hearts and lives to Christ's dominion as our Lord. When they bowed before Joseph as their rightful lord and master, he assured them of his good intentions toward them and comforted them (vv. 19-21). What a tender picture we have before us. It is a scene which needs no explanation. It is full of spiritual instruction for our souls. It clearly sets forth three lessons which we should each lay to heart.

A LESSON ABOUT FORGIVENESS

The first lesson is a lesson about God's abundant grace and forgiveness of sin in Christ. It is written, "*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*" (Rom. 5:20). There is abundant grace for guilty sinners in Christ. Our God is a God who "*delighteth in mercy*" (Mic. 7:18).

Let us learn from Joseph's brothers something about the nature of true repentance. The Spirit of God, who preserved this event for us and caused it to be recorded by Moses, gives us no reason to question the sincerity of these men. Joseph's penitent brothers show us what true repentance involves. Though fear is not itself repentance, repentance does involve a terrifying sense of guilt. These men were afraid because they were guilty of great sin and they knew it. It also involves an acknowledgement and confession of sin (1 John 1:9). Like the publican our Lord mentioned (Luke 18:13), all who truly repent acknowledge and confess themselves to be sinners at heart, by nature, and in practice, without one shred of righteousness with which to commend themselves to God.

Pardon will never be granted until sin is confessed, confessed with a broken heart, and confessed completely. I do not mean that we must list all our sins. That would be impossible. But I do mean that we must not cover our sins (Pro. 28:13). And we must completely confess our sin, offering no excuses for the evil of our sinful nature, our deeds of sin (our wicked acts and thoughts), or the corruption of our attempts at righteousness, acknowledging that even our “good works” and personal righteousnesses are but filthy rags before the holy Lord God (Isa. 64:6).

Repentance, in its essence, is a voluntary surrender to Christ as our Lord and Master. It is taking his yoke upon us. Someone once said, “He who abandons himself to God will never be abandoned by God.” We must lay ourselves at Christ’s feet if we would have him take us into his arms.

This grace of repentance, the gift of Christ to redeemed sinners (Acts 5:31), arises from faith in the Word of God. Joseph’s brothers came to him and made their plea upon the basis of his father’s word. -- *“Thy father did command..”* So, too, penitent sinners come to Christ in hope of mercy upon the basis of what God himself has spoken in his Word (John 3:14-16). Believing God’s record, we cast ourselves into the arms of the crucified Christ in hope of life eternal.

Let us ever remember the tenderness of our Savior toward us. As *“Joseph wept when they spoke unto him,”* so our Lord Jesus Christ is *“touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”* Our Savior is as full of sympathy and tenderness for his saints now, though he is exalted, as he was when he dwelt upon the earth.

Let us, also, try to realize how thorough and complete God’s forgiveness of our sin is. We nailed our Savior to the cursed tree. We caused his blood to flow. His blood might

justly be upon us forever. But so great, so thorough, so complete is his forgiveness that our Savior, rather than charging us with the sin and guilt of his death, blesses us through it! Joseph said to his brothers, *“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves...for God did send me before you to preserve life”* (Gen. 45:5). As John Newton put it...

“With pleasing grief and mournful joy My spirit now is filled,
That I should such a life destroy, Yet live by Him I killed!”

Let every believer understand clearly that Christ has forgiven us of all our sin. We need never fear that he will deal with us upon the basis of our sin, neither by way of punishment, nor by loss of reward. Our great Savior, like Joseph, speaks comfortably to his people and assures us that he will nourish us. His word to us, with regard to all retaliation for sin is, *“Fear not!”* No wonder David sang, *“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”* (Rom. 4:8).

A LESSON ABOUT PROVIDENCE

The second lesson in this passage is a lesson about the universal providence of our God (vv. 19-20). I am sure that Joseph, when he was in that pit, when he was cast into prison, when he lay at night on the cold earth, shackled like a common felon, must have often wept in his loneliness, wondered why he was made to experience so much pain and sorrow, and must have often wondered how his circumstances could be so bad when God had promised to bless him. But the end of his life vindicated God's promise and explained the necessity for every event in his life. Joseph's complicated life unraveled and was exhausted exactly as God had ordained it; and with profound simplicity, Joseph said, *“I am in the place of God!”* The lesson from this man's life is *“the Lord reigneth!”*

Every child of God in this world should be constantly aware of this fact. – *“The Lord reigneth!”* Let us ever rejoice in this glorious fact and take to ourselves the comfort it affords. May God give us grace to believe him. We ought to trust him whose providence is so manifestly displayed to us. Here are five areas in which the sovereignty of God in providence¹⁹ is clearly displayed.

1. God’s sovereignty, his absolute control of the universe is seen in the accomplishment of redemption by the death of Christ (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28).
2. God’s sovereign rule of providence is manifest in the exaltation and glory of Christ (John 17:2; Rom. 14:9). Like Joseph, our Savior is *“in the place of God...to save much people alive.”* And he came to be in that place by God’s sovereign employment of the wicked men who crucified him (Acts 2:22-36).
3. Certainly, we see the greatness of God’s sovereignty in providence in the fact that he overrules evil for good (Psa. 76:10). What Joseph’s brothers meant to be evil, God used for good. Adam’s fall made way for our redemption by Christ. Pharaoh’s slaughter of the Hebrew children brought Moses into his house. Thus the tyrant’s wickedness was both the instrument of his own destruction and of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage for the fulfilment of God’s covenant. Truly, *“all things work together”* for the eternal good of God’s elect. As it is written, *“All things are of God”* (2 Cor. 5:18; Rom. 11:33-36).

¹⁹ Providence is the unfolding of God’s purpose. It is God bringing to pass in time what he purposed to do in eternity.

4. Certainly, the history of every chosen sinner is a revelation of God's wise, good, adorable providence (Rom. 8:28). Providence prepares the sinner for grace and preserves him unto the appointed day of grace (Psa. 107; Hos. 2:8). The old writers called this "prevenient grace," that grace that goes before and prepares the way for grace. Our heavenly Father's secret providence orders all the affairs of our lives, yea, all the affairs of the world, for the good of his people.
5. God's great and glorious, good and wise providence will be so manifest at the conclusion of history that everything will render praise to him (Rev. 5:11-14). A. J. Gordon, who succeeded C. H. Spurgeon as pastor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England, said, "God's providence is like the Hebrew Bible; we must begin at the end and read backward in order to understand it."

A LESSON ABOUT BROTHERLY LOVE

The third lesson to be learned from this story is a lesson about brotherly love. Do you see how this man, Joseph, loved his brothers? He loved them so much that he not only forgave their crimes against him, but spoke kindly to them and sought to remove all their fears. His heart was so tender toward them that he wept when they suspected his kindness. Let us ever seek grace from our God to truly love our brethren in Christ in this way, and to show that love by our attitude and actions.

When we have wronged a brother or a sister in Christ, we must with humility seek forgiveness and reconciliation with them. "*Confess your faults one to another*" (James 5:16). To wrong a friend is great evil; but to compound the wrong by refusing to acknowledge it is even more wicked. That will soon destroy a friendship (Matt. 5:23-24).

When we have been wronged, we must freely forgive the wrong and the wrongdoer (Matt. 6:14; Eph. 4:32 - 5:1). Nothing in this low, ruined world so beautifully reflects the character of the Son of God as forgiveness. As Joseph forgave his brothers, let us forgive one another. As God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, let us, for Christ's sake, forgive one another.

Let us lay these three lessons to heart. (1.) God's grace is abundant and free in Christ. We have great reason to give thanks to him. (2.) God's providence is always good for his people. We should always be content with what our heavenly Father brings to pass. (3.) The love of God in Christ, when experienced, teaches saved sinners to love and forgive one another.