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**FOR THE LORD WILL NOT CAST OFF
FOREVER**

By Robert Fekete

Amidst all of Jeremiah's lamentation,
amidst his lost hope, bitterness and pain,
amidst the fearfulness, loss of peace and loss
of the Lord's presence, he is yet enabled by
God to cry out for this one hope filled
promise, "For the Lord will not cast off
forever." (Lam. 3:31) Oh! that the poor, fallen
down people of the Lord could embrace this
promise, for who are more fit for such a hope?
No, it is not for the self-righteous biblical
scholars, nor the satisfied merry free-willer,
nor for the head-strong legalist.

Here, upon the Lord's words, the poor,
afflicted, doubting sinner can rest. Yet, they
full well know by experience that it is not as
easy as saying, 'I believe' and then comes
peace, comfort and joy, as so many are
persuaded. They go through much confusion,
bitterness, sorrow, wanderings and, yes, sin
before being enabled to enter this resting
promise. They must be brought down to the
state of a worm, eating the dust and ashes of
their sinful ways. They are brought to the
overwhelming waters of grief. Their way is
hedged about and the road they travel is very
strait and rugged. Alone they toss upon their
beds many a night in floods of fears. The
enemies of self: worldly temptation and the
false "easy ways" of satan compass them
about. Fears of being forever lost are
continually upon them. Then, just as he has
fallen for the seventh time, the Lord brings in
the ray of life and hope, saying, "I will not
cast off forever.

In the preceding verses are shown the
wrath and chastisement of correction of the
Lord upon His people; the meditation of this
chastisement; the knowledge of the Lord as
their only hope; the waiting upon the Lord;
then finally the promise of hope applied to the
heart of the believer.

Jeremiah's experience is recorded for our
example, learning and comfort. I believe it to
be very near the experience of God's children

throughout the ages.

Jeremiah states he has felt the wrath of God upon him. But, not wrath alone, for that is appointed at the end of the world to the vessels made for destruction and everlasting death. They neither feel nor know of God's consuming wrath. The saints of God not only *feel* the wrath of God but, the 'rod of wrath' coupled with this wrath is correction. One does not feel just wrath alone. A rod of correction will always attend the poor sinner's soul, for it is sanctified by the Spirit in its application.

When a child of the Lord has the wrath of God upon him, he cries in bitter anguish. How many of us have been made to feel the Lord's wrath going over our heads as a flood of mighty waters to be crushed in the great winepress of God? How we are sometimes made to cry out as David, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me;" or as Job, "He teareth me in His wrath." It is not questioned by His dear saints, "why is Thy wrath against me?" They full well know it is because of their wretched, evil nature. They know they are sinners above all. Deserve it? Yes, a thousand fold.

Jeremiah records some of the Lord's dealings against him. He is shut up in darkness without a ray of light. Christ is the light of the body, and when God's wrath is applied it seems He is hidden and we see ourselves full of evil, having a body filled with darkness. The words of God are turned against us. Instead of them bringing comfort and peace they seem to condemn us. We may even tremble to open God's word for fear it may, beyond doubt, prove we are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. Thus Jeremiah murmurs, "Surely against me is He turned." Our murmurings are against God alone. The stubbornness and pride still remain. But the Lord knows how to deal with murmurers. Therefore, we are humbled through much affliction. Our sins roll upon us, consuming us. God's word is life, it either shows us darkness, our evil nature; or light: the Lord as our peace, righteousness and hope. Hide, complain, do what we may, we cannot escape

our evil nature. Worry, grief and confusion set in. We groan as old men ready to die. Sin sets in our veins as poison. Jeremiah stated that because of God's wrath upon him, he felt all his bones were broken; as it says, "He has broken my bones." By this I take it to mean his frame is broken due to his own sinfulness. Bones form the structure of the body. Without them we could not stand, walk, write, lift, or even talk. Thus, our own ways, works, arid speech are broken — taken from us. We are left a spiritually helpless mass of flesh, skin and broken bones. Self is taken from us. We become as one without form.

In the Lord's wrath we are hedged about unable to escape. As the prophet Hosea says, "And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them but shall not find them." (Hosea 2:7) This they try to do, knowing all the while, that God is angry.

indeed all our righteousness is as filthy rags. All we do of ourselves is enmity against God. So, now, that we find no rest or escape in our old lovers, we run to the Lord. But, as foolish beggars we run expecting Him to accept us! Or, maybe, it is only done half willingly. instead of waiting upon His mercy we turn to Him in haste. We go to Him not because he is Lord and Saviour; not because we love Him or desire Him above all things, but because we once had "peace of mind," "comfort and joy." One may ask, "What is so awful about that?" Well, dear one, a child of God who feels godly sorrow does not go to the Lord because he expects something; he goes because he loves the Lord, loves Him as his all in all, his righteousness, yes. even as Lord, King, and Saviour. In other words, one does not go expecting the Lord to grant him love, mercy, and life, but because he already has them. Thus, it is that the Lord also hedges this way up. As it is written in Hosea 2:7, "I will go and return to my first husband: for then was it better with me than now." This, we now try to do but, hear what the Lord says, "Therefore will I return, and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof and will recover My wool and

My flax given to cover her nakedness.

The Lord does not, at such a time, grant us rest. Rather, He takes away what we had, hedging up the way. We must yet go through much tribulation and be made fully willing with a heart full of love toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Along with this, all prayer and supplication is shut out. “And when I cry and shout He shutteth out my prayer. True prayer is not just spoken with idle words of the mouth. We are made to cry and groan from the heart with words which cannot be uttered. For, we know not how or what to pray for as we ought. When we are brought to the lowest state and cry from the belly of hell, then truly we speak from the heart. How often we go to the Lord and pray only with part of the heart! But, it is written, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, mind, and soul.” Thus, prayer is shut off until the time appointed, when the Spirit of God shall make intercession for us; whether it be one lashing, ten lashings or even a hundred. I believe even the rod of wrath is an answer to prayer; although, we as foolish carnal beings cannot at the time see that.

So now, it seems we are left to go down into the pit of hell. The way to death seems very clear and very near. It is the path to everlasting destruction and doom. This, I believe, is what is meant by “He hath made my paths crooked.”

Therefore, the Lord seems to be no longer a friend, a Saviour to sinners, a gentle Lamb, a meek and lowly Helper. Rather He comes as a bear or a lion waiting in secret to pounce upon the wretched, hell-deserving sinner. This is how the rod of God’s wrath feels to us. We are pulled to pieces and set as the target — the prey — for His piercing arrows of anger. Comfort? Oh, no. only brokenness, confusion and strife.

Upon this we become as loners away from those we love. Wandering in a barren wilderness alone, torn, sick, broken and blind, as in darkness. Our only friends are the dust of the land —our sin, — the hot dry piercing wind and the scorching sun of God’s wrath.

Thirst and hunger cause us to stumble in our way. We are separated from His children in a way we know not. Love and fellowship with the Lord and the brethren are dried up. The heavenly manna which once fed our souls is gone. Thus, we stand alone.

Now that we stand, not in a murmuring affliction of sin as at first (Lam. 3:5), we no longer question the Lord’s rod upon us. Silently, submissively, we bear the reproach of our sins. We stop running, murmuring, or questioning. We sit quietly in bitterness eating only the dust of the earth — our sins — drinking the poison waters of death. As it says in James, “Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Think not that this is to be applied only to the reprobate. This is now applied to the saints, much to the dismay of every sensible sinner.

The only covering we have is ashes: yes, our own worthless works, “good deeds,” and self-righteousness. All we have is worthless ashes. Ashamed and naked we are unable to extricate ourselves by any works of creature merit.

It now seems so long since the last moment of peace and joy. We wonder if there ever was a moment of the Lord’s presence with us. Jeremiah exclaims, “And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.” (Lam. 3:17). Forgetfulness from God drives from us the “feel” of His mercy. I wish I could remember the times the Lord lifted me up to feel His love, His peace and His mercy. How soon we forget the refreshing seasons. And, how easily we remember only our bitter experiences or wretchedness and evil actions. These we can recall to mind by the thousands. But, just try and bring forth a joyful past experience. In short, afflictions serve to keep us humble and in an uneasy dissatisfaction, yet desirous state.

But Jeremiah was talking of something much more painful. He had completely forgotten peace and prosperity. The only thing on his mind is God’s wrath and his sins. He was like a bedridden person with legs broken, malnourished, flesh torn, and speared through

with an arrow. Such a person's thoughts are far from the times he enjoyed the warmth of the Sun, and refreshment of good wine and tasty food. So it is with God's children. They lie very near to death. The Lord does not allow us to draw comfort from past experiences, trusting in them alone. Thus, He removes and causes us to forget the past things. We must be brought to the feet of Jesus again, and again. We are made to wholly lean on Jesus's breast — to weep only upon His shoulder — to feel Him as our love and Saviour. Here, and here alone, is where a poor sinner receives comfort.

Then finally we are brought to the end of ourselves. The most dreadful of experiences is upon us. Strength is gone ... hope is perished. As Jeremiah says, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord."

All the freewill, all the will-worship, all the duty-religion and all the legal works are destroyed. No strength at all do we now have. This leaves us in a very helpless, vulnerable state, open to the attacks of satan and of the alluring world. We sigh, "How shall I avoid doom?" I will go down to the pit as they of the world. Strength? We have none, but be assured of this, dear saint, *no one*, but the child of God can ever feel so low, so drained and so helpless. The world will never experience such spiritual weakness. Indeed, we are peculiar pilgrims in a foreign land.

At this stage we are all but ready to give it up. "The Lord is not mine," we lament; "I am not of His elect, written in the book of life." (Rev. 13:8; 17:8) What little hope we had before is now gone. A life of everlasting woe seems to await us. There is nothing left to live for. We may even, for a time, go back into the world living the days in misery and in a careless state, even so far as not wanting anything to do with God, Jesus Christ, or religion.

Yet, we are still far from peace and comfort. The old schoolmaster (the law) returns to teach us once again. It teaches us we are all concluded under sin. In a sense, we are kept under the law, shut up unto faith. (Gal. 3:22-24) The Spirit reveals to us our

dreadful state. The Lord Jesus told the apostles, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall *teach you all things*, and bring all things to your *remembrance*, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26) Think not that the Lord is speaking of head notions, legal truth (that is, truth without life) or prophecy of just His bodily resurrection. Some like to boast in this Scripture (as I once did myself) that the Spirit will teach you all the Bible doctrines in head-knowledge. Yet they neglect to mention that He teaches one that he is a sinner — and not just once in the beginning (at regeneration) but, time and time again. The head strong Calvinist does not experience this. Oh, yes, he professes it with his mouth, perhaps, but only to justify his having the truth.

Take note of the above verse and listen to what Christ says just a little later: "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John 16:8) That world is the world of His elect, for who else can obtain righteousness? So, you see, sin is brought to remembrance. This, I believe, is the main portion which Jesus Christ said the Holy Spirit would cause them to remember. I can think of no better Scripture, in which the latter is expressed, than that by Jeremiah: "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind therefore have I hope."

Here Jeremiah is made to think back on his experience — his pain, sorrow, grief, bitterness and wretchedness. He remembers the darkness; the brokenness; the hedges; the crooked paths, the Lord as a lion in wait; the arrows of anger; the bitterness and reproach; the poison of his sins; his own worthless righteousness; his weakness and even his loss of hope. These he sums up as wormwood and gall ... in a word — sinfulness. So the Lord says, "I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double." The effect upon Jeremiah (and all His saints) is not one of licentiousness or haughtiness. It humbles. Not

one self righteous free willer, legalist, duty religionist or do-gooder ever came unto the Lord. God's dwelling is for the "meek and the lowly," the down-cast sinner, the forgotten and despised, the foolish, the weak and the cripples, the hungry and the thirsty.

Jeremiah's hope now rests in the fact that he is a sinner; that he has felt the "rod" of God's wrath. For it is written, "And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He SHALL save HIS PEOPLE from their SINS." Jesus Christ Himself said, "for this cause came I into the world to save sinners." Can you not see how Jeremiah's experience is really to be embraced as a great hope. The rod of wrath, though very grievous, is one of our greatest hopes. Thus the experienced Christian can kiss the rod with gladness in his heart. Here is part of his rest. The rod is only for God's children. The world will never know the Lord's rod.

The woman of Canaan acknowledged the Lord's answer of "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." For the Canaanite woman felt herself to be a dog desiring only the crumbs from the table of our Lord. We are indeed vile dogs. Hope is not in sin, but in the fact that Jesus Christ came to save sinners!

When one has this hope, he is a sensible sinner. He cannot at this point say, "the Lord is mine", or, "will be mine. He has no hope at all in himself. His hope is only on the Lord alone. He knows the Lord can save, but he can't believe it for himself. Such is the state (I believe) of most Christians. They know Christ must be their Righteousness, their obedience, their King, their High Priest, their Saviour and Lord. But, the question still remains: "Is it for me?"

So Jeremiah proclaims, "The Lord is my portion saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." There is no other place for a sinner's hope. It can't be found in the world, bought with fame and money, worked for by good deeds or earned by head knowledge.

The waiting portion is part of the longest trial a child of God can have. He has learned not to run in haste by works, law, or duty. He

bears the evil of his youth. In silence he waits without murmuring. Not saying, "why am I thus?" —he just knows it as a fact. He believes he is the worst of sinners. We wait — acknowledging Jesus Christ is King of Zion. Of Him we receive mercy. There is a yearning within the heart for the salvation of God; to be seated at the feet of Jesus Christ; to lean upon his breast; to kiss Him with the lips of joy; yes, to be forever with Him. We wait in earnestness to feel His love upon us. And to hear Him say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee — receive everlasting life." Yet, during this time, we still feel the Lord has forsaken us. We only have hope that the Lord saved sinners. The one thing known for sure is: we are sinners. There is no doubting this.

Then comes a stirring, a quickening of hope. The time seems nearer than before. It is saving hope. It is no longer just a general promise to all the elect sinners by grace, but hope is now applied personally. Slowly, the dark side of the Scriptures turn to light. The words of God seem not to condemn, but rather to give rest and comfort. Maybe, just maybe, I am the Lord's — darkness gives way to light.

Instead of wrath, a smile shines forth. The experience is one of joy and sorrow. Joy in the Lord as Saviour of sinners, and sorrow for our reproach and sin against Him takes place.

Instead of the Lord coming as a lion He is now the slain Lamb of God. He is a gentle shepherd watching over His sheep. The heavenly manna from God replaces the dust, and the drink from the blood of Christ replaces the bitter sea of wormwood. Our Lord's righteousness covers us, blowing away the ashes of shame. He comes with healing in His wings to carry us away upon the mountain. There, as Solomon says, "the turtle dove is singing" of the peace of the Lord.

Now we call upon Him with a full heart. Though still with our mouths in the dust, for this is where the Lord hears. The Lord hears the cries of His dear ones. The publican, when he prayed, confessed only that he was a sinner saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner. The

Lord heard the publican's prayer. Whereas the Pharisee offered everything that seemed to the natural man good; he led a "good" life, fasted and gave much to the service of God, as he thought. There is not one thing to the natural eye one could accuse this Pharisee of. The Pharisee offered much; the publican offered nothing. Yet, the Lord did not hear the Pharisee's prayer. I tell you now, beyond a doubt, if you go to the Lord with head lifted up, and in good conscience believing you have served the Lord well, then maybe you need to be brought down as Jeremiah was. Yet, we all do as the Pharisee many times. One sure way of knowing one is in the state as a Pharisee is that he looks upon his brother as less than himself. When the brother sins he condemns or hates and cares not for his soul. Dear brethren, may God humble us to the state of a publican; and forgive us of the times we acted as the Pharisee.

Be not ashamed, dear brethren, when you are made to cry as the publican, or as Jeremiah, to call out of the low dungeon or shout from the dust. The Lord will hear. Be joyful and leap within for the Lord has heard the mourning of His afflicted ones. Rejoice and be glad, for, though He has afflicted you with His rod, He will also have compassion and mercy. Thus, lift up your hearts, "For the Lord will not cast off forever." In the book of Isaiah, chapter 49:13-16, is a beautiful summary of the Lord's election and the true state of all His elect in Zion. The Lord spoke to His people in the past and will always have mercy on His afflicted, castdown children. But, Zion in much heavy grief and doubt responds, "I am forgotten and forsaken of the Lord." From this state the Lord hears us. When we have fallen for the seventh time (that is, by the perfect counsel and judgment of God) then the Lord takes us by the hand and lifts us up. We weep in joy: it is all the Lord's doing — the Lord's mercy. It is all of grace. And as He says, "I will never leave thee (though it may seem so) nor forsake thee." I heard part of a song which expresses my feelings very well. It was, to me, one of the most beautiful sounds I ever heard.

"Cast down but not destroyed,
Cast down but not destroyed;
Now of this precious truth I sing,
Cast down but not destroyed."

May you all be enabled, though cast down and humbled, to sing the praise and joy of the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord, and to rest upon the Lord's election of grace. "Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me."

Know for a surety the Lord Jesus Christ came to save sinners and will not cast off forever. May the peace and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ reign in your hearts. - N.Y., Aug., 1984.

THE CHOSEN GENERATION AND ROYAL PRIESTHOOD By Christopher Cob, 1849

"But ye are a CHOSEN generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." - Peter 2:9.

"Go around about Zion; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this GOD is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." (Psalm 48:12-14) And again: "He will surely hear the afflictions of the afflicted and answer their cry," though they may now seem forsaken and forgotten, though adject and outcasts in the eyes of the world — as Christ was: "Disallowed, indeed, of men; but chosen of God, and precious." So was it with our Lord and Master, and so will it be with all those on whom the Father hath set His love in like manner. However the world may look on them, or they judge of themselves, yet in the eye of God it is thus: "Ye are a CHOSEN generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should SHOW FORTH the praises of

Him who HATH CALLED you out of darkness into His marvellous light.”

Now, there is great need to distinguish between one thing and another, that the “trumpet” may “give a certain sound.” Who are these “chosen people” that are thus beloved? For it belongs not to ALL MEN: “I am NOT sent but to the LOST SHEEP of the house of Israel.’ Many widows were in Israel, but only to ONE poor widow of Sarepta was Elijah sent. “It is not meet,” saith Christ, “to take the CHILDREN’S BREAD, and give it to the DOGS.” Some are dogs, as some are “children;” and Peter tells Simon Magus plainly, “Thou hast neither part NOR lot in this matter.” Lest every one should thrust in there are bounds set; not all, but “YE, are a chosen generation.” “Not every one that says, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter;” not even one that comes, and hears, and sits in the house “among the children” is of this “chosen generation,” of that blessed seed. No; but in “Isaac shall thy seed be blessed.” Ishmael, though he may live in the house, yet he must not be heir with Isaac. There are many flourishing plants in the WORLD that grow and thrive apace; but “every plant that My heavenly Father HATH NOT planted, shall be rooted up. The king will overlook all His guests, and then, “Friend, how camest thou hither?” will light on all that have not on the wedding garment. However we may strive to pull in wives, and husbands, and children, and other relations, according to our selfish wills, yet alas! that will not stand, that will not make any such who are NOT of this “chosen generation.” It is not whom man approves, but whom the Lord approves. [It is not who ‘accepts the Lord;’ but whom does the Lord accept].

It was once so, that all lay in the confused mass together, in one lump, like the potter’s clay; and then there was no difference at all. None could say, “This is acceptable, or this rejected; this is Jacob, or this Esau; this is a vessel of honour, that of dishonour,” till the Potter had separated and distinguished His clay to several purposes; and then was the portion of the nations divided, and “the Lord’s

people became His portion;” then this “chosen generation” had their first being, and were born from the “womb of the morning.”

Now, in *choosing*, these several things are to be considered:

1. Before a man chooseth anything, he *weighs* well, and *considers*, and *overlooks* it in his mind. He weighs all the flaws and all the perfections in it, that he may know what he chooseth, and not do it blindly. So the Lord was pleased to weigh all His creatures: “When He divided to the nations their inheritance, and separated the sons of Adam,” then He said, “Jacob is My portion.” He knew what He did — how man would prove. As God says, “I knew thou wouldst have iron sinews and a brazen brow.” He thoroughly considered what He did, took in all faults and provocations that should ever spring from them; and yet He pitches on this “chosen generation,” and “Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.”

Hence it is there are no repentings in God, because the thing was thoroughly weighed. We often repent, because of our hasty rushing upon this and the other. But God is not as man; He made His choice with full advice and counsel; hence it is that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,” and “in Him is no variableness or shadow of turning.” Because all His works were done in counsel, therefore they stand fast for ever and ever. And David says, “Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.” This God is Zion’s God, that hath done things at a certainty, and “will be a guide even unto death,” who will never leave nor forsake her. The bottom and ground is certain, and is thus expressed in the Proverbs: “That I may make thee understand the certainty of the words of truth.”

This choice of God is a certain, infallible, unchangeable choice. It will seem wonderful when you come to consider it, and the thing sinks into your hearts: Wert thou once in the

same lump with the reprobate silver? Was Esau Jacob's brother, and Jacob loved and Esau hated? (Romans 9:11-13; Mal. 1:2.3) How comes this thing about? What means this favour? What manner of love is this? "O Lord! if it did but sink into your souls, what a thing it is to be chosen of God!" "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches." This is not the thing which puts the difference; and Christ saith to His disciples, "Rejoice not that devils are subject to you." That is not your happiness. No; but that "your names are written in heaven;" you are of this "chosen generation;" God pitched upon you; whatever you are, rejoice in that. Samuel looks upon Eliab because of his stature and goodly person, as if sure he was the Lord's anointed. "No," saith God, "not he; it is the stripling, the little youth in the field, the youngest and least thought of: David, he is the man." He saves not the whole, the honorable and learned, the Scribes and Pharisees; but, "ought not this daughter of Abraham to be loosed, whom Satan hath bound, lo! these eighteen years?" She must be loosed, because a daughter of Abraham, however mean and base in the eyes of man, for "God seeth not as man seeth." He picks where He pleaseth; "one of a city, and two of a tribe." "Though Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet but a remnant shall be saved." Though there be "threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, my beloved, my undefiled is but one." That He should let thousands and ten thousands go, and yet "pitch on me!" This will be wonderful to us when we shall see into it!

2. A man *affects* the things he chooseth: his heart goes after it more than that which he lets alone, and, therefore, Moses said to Israel, "The Lord did not choose you because we were more in number than any people. but because He loved you." And in Jeremiah He says. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" and "when thou wast in thy blood." (one would think that a strange time to love in,) yet. "behold, thy time was the time of love." Though there was no cause, yet He loves: "Even so. Father," saith Christ, "for so it

pleased Thee." Two in a womb, two in a mill, two in the same condition; yet one taken, and the other left. To be left is enough; there is need of no more reprobation than that! If a man be but left. and not daily maintained, kept up, and preserved, he will corrupt himself, and run naturally to destruction. There is no need of cursing or destroying any creature; but He is pleased to leave some, and that is enough although it certainly is not all. They naturally tend and fall into the curse, and bring it on their own heads. A man's damnation is of himself, being "condemned already": he procures his own curse, and if he is but left, and not made spiritually alive, he must die. No man can keep alive his own soul. The branch, if it be left without sap from the root, will naturally die. If the Lord hath not chosen nor set His love upon him, that is destruction enough in the germ, he will surely run thither. Therefore see how Esau first sells his birthright, then loses his blessing; and one misery follows another, till he is quite ruined. The choosing, the setting his heart upon him, is the thing that saves. Christ says of the spouse: "Thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes." That is the thing: to be beloved, to find favour in His eyes. Love will bear all things; it is as strong as death; it will save to the uttermost; and this lot falls on some, but not all. Though Esther be an unlikely maiden, one of another country, of mean degree, yet "she pleased Hegai, and obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her the things for her purification, with such things as belonged to him, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house; and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women." (Esther 2:9) "And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins." (ver. 17) This is the thing that brings the crown to her, be she what she will. "Thou art fair, My love, My undefiled." Though she complains, "I am black," yet He loveth her, and love sees no faults; she is comely in His eye. This is the portion of the "chosen generation."

3. What a man chooseth to himself, *he taketh out from other things, and gathers it near to himself.* Thus is it with God; He pulls the brand out of the burning; He takes the poor out of the dung. hill, leaves them not there. This is, indeed, a sure token of choosing, when He leaves not a man or woman in their darkness, bonds, or snares, but pulls them out, separates the wheat from the chaff; who hath “translated US out of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son.” In the Revelation it is said they were redeemed to God from amongst men, and Christ saith, “Because I have chosen you out of the world, it hates you.” He takes His chosen ones out of their chains, out of their filth, out of a perishing condition, and cuts them off from the old stock. That which He intends for a vessel of honour He takes out of the lump; He leaves not His own in the same lump with the rude world.

Now, this is the great thing to be considered, whether you are yet thus pulled out? Do you ever consider it? Hath He made thee to differ from the rude world? Art thou pulled out of the kingdom of Satan, where the whole world, religious and profane, dwelleth in wickedness? Though in several ranks forms, and degrees, yet in the same kingdom still — not a new creation made; but this will make it appear He chooseth thee, if thou canst say with David, “He plucked my feet out of the snare; He brought me up from the lowest hell;” and Jonah saith, “Yet hast Thou brought up my’ life from corruption. O Lord my God.” That is His salvation; there it appears God is God. We would vainly promise ourselves, as the world does, to be saved by His mercy only, and quietly pass our lives in our own wills here, and go to heaven when we die; but alas! if ever saved, we MUST be taken out of the condition we are in. “Come out from among them, My people, that ye partake not of her plagues.’ Many have great words, arid great knowledge and light; ay, but they are not yet translated out of the old kingdom; they remain still on the same stock. But things that are chosen are taken out of the midst of other things, as Moses saith to Israel, “Was ever

such a thing known, as that God should take to Himself a people out of the midst of another people, by great signs and wonders?” To take out of snares, and bonds, and entanglements! For God to say, “Come out of all, and be you clean, and be My’ people. and I will be your God!”

I shall inquire of you. Are you thus chosen? Are you PULLED OUT of darkness and death, and joined to all the living? Though in ever so mean a place, ever so despised an outcast, though but a living dog, yet, if living, if TAKEN OUT of death, and planted into a new life, that is the thing; if there be that seed of life, it will ever be stirring, and moving, and bending, like the needle touched with the loadstone; set it where you will, it can never rest until it come into its right place, till the soul be brought to God. There is a restless spirit in the Cams and lost ones, but that is only out of torment, the worm that never dies; and this restless spirit never moves towards God, but runs from Him. But to this centre the Spirit of life ever tends: to come from, and out of all things unto God.

4. Things that are chosen *have no hand in their own choice.* All that befalls this “chosen generation” is of mercy and free goodness. “Who made thee to differ?” Nothing they could do could ever make a difference; but the case stands thus: Two things lie together, and a man passing by takes one and lets the other lie; the things have no hand in it. So is it in this choice of God: all is done according to the pleasure of HIS OWN WILL. (For the children being NOT YET BORN, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to ELECTION might stand, NOT OF WORKS, but of HIM THAT CALLETH); It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”(Rom. 9:11-13) See and read as you go, that you may have nothing to glory and boast in, nor challenge the least to thyself, as if He saw some readiness, or activity, or worthiness in thee more than in other. No; He saw nothing except His own pleasure. If there

be anything good in thee, He puts it there. "Ye have NOT chosen Me," saith Christ, "but I HAVE CHOSEN YOUR" This will make it appear free indeed, when you shall be made to see there is no hand of yours in it, but "of HIS OWN GOOD WILL begat He us." No man ever begun first to seek after God; but 'I was found of them that sought Me not," else no soul would ever be saved. Can a stone move itself upwards? No; nothing can move to God but what came from God; none can go to heaven but the Son of Man, which came down from heaven. It is contrary to man, who is born from beneath, from the earth, to move upwards; his centre is below. Unless he be PULLED, and drawn, and borne up, and carried upon eagles' wings, he falls to the earth like a stone. The natural man CANNOT please God; he neither will nor can be subject to the law of God, (Rom. 8:7-8) which is, that he may have all the glory alone in the work of salvation, as He says in Isaiah: "It shall be to Me for a name and for a praise." That He should have such unlikely ones, and out of stones raise up children to Abraham, will seem wonderful. "I did not think to see the Lord here." saith Hagar, when she had given up all for lost. This will make the soul say as David did, "God alone doeth all."

5. Things that are chosen *are set apart for some special use*; a man hath some end in choosing them. It was so with God in this choice: He hath a peculiar end and design to bring about, and He chooseth some for that purpose. But why are not all the world for this same use? True, they might have been had He put in them the same Spirit, and fitted the vessel to that same purpose; but He spends a great deal of cost and pains upon some, and prepares the vessel of mercy for that very purpose to put in new wine. Old bottles would break presently; they were not intended for that purpose. Saul had this wine in him: he was among the prophets, the Spirit of God was upon him; but the vessel broke, and all ran out and was lost. So it was with Judas, a "preacher," who went in and out with Christ, and wrought mirades; but the vessel had holes, and all was lost, and came to nothing.

Therefore it is said of some, that "concerning faith and a good conscience they make shipwreck." All is shattered, and broken, and disappeared, as if it never had been. Some are compared "to the corn that grows on the house top;" though it be green and flourishing, yet it soon withers and comes to nothing. It was sown there by providence, or carried by some fowl; the husbandman never intended to have a crop from thence. So it may be, and hath been, with many that are very green; they have head knowledge, and parts, and forwardness, ay, but they grow upon the house top; the place was not intended for that purpose — to bear a crop. The stony ground flourished for a time, but soon died for want of root. "Ye did run well," but they left, and soon turned aside. But now, whoever is pitched upon BY GOD, and made a CHOSEN VESSEL, he is set apart for some end and service. "Say ye," saith Christ, "the Master hath need of him;" and He says to Ananias concerning Paul, "He is a chosen vessel, to carry forth My name." Whoever of you are thus chosen, and picked and gathered by God OUT OF the world, relations, and friends, do you think God hath no end in it? Is it, think you, that you should still live to your own wills as you once thought you did, and walk as other Gentiles! No; it is that you may do Him service, be His, and no more your own.

6. Things that are chosen men *expect more from* than other refuse they leave behind. A man when he is hungry chooseth bread, and not a stone; and he looks for more refreshment and nourishment from that than he would from a stone. God does not expect to gather "grapes from thorns;" He looks not to "reap where He has not sown." The unjust servant accused Him falsely in that. But if it pleased Him to take advantage He may. He may come at an hour unthought of, as Christ came to the fig tree, and cursed it because no fruit was found on it, though it is said it was not the time of fruit. It seems strange, but such a Lord is he: if He will take the advantage, if he will be very urgent to mark what is done amiss, then who shall stand? He can, if it

pleased Him, cast a man into sickness and torments of body', or Jet loose horrors upon his soul; there is cause and advantage enough to be taken, if He will make a man an example — a witness of His power and severity; for the Gospel hath that in it too; it is to be preached for a witness to all, as for salvation or deliverance to so me.

Now, God expects from His own, His "chosen generation," some what of love: "If I be a Father, where is My honour?" He expects fruit from you; He looks for sweet grapes from His vine; He expects better entertainment from them than from the world. And though it happens that they are the chief of sinners, and found the most ill requiting of all people; ay, but it is their shame and sorrow, and sin; He looks for other fruit, and for more, where He trusts with heavenly treasure. "I said, They are My people, children that will not lie."

7. Things that are chosen *are more looked after*, and more carefully minded than other things; they are not scattered about, but frugally reserved. So doth the Lord deal with His chosen; He takes them into His bosom, hides them under the shadow of His wings. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." If their death be precious, if there be love in that work of bringing to death, then how much more love will be seen in bringing them again to life? He says of His vineyard, that He watches it night and day. There is no time He does not watch it. In the light and in the darkness, in sorrows and in enlargements, He watches. Whether we sleep or wake, yet the Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. If they are sent into captivity, it is for their good. If Daniel be east into the den of lions, his God is there to shut the lions' mouths. If Joseph be sold into Egypt, God goes with him; if he be cast into prison, He is with him there, and finds favours for him. Wherever these go, a special eye is upon them. When they wander from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, yet there "He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, He reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not Mine anointed,

and do My prophets no harm." (I Chron. 16:22) His charge is given out to secure them; a guard is set about them, that nothing may harm them: "He shall give His angels charge over thee, and they shall preserve thee in all thy ways." This is His care of His chosen, and this is their safety and happiness.

II. *A Royal Priesthood.* Royal, of the royal blood, born OF GOD, sprung from that stock and kindred.

The "chosen generation" is intended for that — to be a royal priesthood, to offer up prayers and praises to God. "Hitherto," saith Christ, "you have asked nothing in My name," because they were not brought to believe the words of Christ. They knew not they were a "chosen generation;" till at the last, when He was about to leave them, He says to God, "And these have believed that Thou hast sent Me." There is no coming to your priesthood till you are first brought to know and believe you are a "chosen generation." And hence three great blessings belong to them as they are manifested from time to time to their souls: —

1. *They can go to God as those that have an interest in Him;* they go as to a Father, and not as to a Judge. The promise is to Christ, and so to all His seed. He shall say, "My Father, My Father!" And Christ says to His disciples, who were of this royal priesthood, when you pray, say, "Our Father." All must go to Him as "our Lord," and bow before their Judge; but this priesthood has an interest in Him, as being of that royal race, sprung out of His own heart. If you had but the knowledge of your interest in this Father, certainly you could not hold your peace, you could not be kept off from going and making your requests known to Him. "If thou hadst known," saith Christ to the woman, "the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked of Him living water." You could not but pray, and tell Him your wants, griefs, and sorrows; for you may go to Him on this ground: "He is my Father." O that you did but know, and weigh, and consider whether indeed your lot be fallen in so good a ground! We would be taught to pray any ways rather than to pray thus: "Our

Father,” as the disciples ask of Christ, “Teach us to pray.” But how? “As John taught his “disciples.” Why, how was that? John could show his disciples their wants, their misery, and their ruin; and could point to the Lamb of God, that this was He “which taketh away the sins of the world;” that relief was only to be had and expected there. But John could not tell them, “This is your portion, God is your Father, all this is for you.” No; this is the witness which Christ is to bear forth, which is greater than the witness of John. He tells them, “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom;” and also, “The Father Himself loveth you:” and therefore He teaches them to pray thus: “Our Father.’ But how long were they before being brought to ask anything in this name! Such a wretched unwillingness is in the heart of man, indeed, to know or come to its good.

2. This royal priesthood have this blessing from their interest in God: *they may go freely, and with boldness, to the throne of grace.* No need of strangeness or straitness on God’s part. “Ye are not straitened in us,” saith Paul, “but ye are straitened in your own bowels.” That is all the cause, indeed. But John was bold; he could say, “And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son .Jesus Christ.” His company was no lower or meaner; and it is said of our fathers how they “walked with God,” and were “the friends of God.” They had a boldness to go to Him at all times, in all cases of need. When found sinners, yet even then they can pray, “O! cleanse my heart; O! wash me. and I shall be whiter than snow.” When found ignorant, yet pray still as your heart is so indited: “O! grant me understanding, and I shall live. Teach me the way that I should walk. O! guide me and teach me!” He is bold to go to God in the worst day, in the lowest time, yet he hath no where else to betake him; and here the door stands opens always: (sic: this is not the editor’s experience and we are told of others that it is not so with them) “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” When his sins go over his head, as a burden too heavy to bear,

where does he carry them but to God? Where spreads Hezekiah the letter full of railings. threatenings, and reproaches, but before the Lord? As children, though they have ever so greatly offended, yet, when all comes to all, they have no where else to go, but gather home to their Father’s house. Though Absalom had slain his brother, and highly offended the king his father, yet nothing will content him unless he may see the king’s face; so nothing can stay the soul or keep it back, though it hath dealt ever so unkindly with the Lord; though it hath crucified and killed this brother, yet it must come in to its Father, and own its sin, and see the King’s face, and cannot rest till He smile again and take it into favour, that it may be free and bold with him as formerly.

3. Another special blessing of this royal priesthood is, that, as they have an interest in God and boldness to Him, *so they are sure to prevail with Him in the things they ask in faith.* “I know,” saith Martha to Christ, “whatever Thou askest of God, He will give it to Thee.” Nothing else will stop the cry of this child: it will ask and ask till it prevails. Though called “dog,” and put off once and again, yet the Gentile woman follows on still, and will not leave, till at last she gets this answer, “O woman, great is thy faith! Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” There is no denying this royal priesthood the thing they are’ in want of; they will never go from His door till He arise and avenge His elect. There is a wonderful sympathy, that runs in the worse of times, that cannot give over; but still the cry is, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” “Though He kill me, yet will I trust in Him.” And, therefore, what need is there, and what great advantage might be to you, to know you are numbered in this royal priesthood, to whom these special and peculiar blessings belong! that you might step into the priest’s office, and begin to pray, for “He will deny no good thing to them that love Him;” or rather, that are loved of Him, saith Paul. Though the lions may want and suffer hunger, though the great and high ones of the world may come into straits, and cry, and no

Baal answer them, yet Elijah is heard. The Lord deals not so with this royal priesthood: He will deny them no manner of good thing.

Now, if it were the Lord's will, I desire that I might interpret the riddle to you, that you might read the parable, and be your own witnesses, that "God is in you of truth." I have told you that you are a "chosen generation," and are to be a "royal priesthood;" arid though there be in us a strange, unnatural warring against it, yet, as Christ saith, "It is your Father's good pleasure to GIVE you the kingdom." He hath pleased to tie Himself in such a bond of nearness as nothing can separate. But I would yet come nearer and closer to you, that you may know more clearly how to judge of the matter, and see the bounds of distinction that are set between this chosen generation and all others. For, as it is certain the hypocrite will NEVER be without hope, say and do what you can, yet he will scramble and steal something to lean on and trust to — his accepting, his choosings, his doings etc.; so the sons of God are as much on the other hand. It is as hard to pull and draw them up to believe and hope as to keep the others back; they must be overpowered to it; they require sign upon sign, and witness upon witness, before they will be satisfied. And, therefore, John says concerning some, "I write unto you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." But how shall we "know" this chosen generation?

I shall propose these seven characteristics for you to consider:

1. In this chosen generation there *is a certain spiritual instinct of a close*, whenever God and the truth sown in their souls come to meet. When they come but near one another, there is a natural turning, and cleaving together. The loadstone and the iron never meet but they close and feel one another, and gather nearer and nearer. Now, examine if it be not thus with you; whenever you meet with a living breath from the Lord, doeth it not touch something IN you? Doth it not turn and strike the heart, and cause a strange close in your spirit? When Christ put but His finger in at the hole of the door, the spouse's

compassions were turned presently. It is not so to other lovers. The loadstone will not cleave to all metals, nor to wood and straws, though you gild them ever so fairly.

Now, all the rest of the world are taken here. They all wonder after the beast when it hath any likeness of the Lamb upon it; they CANNOT know wolves in sheep's clothing. They take down all good words, and earnest desires, and hope, and love, and zeal, that speak of God. They are taken with shadows and pictures, and cannot distinguish between one word and another. Their gods have no breath passing through their throat; they live not to discern, and distinguish, and divide between different things. All that hath the same shadow to them passes for the same thing; but, "My sheep know My voice," saith Christ. That touches them; and "the voice of strangers they will not hear." Where this chosen generation is, there is a certain distinguishing relish and taste: "Doth not my ear taste words?" saith Job. Nothing will please or take this truth, wherever it is sown in, but its own kind, and there it naturally cleaves and closeth.

2. You shall know this chosen generation by this: *they can find no rest for the sole of their feet, no place where to lay their head*. Though they run and hunt ever so about for ease and rest, yet they can find none; they are certainly disappointed and wearied out of all things. All that they come near cries out to them, as the lepers of old, "Unclean, unclean!" "Come not to me, I cannot satisfy." The earth says, "It is not in me;" and the sea, "It is not in me." They can sit down no where but the stool is pulled from under them, and they hastened up to their journey: "Up, Elijah, why sitteth thou here?" Everything their hearts would pitch on, is made either too hot or too heavy for them to carry. Either we cannot carry our lusts, they have so much lumber and luggage attached to them, or else they are too hot, and burn our hands; the thorns are too sharp, it is too hard to "kick against the pricks." Therefore I have often said, of all people in the world, it is in vain for those that belong to God to go about to please

themselves in any lust, for they are sure to be hunted out. Others may enjoy their wills, and sit down in sin, and take content in the creatures; their eyes may swell with fatness, they may have their heart's desire; ay, but the Davids may not: "I am chastened every morning, and plagued every moment." They have no rest in this world, but are always like strangers and pilgrims. Though weary and tired, yet alas! they must not stop till they reach home. All grows weary and tiresome to their souls. Nothing can ease, quiet, satisfy, or fill up their wants. No pleasure or enjoyment. If I say, "My bed shall comfort me," yet there He is met with and I am affrighted. If I go up to heaven, or down to hell, or fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, yet no where can I sit down for ease, but this Spirit finds me out. The old man rest and satisfaction no where. Job hunts through all places, and searches the perfections of the choicest creatures; he finds the place of gold, and a place for silver, and a place for pearls and treasures; but yet all this is too short for their wants. Where is the place for wisdom? He had tried all things, and yet finds this wanting. Now, many through idleness sit still, and will not take the pains to hunt thus; they will not try whether the creatures can content them or not. "But," saith David, "I have seen an end of all perfection." I see that all things come to an end. When all means, and ways, and plots are proved out to the utmost, yet then the soul is weary of all its labour, and cries out, "Ye are all physicians of no value, ye cannot help me."

3. By this you shall know this generation: *God is their utmost: their utmost Hope, utmost proposal, the utmost thing of all His people.* But He is not the utmost of others; they follow Christ for loaves — blessings. Some base, selfish thing or other is their highest aim. If they may have what their hearts run after, they could sit short of God well enough. Give them ease, give them peace of conscience, give them knowledge, and great enlargements of spirit, and they have enough. This contents them; but this chosen generation, give them what you will — gifts, parts, or enjoyments of the world, or

enlargements of truth, or heaven itself, to be saved, — it would not be enough for them; but God is the utmost thing, the Centre to which their souls tend. To see the King's face is their desire; else, what will their lives avail?

This, I would propose to you: Whether ever anything thou hast met with in all thy life was enough for thee? Whether it was the utmost thing that thy soul could sit down in? No, sure I am, nothing can stop the cry of the elect; it cries night and day; when straitened, and when enlarged, still it cries. When Jacob had wrestled all the night with God, and now He says, "Let me go, for the day breaks." Is not that enough? Will not the day content thee, to know, and see, and be enlarged? No, it will not: "I will not let thee go unless Thou bless me." He wanted a farther blessing still. I would have you weigh the thing in your own souls, whether it be thus or no with you: and do not always stagger: "Be not faithless, but believing."

4. This is another sign of this chosen generation: *they always gather and cleave closest to them that are most excellent.* "All my delight." Says David, "is with the saints, and them that excel in virtue." It chooseth to come up to the foremost, to the worthies of Israel. Now, others loiter away their time without any such aspiring desires. If they might but come to heaven and be saved at last, that were enough to them. They are not pressing on to the utmost mark, where the bullets are thickest and the battle hottest, as this generation does, according to that right mind that is planted in them. They long, with Moses, if possible, that they may go over this Jordan; they are ever crying out of their shortness. Jacob complained that "his days were few and evil," and that he had not reached the age of his fathers in their generations: ay, but he would have reached the greatest attainment. That which is of this stock presseth to the utmost mark, prizeth that truth, that friend, that deals most plainly, nakedly, and exactly with it; it chooses the wounds of a friend, and goes where the sword of a friend, and goes where the sword cuts sharpest. This the hypocrite cannot endure.

5. This chosen generation *have often still and secret hintings speaking within them*, that they are indeed of this flock, that they do indeed belong to God, however they are stopping the ear and putting it off. Now, the children of hell, they hunt and seek for such a voice, that they may be deceived and deluded, and the devil speaks peace to them, and they are “given up to believe a lie;” but the children of God are followed with such a secret whispering in their souls, that rises up without their control: nay, when they run from it, it speaks, “Surely they are My people: they are My chosen. I will be their God. Now, either we are not sober, and so listen not to hear this voice, or else we willfully stop the ear, and run from it, or else through ignorance the soul runs wrong when it doth hear; it goes to Eli, as Samuel did; it runs to this and the other thing, to know the meaning of it, because as yet, it is said “Samuel knew not the Lord;” but the time comes when the Lord will go on, and call “Samuel, Samuel” so long, till all the chosen of God, that are called according to His purpose shall be made to hear and own it distinctly, and to say, “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”

6. This chosen generation, in their greatest transgressions and iniquities, when most guilty and left to themselves, yet *never find such thorough despair speaking in them, that they shall be cut off utterly*. Now, to all the Cains He will speak destruction for that very cause: “A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be, because thou hast killed thy brother: and thy brother cries to Me, therefore thou art cursed.” But to His own He speaks no such thing; He shows them not their sin to destroy them nor drive them from Him; He hath a care in all His rebukes. So when Nathan was sent to show David his great sin of adultery and murder, before he had well finished his charge, lest such a thought should seize on him that God would utterly cut him off, he added, “The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.” (II Samuel 12:13) He never says to the soul of any of His own, “Iniquity shall be your ruin,” that sin shall utterly

separate. “No,” says Paul, “nothing shall be able to separate, nothing; not principalities, nor powers of hell,” not the heights or depths of sin; nothing shall separate from that love of God to whom that portion belongs. Now mind, and consider, and attend, whether all along your journey you find not such leadings in your spirit as these I shall speak of.

7. You shall know this generation by this, *whenever there is in them a heart to return, there is a heart in God to receive*. He stands open, and open at all times to them; there are such breathings in the souls of His people that witness this for Him, and can set to their seals that God is true in this particular: that He is always “pitiful and waits to be gracious. Mind whether it be not thus with you, whenever your souls are in a sober frame and you can speak truly, and not as the “words of a man that is desperate, which are as wind” — whenever you are yourselves, and sober; see if there be not ever such hints speaking in you, that God is ready continually; He waits to receive, whenever you are made willing to come: “At that time soever a sinner repenteth,” etc. And “if thou wilt return, O Israel, return to Me;” as if He should say, Go to no other; if thou wilt return, here is a heart open; I am ready for thee; “Return to Me, O Israel.” Now, let none get up the words and shadow of this, that have not the substance! that idol will not stand; though never so often raised and held up by force, yet it will fall down. But you who are indeed the chosen of God, and loved by Him, if I shall ever live to see you brought out and delivered, you will know what I have said, and be my witnesses, how these leadings have been all along your days with you, however at the present it be the weak time with you, and the hour of the power of darkness, when fears, and jealousies, confusions and doubtings, have their time to rule. But what saith the Spirit still? What speaks that Spirit of Life? Are not these stirring within? Is there not an invisible and strange close in thy soul, when God and the truth in thee meet? When Joseph and Benjamin meet, what a kiss is there, and turning of the compassions! Then again, dost

thou not find that all creatures are too short; all is weariness to thee; no rest or content to be had there; there is a pressing on through all to the utmost point, to God Himself, thy Life and Portion? Is it not thus? And so for all the other characters, are not these things so?

Now, if you have heard and believed this, you can surely witness to it. He that believes sets to his seal that God is true; and till you shall set to your seals and believe that you are this chosen generation, and your souls stand settled in it, you never enter into the priest's office, to go to God with boldness, to go in all straits. No, we cannot go with the prayer, "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief," until somewhat of this faith be risen up and be struck to by us. If ever we begin, we must begin with this little grain; though there be but a dim seeing, but half an eye open, yet the star must be followed, if ever we come to Christ; and the promise is, "The eyes of them THAT SEE shall not be dim." Now it is a dim seeing indeed; now we see but darkly; but however, if we do but stick to this dark seeing, then we may go and pray for farther light, that it may grow clearer and clearer to the perfect day.

But why are we so loth to believe that this good is intended us? It is a wonderful, supernatural thing. But well, the "long-suffering of God is salvation." This will one day be proved. There is a chosen generation amongst you, that is certain.

I must leave the subject, and desire the Lord would give you understanding into what hath been said; and above all, that you may not war or fight against it in your minds, but soberly inquire, "Is this my lot — is this my portion, to be one of this chosen generation?" Selected from the *Gospel Standard*, 1848

A believer's holy deportment often gives a check to the sins of other. The profane stand in awe, when grace comes forth, and sits, like a ruler in the gate, to be seen of all that pass by. - *Gurnall*.

TAUGHT OF GOD

Stan Phillips

"It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." - John 6:45.

It is a sweet mercy to be fixed in that number that is taught of God. There are many who are taught of man; whose only hearing is the hearing of men. Indeed, it is a characteristic doctrine of present-day Calvinistic groups, to teach that the hearing referred to in this and other texts, is the external hearing of the articulation of decibels of sound waves by preachers unto the subject of the Gospel. We do not perceive that this hearing is of sound waves; but rather the reception of the call and commandments of Christ through the operation of the Spirit. As it is written, "He that hath ears, let him hear." This hearing is surely much different to that expressed by the Lord when He said, "Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word." (John 8:43)

It is a covenant promise that God Himself shall teach His own people, and for this reason, one of the offices of Christ is that of a Prophet — He is our Prophet, Priest, and King. He is the Prophet, for we are so ignorant and incapacitated that we cannot seek of and obtain wisdom and understanding by the natural mind with which we are equipped. We must be spiritually taught every single truth we ever shall learn. Any natural learning upon subjects related to spiritual topics are only head-knowledge - philosophy, if you will. He is our Priest, for we cannot approach to God as sinful and unholy as we are in our nature. We must, imperatively must, have a Mediator, an Intercessor. And He is our King, our Sovereign, who works His own will in heaven above and earth beneath, the Sole Ruler of His kingdom without the aid of any. Each of these headings is sufficient for a lengthy article, but we must forebear.

Our thought is upon a limited aspect of the general teaching of the Holy Spirit in a believer's soul; and somewhat of a rebuke to

such who love sin and yet creep in among the saints using the carnal logic of the natural mind and the precious doctrine of predestination to advocate a moderate attitude toward the sins that by nature they cannot help but to commit. In short, those whose hearts still love sin and claim that the fixed decree of God compels them to continue in sin after they profess they are dead to sin.

Augustus Toplady once gave a definition of a true believer in Christ in this manner: “A Pharisee calls him an Antinomian; an Antinomian calls him a Pharisee.” Such a narrow line can be drawn between the two that truly it is a “strait and narrow way” in which these travelers of grace journey!

The truth of the Scriptures and voice of a heavenly experience is that salvation— all of it — is wholly of the Lord. The lawless Antinomian fully agrees: “Salvation is by grace. I can’t help sinning —it is decreed of God from eternity;” and glad he is that this, his heart’s special delight, is not deprived him! The self-righteous Pharisee concurs: “Salvation is of the Lord, and if I do my duty, He will abundantly bless me;” and no holier-than-thou character can be found in Christendom! He is always “steady as you go.”

“And they shall all be taught of God.” Here is the dividing line between the two extremes. “The works of the flesh are manifest” to all thus taught of God; for “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, TEACHING US, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world;” etc. (Titus 2:11) This teaching divides the allegiance of the spiritual mind, heart, and soul from the earthly lusts of the outward man which is given over to carnality, sin, and death.

There is formed in the new creature antipathy to all — absolutely all — that is associated with Adam the First. diametrical and irreconcilable natures exist in the embodiment of that “one man;” body, soul, and spirit interstitially united; which produces a violent and deadly warfare within the child

of God between the spiritual and natural elements of his being. As surely as cancer cells and nonmalignant cells in a body war violently to the death; or as antibodies engage alien viruses within the body in deadly combat to one’s discomfort, distress, and even death, so too, the grace of God introduced within the corrupt habitation of the flesh war with unrelenting and conquering conflicts to ultimate victory and death. Grace demands nothing short of unconditional surrender and the execution of the earthly lusts which war against the spirit of holiness and godliness planted within. It is unreasonable to expect any agreeable compromises, fraternization, moderation, or peace between absolute holiness and total depravity! Better to expect a free enterprise and a command economic system dwelling in harmony within the institutions of the same nation — it cannot be done. There can be no agreement between Christ and Belial; God and mammon; or flesh and spirit; — modified doctrines of the Christian faith notwithstanding. We can rest assured that they are resolute belligerents with violently opposing natures. They have nothing in common at all; yea, rather, they have but one motive driving them, and that is the total destruction of their opposites!

Thus, one taught of God by that “grace of God that bringeth salvation” cannot sue for peace with the works of the flesh — no, not even with the price of the shed blood of Christ argumentatively considered! What language, judge you, is this but that of a true Judas, which sues for peace with sin with the blood of the everlasting covenant, claiming, for argument’s sake, that “Christ died for our sins, put them away, will not remember them again, so let us sin the more that grace might abound!” Is this the lesson that “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” teaches an experimental child of God, or a lesson taught by that old crooked Serpent? Shall we sin without conscience because Christ has died for someone? God forbid! How can they who are dead to sin live any longer therein! How can perpetual combatants and irreconcilable foes sit down to tea together! Let alone

discuss the absolute predestination of all things together! Or, as the Holy Ghost: “How can two walk together except they be agreed?”

One may bring forth arguments for a negotiated peace between the two natures, saying that Christ has reconciled the two so as to make them agreeable with one another. We have been told that we ought to forgive, and receive into our fellowship, those that continue in sin, because Christ loved them. But, we have no forgiveness for any but those who offend against us; those who offend against God, either He must forgive or judge, for none can be a mediator between God and man save the Son of Man who forgives sins. No such argument for moderation between a life of sin and a calling of God from sin can ever change the sure word of prophecy. The word of God stands immutably the same as ever in the condemnation of sin. Human reason, or carnal logic, may apply selected doctrines to harmonize righteousness and unrighteousness in unholy alliances, yet the word of God remains implacably resolute and absolutely pure. The “works of the flesh are manifest,” still, to every quickened and feeling soul, and so are the fruit of the Spirit” and “fruit of righteousness.” More — the warfare will not cease no matter what doctrine is sacrificed on the altar of unholy timidity and self-gratification. One principle negotiated away in this warfare only demands yet another, until the “conscience is seared with a hot iron” (I Tim. 4:2) and “they grieve the Holy Spirit of God.” (Eph. 4:30). Doctrine may be “wrest to” one’s “own destruction,” (II Peter 3:16) but the true religion of God does not moderate to accommodate the works of the flesh. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to KEEP HIMSELF UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD.” (James 1:27) So where does that leave the vile principle that we can continue freely in sin because God has fixed and determined all things? That He has so fixed and determined all things is amply evident by the sure word of God. But one

must keep in mind that “It is impossible but that offences will come: but WOE unto him, through whom they come.” Their fixed certainty in no wise excuses the guilty; rather, the offences mark or identify the one under the woe, howsoever sound and orthodox he may appear.

The very nature of the carnal, or natural man, is to love sin and unrighteousness. This is the meat most adaptable to the habitat and maintenance of man, and to this very environment he is already condemned. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT, because their deeds were evil.” In fact, “everyone that doeth evil HATETH the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” (John 3:19-20) This does not preclude a man’s coming to a religion, a doctrine, an organization, nor his being exceedingly zealous in it. Men by nature get drunk on many things, and he becomes most intoxicated upon natural religion. There are more of these than those drunk on wines.

Now that is man’s natural condition as he normally is; as a healthy, sane man in the view of the world. This is his own characteristic “bent.” This marks him off from other creatures as “Man.” If this is an individual’s normal, natural, and daily bent or disposition, such a man has not yet been brought into subjugation to the spiritual and heavenly power of Christ — be he a Calvinist or an absoluter theologian of the greatest mental and logical mind or fluency of speech. You recall that Christ spoke of some seed which fell upon stones, and these, according to Him, were such that embraced the truth in joy — for a time — but then fell away. Why? Because they had no root in themselves — they were not partakers of divine life. They were the unwise virgins which had no oil of grace in them and whose light of natural religion failed them when most in need. Merely because one appears bubbling over with joy, and can mumble learned expressions of the language of free grace is not sufficient

to declare such a living branch in the Vine. One must always wait until the ripening of the fruit to find the branches which need purging. So, such a man in nature, though religious and quite orthodox, “can’t help sinning,” for that is all the natural capacity he possesses from his only father — Adam the First. Believe it or not, but some actually publicly brag that they can’t help sinning, as if that should commend them to the household of faith! These are those religious characters of whom Paul wrote, saying, they “walk in the vanity of their minds, having their understanding darkened, being ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts: who being past feeling have GIVEN THEMSELVES OVER unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” Then he adds so beautifully: “But ye have NOT so learned Christ.” (Eph. 4:17-20) If the one taught by the “grace of God” is to “put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust;” — which they are taught they are — what then must be evidently subdued by the work of the Spirit, except this very same? Surely it is “the works of the flesh” which are manifest, “which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things SHALL NOT (this is a “hard-shall”) INHERIT the kingdom of God.” (Gal. 5:19-21) How then shall one dispute it? or shall say it is God’s work to make one sin so that “they cannot help it”. How think some that such who walk after the above manner may be proper candidates for baptism and communion? Is it not evident that such traits are the marks of the earthling, rather than the characteristics of the heavenly?

The children of God, taught by this grace which bringeth salvation, are commanded and compelled to act differently - “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness,

let it NOT be ONCE named among you, AS BECOMETH SAINTS; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (as if to say, in neither the kingdom of Christ or that of His Father above!) When he says let these things “not be once named among you,” he does not mean to let them often be named among the saints! (Eph. 5:3-5) If such hath no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God, then let the religious world embrace whomever and whatever they will; but the saints of God cannot make private judgments. The rule of the Gospel is already set and fixed and they can only follow the rule as written. As we have often stated, we repeat again: We do not believe that God is the author nor approver of sin. Nor can we believe that a quickened sinner can approve of it either; nor lay his own sins at the door of God’s fixed and unalterable decree in such a manner as to nullify the expressed abhorrence of sin by the Holy One.

God’s people are such as Christ describes for us saying: “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (John 3:21) This is their earnest bent. — their characteristic disposition. And I hasten to add, it is recognized by all the saints when seen in another, and even the world without take notice of them. They must feed upon Christ. They are continually coming to Him. They are frequently mourning their sinful state. They love and pursue after righteousness, long for the clothings of Christ’s imputed righteousness to be made evident to them; they are often repenting, often doubting, often believing, perpetually confessing, hungering, seeking, and knocking. They travail entering the kingdom of God. As Peter exclaimed, “Where can we go Lord, Thou hast the words of eternal life!” The raven loosed by Noah did not return to the safety of the Ark. He was an unclean bird and had much carnage to reed

upon and upon which to rest his feet. Not so the dove. That clean bird had to return to the Ark for his rest and food. They were, of course, both “birds” — but there was a stark difference between their native characteristics; even as there is between the unrenewed and renewed souls. I tell you, beloved, that the dove found a “can’t help it” in its necessary return to the Ark, while the unclean raven also found a “can’t help it” in its gluttonous attention to carrion! So, too, the children of grace “cannot help” but keep the commandments of God. The raven “could not help” but feed upon carrion because that is the nature of ravens. The unrenewed “Christian” cannot help but to love sin and unrighteousness because that is the nature of Man. In all these situations, each are by the condition of nature a “can’t help it” group. The difference lies in what it is that they cannot help but do which they love to do and desire others to approve of them doing.

The children of God are marked by many different spiritual gifts which are the operations of God’s blessed Spirit. “And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God WHICH WORKETH ALL IN ALL.” (I Cor. 12:6) If He works ALL in all, or every one of His people. then what is there left for them to work of themselves? There can be no real comfort for the child of God to see continually day in and day out no-thing but the works of his flesh. He desires to see the works of the Spirit in him; to discover these tokens of God love and favor afresh. This is so very needful for the gift of hope to be nourished. Seeing fruits of righteousness stirred up in one’s soul, to feel the intercession of the Spirit, to find a mind of holy meditation, a spiritual song of Zion in the heart, to have the soul drawn out and wafted upwards in aesthetic rapture to Christ and the Father: to be tried and given patience: and to feelingly claim the longsuffering mercies of God — these and more — are sources of strength and encouragement to a renewed soul. Without these, ah, my soul. what could we do? Of what meaning is there to life, or existence? Far from causing God’s children to

boast, it is designed to humble them before His august Presence. As Paul. the experienced child recognizes the work as being of God. “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that WORKETH IN US, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Eph. 3:20) Or, as he said of himself on one occasion: “Whereunto I also labour, striving ACCORDING TO HIS WORKING, which WORKETH IN ME mightily.” (Col. 1:29)

There is great comfort in seeing evidences of one’s sonship by the fruits that mark him, and such are the works of God in him. The church at Philippi experienced it. Paul reported of them, and said to them: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have ALWAYS OBEYED, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which WORKETH IN YOU both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:12-13)

We do not speak here of cause and effect situations. We do not profess a duty-based religion — yea, we are made to be enemies of that doctrine of carnality and devils. Conditionalism we verily despise to the core of our being. Rather, we speak of experimental evidences —characteristic traits of sonship. Of the inward proofs of God’s visitations to one’s soul; of the faith which is unfeign as a “gift of God;” of the marks of God’s handiwork upon His own offspring. The possessor of these did not acquire them by any merit, but became a recipient of them freely by God’s grace freely bestowed. “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed,” so said the report in Acts 13:48. What was the characteristic mark that these individuals were ordained to life, rather than rejected as other? Their belief was the mark. From whence came this mark? Did they mark themselves. No. It “is the gift of God.” (Eph. 2:8) This is a sweet arid merciful comfort when one is blessed to feel the reality of eternal life within the soul. The work of God

which makes a believer an obedient child — all His people obey Him, for He speaks in power to them — gives them tokens of His love and grace. Repentance which results from “godly sorrow” is not the same as that which is motivated by guilt feelings in nature. It is “granted to the Gentiles”: “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” (Acts 11:18) Peter, in the preceding verse says it was a “gift:” Forasmuch then as God GAVE them” (the Gentiles) “the like GIFT as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?” (vs.17) Thus, while outward temporary repentance is no mark of divine grace, seeing that Judas, Esau, Simon Magnus, and the whole brood of freewill worshippers from that day to this have had that psychological experience, yet that repentance UNTO LIFE is a mark that God places upon all His elect ones so that they can rejoice and the church edified. When sin as billows roar against us, how often we are desirous of that same evidence David prayed for, saying, “Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine anger towards us to cease.” (Psa. 85:4) Or, as “Ephraim bemoaning himself; THOU hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God.” (Jere. 31:18) When the reprobate Judas repented, it is said that he “repented himself.” His turning was altogether of himself. But God’s people find an inability to turn themselves. They can feel and understand that repentance is a gracious evidence of God’s merciful intervention in their lives.

Beloved, we find ourselves totally unable to do any spiritual good. Social good in natural things we can do — but that counts for nothing other than its own natural end. We seek spiritual evidences that God is our God. We discover this in those works of righteousness He works in us to the end that we are His epistles, read and approved of all men.

Without this divine teaching of godliness

within our souls, we have never been to school yet. The proof of teaching is the things which are learned and applied. Christ is made to His people their all and in all, and His works, His traits, His characteristics manifest (but do not cause) that they are heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ. “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;” — that is their mark! They can’t help sinning, for they do as the dog or the swine — they go to their own environment. “But they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit... - that is their mark; and rather different from the mark of the wicked. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.” And “for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:5, 12,14).

As Paul, so every child of grace: “I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.” Did Paul use the truth to “turn the grace of God into lasciviousness?” No. Those who so abuse the truth are already well identified by the Holy Spirit, for He says of some: “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Can you imagine ministers preaching that Judas, with his mark well stamped upon him, was a child of God, and referring to him as “brother Judas”! That he probably is their brother. we would not dispute. but it is clear from his behavior and the prophecy that he was cursed, and as a reprobate is no brother to the sanctified of Christ. If you read Psalm 109, beginning at verse 6, you can clearly see the end of that wicked one, his wife, his children, his fathers (plural) and what is declared of him which was fulfilled in those eventful days of Christ suffering. What foolishness ignorance can breed! No, my brethren, we do not believe that God forces us to sin, nor that sinfulness is a characteristic mark of God’s quickened elect.

ARMINIANS

By Augustus Toplady

I much question, whether the man, that dies an Arminian (freewiller), can go to heaven. But, certainly, he will not be an Arminian, when he is in heaven. The employ of the blessed is, to cast their crowns at the feet of God and the Lamb. and to sing, "Not unto us, O Lord."

Should it be thought harsh to question the salvation of one who dies under the blindness of Arminianism; as if a man, who only robs God in part. might miss of glory; let it be considered that even on earth, if a person robs me only of my watch, or a single guinea, he has forfeited his right to life to the law, as much as if he has robbed me of all I am worth.

The old Arminians mentioned in the Scripture are blamed for thinking, wickedly, that God was such an one as themselves; but our new Arminians out-sill their predecessors and actually represent God as a Being in many respects considerably inferior to themselves. They suppose Him both to form His schemes with less wisdom, and to execute them with less power, spirit, and success, than a prime minister, of common sense, forms and executes his. They dare ascribe to God such impotence, blunders, imperfections, and disappointments, as they would blush to ascribe to a Ximenes, or a Sully.

Arminians consider the grace that is inspired into a true believer's heart, as a text of Scripture written upon a pan of glass, liable to be demolished by the first hand that flings a stone at it.

All the disputes between us and the Arminians, may be reduced to these two questions: 1. Is God dependent on man, or is man dependent on God? 2. Is man a debtor to God, or God a debtor to man?

When the Arminian foolishly affirm, concerning the will of an unregenerate man, viz. that "it's liberty consist in an indifferency to good or evil, like a balance in equal poise;" holds true of a regenerate man, in some circumstances, and in some respects, viz. that

a person, who is happily resigned to God's providential disposals, may (in point of absolute acquiescence) be said to have his will in equilibrium; i.e., he wishes to be quite conformed to the divine pleasure, and to incline neither to prosperity nor adversity, life nor death, but is desirous that God's own hand may incline the scale. We are never truly contented, nor (of course) truly happy, until God and we have but one will between us.

The Arminians think, that, in conversion, God does little or nothing for men, but gives them a pull by the elbow to awake them from their sleep. Rather, He acts, as maritime officers do by their sailors: He cuts down the hammock of carnal security in which the elect are; down they fall, and the bruises and surprise they receive, awaken them from their death in sin, and bring them to themselves, whether they will or no.

According to Arminianism, grace has the name, but free-will has the game.

Arminians suppose God to give us heaven, as the king grants a brief for building a church-house. The brief runs, "We have granted our most gracious letters patent." But these same most gracious letters are amply paid for before they are granted. No fee, no brief.

So people, especially the Arminians seem to speak of the Thirty-nine Articles of the established church, as if those newly-invented elastic garters, which are so contrived by springs, that they will accommodate and fit themselves to any leg that should wear them. -
1794