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Unsearchable Riches

A BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE

FOR GOD AND HIS

WORD

VOLUME LXXXIX

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Hymn

Tis not that I did choose Thee
For Lord that could not be,
This heart would still refuse Thee
Hadst Thou not chosen me.

Thou from the sin that stained me
Hast cleansed and set me free,
Of old Thou hast ordained me
That I should live to Thee.

Twas sovereign mercy called me
And taught my opening mind,
The world had else enthralled me
To heavenly glories blind.

My heart knows none before Thee
For Thy rich grace I thirst,
This knowing, if I love Thee—
Thou must have loved me first.

Josiah Conder—1836

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR JANUARY 1998 BEING THE FIRST NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY-NINE

EDITORIAL

WE BEGIN our eighty-ninth year with these words of Paul in our heart: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ, according as *He chooses us in Him* before the disruption of the world, we to be holy and flawless in His sight” (Eph.1:3,4). Some may hesitate to give concentrated attention to these thoughts relating our blessings to God’s choice of us rather than to our seeking of Him and our levels of devoutness, as presented by religious tradition. But we find that the more we focus on the deity of God, that all is out of God and through Him and for Him, the greater is our joy and peace.

Consequently, we start the new year with a hymn praising God for choosing us, and we continue this theme in nearly all the articles in this issue. The evangel itself tells of a great work of salvation, justification and reconciliation that is all of God, in and through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not of ourselves, and so there is no room for us to boast in ourselves.

Furthermore, since we are saved in grace through faith, and this is not of ourselves, we can be certain that even those who die in unbelief will ultimately join us in acclaiming in genuine, heartfelt praise, “Jesus Christ is Lord!” This, too, is savored in the following pages.

But what of our present lives? What of the thoughts that occupy our minds, the words that come out of our mouths, and the deeds of our hands? These too are (and this seems very strange at first) not of ourselves. It is because God blesses us by choosing us in Christ that we are to be holy and flawless in His sight. This also is His achievement. The joyful certainty of our spiritual blessings among the celestials is a daily source of new life to the believer. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

D.H.H.

THE SALVATION OF THE UNBELIEVER

AS GOD is the Saviour of all mankind, especially of those who believe (1 Tim.4:10), we may confidently rest on one grand and glorious foundation truth—that *all salvation is of God, and neither believer nor unbeliever has any part in it*. On the one hand this assures us of the possibility of saving all men, for God alone is able, and, on the other, it bars out all human schemes for their restoration, whether by works, or suffering, by giving them a second chance, or by any cause whatever which originates in man. Those who believe are saved by His grace (Rom.4:16), those who do not believe are saved through His judgments, but in both it is He alone Who is Saviour.

Faith is but the channel of grace; it does not produce salvation. Judgment is but a means He uses, a process which leads to the opening of the unbeliever's eyes. It does not remove his guilt or cleanse a single sin. *That is done wholly and solely by the blood of Christ*. Every effort to bring about the ultimate salvation of all through the purgatorial or penitential sufferings of the sinner is a denial of this great truth. Judgments do not save, but the God Who judges is also the Saviour, and all His dealings with mankind are governed by the grand goal which He has set before Him—to become All in *all* His creatures.

In setting forth the process by means of which God brings the unbeliever back to Himself we must remember that few believers are able to analyze the method used in their own salvation. Now, if we are not able to explain our own experience, how shall we understand His method

with others? Yet, strange as it may seem, God's dealings with the unbeliever are much more easily apprehended than His way with us. The very simplicity of faith baffles us. Most theological systems seek to base belief on evidence, and speak of "Christian evidences" as the foundation of the believer's salvation. This is, rather, the method He uses in the deliverance of the unbeliever.

FAITH AND EVIDENCES

The case of Thomas is an example of the overpowering force of evidence where faith is wanting (John 20:26-29). No man can long withstand the testimony of his senses, even when (unlike Thomas) his interests may be opposed.

The tangible proofs given to support the proclamation of the kingdom affords a rich field for the study of the effect of evidence on the human heart. The unbeliever will be saved by sight. He will yield to the force of facts. He will be convinced by logic. What evidence is most suited for this purpose? In our Lord's ministry we can see both the helps and the hindrances offered by the senses. The consideration of a few cases will reveal what most moves men and what makes them obstinate.

The rich young man was hindered by his possessions. The Samaritans were helped by the Lord's words. The resurrection of Lazarus led many Jews to rely on His acts. These illustrate God's method in the judgment of the unbeliever. He removes hindrances—no earthly acquisitions interfere with the decisions of the heart, for both heaven and earth flee from the face of Him Who sits on the throne. He works the greatest possible miracle, by raising them from the dead. He reads the inmost secret of their hearts. He appears in their very presence in soul-dismaying splendor. *They cannot* doubt His power or His perfections, and no motive remains to lead them to deceive themselves.

The judgment of unbelievers takes place in the inter-

val between the passing of this present earth and the creation of the new. Every tie which bound them to the earth has been burned up. They are the subjects of the most astounding miracle ever wrought, having been raised from the dead. They are in the presence of the Divine Majesty. Their secrets are bared to His awful gaze. The character of their judgment, being adjusted to their acts, not simply as to severity but so as to correct them, will reveal God's purpose to save and reconcile them to Himself. This, followed by their death in the lake of fire and subsequent vivification at the consummation, is the basis of their reconciliation through the blood of the cross (Col.1:20).

The excuses offered by those who were bidden to the great supper (Luke 14:18) are all removed before the great white throne. No fields or oxen or wives will intrude between the spirit and the great Judge.

In the judgment day God will judge the hidden things of humanity (Rom.2:16). We are prone to consider this a mere exhibition of His omniscience, to facilitate the trial of the sinner and to insure his condemnation. But more than this, it cannot but have a most powerful effect on the unbeliever's attitude toward Christ. What was it that impressed the woman of Samaria (John 4:19,29)? It was His knowledge of her hidden secrets. As a result we read that many of the Samaritans of that city believe in Him because of the woman's word that He told her all that she had done (John 4:39).

The blessed results achieved by His exposure of the woman at Sychar's spring will be multiplied by many millions at the great white throne. There is nothing hidden that shall not be manifested (Matt.10:26). As in Corinth, the hidden things of the unbeliever's heart become apparent, and, falling on his face, he will worship God (1 Cor.14:25).

Perhaps no miracle wrought by our Lord and His apostles created a stronger conviction than that of raising the

dead. When Lazarus was raised many of the rulers believed, and the chief priests were concerned lest all should believe on Him because of this sign (John 11:45,48). When Peter raised Dorcas it also was used to convince many who believed on the Lord. Can we imagine what conviction it must have brought to Lazarus and to Dorcas themselves, if they should have had the slightest tendency to doubt? Could there have been any stronger proof of divine power than that their very life had come back to them at the bidding of One Who is stronger than death? In the process of winning the unbeliever we judge their resurrection and final vivification to be ample to account for salvation and reconciliation entering their lives.

SAUL OF TARSUS

The apostle Paul's case is of surpassing significance in its bearing on the salvation of unbelievers. He was the foremost of sinners, and it cannot be denied that, among men, there was no case quite as desperate as his. All question as to God's ability to save vanishes in the light of his call on the Damascus road. The miraculous means employed in his case surely would suffice for every one of God's enemies. And who will deny, on sober reflection, that the appalling power and glory of the august judgment session into which the unbeliever is ushered by his resurrection will be unutterably more impressive?

The apostle's vision passed. He came back to a scene where all was as before. He alone had changed. But the unbeliever sees the power and presence of God not only in his own deliverance from death, but in all around him. The vision does not vanish. The divine presence abides.

GOD AS JUDGE

The change which eventuates in the ultimate salvation of the unbeliever is wrought, not only by his resurrection,

but by the august judgment session, when he stands in the presence of Christ, with all his unbelief swept away by the awful realization of His power and the justice of His throne. We are asked, Is it possible for them to repent? Rather, we would like to know, Is it possible for them *not* to repent, or change their minds? We cannot conceive an unrepentant sinner before the great white throne.

God's thoughts and man's imaginations are nowhere more at variance than on the subject of judgment, or punishment. God is love; man is hate. David was wise when he was given the choice of fleeing before his enemies or falling into the hand of Yahweh. He uttered a great truth when he exclaimed "Let us fall, I pray, into the hand of Yahweh, for His compassions are abundant; but let me not fall into the hand of humanity." And surely his choice was vindicated, for when the messenger was stretching out his hand in destruction toward Jerusalem, Yahweh showed Himself merciful, and said, "Enough, now hold back your hand" (2 Sam.24:10-16).

NINEVEH

Jonah went through the streets of Nineveh, crying: "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overturned!" (Jonah 3:4). But God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and He regretted the evil He said He would do unto them. "And He did it not" (Jonah 3:10). And what did Jonah do? Was he not pleased at the success of his mission? Did he not glory in the character of His God? Alas! he was like the many today. Like Jonah, they imagine that God has a streak of hate in His character and that He wanted to destroy Nineveh to give it exercise. But He had an object in threatening its destruction. Now that they repented and the object was attained, why should He belie His character and destroy them from sheer vindictiveness? Jonah's God was a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and

of much benignity, and regretting of the evil which He had threatened (Jonah 4:2).

DESTRUCTION

The thought that the resurrection and judgment of the unbeliever is only a prelude to his final "destruction" in the lake of fire must be judged by its moral effect, for it has no support whatever in the Scriptures. In the first place "destruction" (by which annihilation or extinction of being is intended), is *never used of the lake of fire or of the second death*. It is always used of the sinner before his resurrection at the great white throne. Those who are "destroyed" in Gehenna will be there. Those who "perished" in the wilderness and at the flood will be raised. "Destruction" is never annihilation. It never precludes resurrection and salvation. Indeed, *it is a necessary precursor of salvation*. The Lord came to seek and to save the "destroyed" (lost). So that, even if there were a single passage telling us that the unbeliever is "destroyed" in the second death (which there is not) we would still have every reason to believe God when He assured us that all who are dying in Adam shall be made alive in Christ (1 Cor.15:22).

Let no one suppose that we plead for the repeal of God's word regarding the doom of the unbeliever. Far from it. But we do plead for the removal of those harsh, human perversions of His word, which seek to make Him a man like ourselves, hateful and hating one another, vindictive and vicious in our views of the so-called "penalties" of sin. We plead for a revision of our vocabulary on this important theme.

The terms *destroy* and *destruction* are so often used of irrecoverable ruin that a few examples will be given to show how far this is from the truth. The rendering "lost" is always the translation of the word for destroy. It would be the utmost folly for the Son of Mankind to seek, much

less to save those who are annihilated. The lost sheep and the lost coin and the lost prodigal all had been destroyed, yet all were found and saved. Were the whole world lost or destroyed in the lake of fire, that would be no hindrance to salvation. Rather, it would be the very sphere in which alone salvation can operate. Christ cannot save anyone unless first he is destroyed, or lost.

GOD IS THE SAVIOUR

Such is the salvation of the unbeliever. It is not only in absolute accord with every passage in the word of God, but in utmost harmony with the God Who is revealed through that word. How can anyone who truly loves Him rest satisfied with less than this, the only true, the only scriptural solution?

Let those who are fond of reasoning about the destiny of the universe accept their own premises and follow them out logically and the inevitable conclusion will be a universal reconciliation. Try it and see. All will acknowledge these premises:

God is love		therefore?
God is omnipotent		

God is not love if He will not do all He can for His creatures, neither is He omnipotent if He is unable to save them. Both revelation and reason are arrayed against the false delusion of unending torment for the unbeliever. It degrades the sacrifice of Christ to a mere attempt to remedy an evil which it cannot cure. O, my brethren, why do you limit His love, why do you paralyze His power? Is the Christ Who saved *you* capable of completing His work by saving all like you? Or, if He *can*, why *will* He not?

Confess that this terrible doctrine cannot but lead you to doubt His perfections. It brings you up to a blank wall,

to a pit of dense darkness. But the blessed truth opens up a glorious vista flooded with the love light of God.

THE JUST JUDGMENT OF GOD

But, we are told, God's justice demands judgment. There is truth in this. But if God's justice must be displayed at the expense of His love, the extinction of the unbeliever in the lake of fire, far from forever removing an eyesore from the universe, places a blot upon His character which eternity itself can never erase. If we do not doubt His willingness to save them, then we must acknowledge His inability. If we cannot question His power, then we must limit His love, and then we endanger the very foundation on which all eternal bliss must be established.

But we do not need to rest on reason. At best, it is usually the refuge of unbelief. God has spoken, and real reason rests on His revelation. He is the Saviour of all mankind, especially of those who believe. God give us grace to glory in such a God!

In the opening chapters of Romans Paul lays the foundation on which God's just judgment is based. He closes his indictment of mankind with these words: ". . . God's just statute, that such as are committing them are *deserving of death* . . ." (Rom. 1:32). As the first death cannot be the effect of any judicial procedure on God's part, it is evident that the death penalty awaits all who come into the judgment. Whatever may be the variety and degree of the tribulation and anguish meted out to each, one common end awaits them all—the second death.

VIVIFIED IN CHRIST

But, some will ask, if they were condemned to death, how can they be raised again? What right have they to the grace and life that will be their portion? We answer, *none*. They will have no more claim on the ecstatic bliss

of that unending day than I or you, or any believer! What right have we? None at all. But *in Christ* we have a perfect title to every favor. So it will be with the unbeliever. It is not written that “Even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also shall all be vivified,” but “thus also, *in Christ*, shall all be vivified” (1 Cor.15:22). Adam’s death involves all, irrespective of their deserts. Christ’s life extends to all, apart from their personal merits.

And here is where the unbeliever learns to love God. The judgment has exposed his own unworthiness. The grace of vivification will illumine his heart with the love of God in Christ. Then shall be fulfilled God’s universal goal:

“. . . to Me will bow every knee,
And every tongue will be
acclaiming God.”

This is the method He will use to bend the stubborn knees. He will not use physical force but moral suasion. Neither will He wring out a *confession of sin* from every tongue. The Greek word as here used means *acclaim*, which involves a complete acknowledgment and acquiescence in the divine will.

The crowning and conclusive exhibition of God’s power and love toward the unbeliever awaits the consummation. The eons are past. All sin is banished. Evil is no more. The Son of God has nearly completed His mediatorial work. All the living are in perfect accord with God. Nothing remains but the conquest of death and the reconciliation of its denizens. It is the only enemy left in all God’s universe. Then, and not till then will the vast concourse of mankind emerge from the domain of death never to enter it again. Then death will be despoiled, the last enemy laid low. Then shall all awake to live in the light and love of Him Who will have become the Saviour of all mankind.

A. E. Knoch

God is Operating in Us

“DO NOT I CHOOSE YOU?”

DURING the course of our Lord’s brief and turbulent ministry there came a time when His challenging words were unacceptable to the throng which had followed Him. He had fed five thousand of the people with mere five cakes of barley bread and two food fishes, but evading their exultation and intention to be making Him a king, He retired alone into the mountain. Later, He crossed over the sea of Galilee, appearing to His disciples, walking on the waters (John 6:1-21; *cp* Matt.14:13-33).

The next day, this multitude also crossed over to Capernaum in boats which had come from Tiberias. They knew that during the previous evening the disciples alone had crossed the sea in the only boat available. “Rabbi,” they questioned, utterly perplexed to find Him on the other side of the sea, “When camest Thou to be here?” (John 6:25).

Perceiving the motivation of this throng, Jesus had to declare the distinctive nature of His royal commission. “I am the Bread of life,” He taught. “Do not murmur with one another. No one can come to Me if ever the Father Who sends Me should not be drawing him . . . Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the Bread which is descending out of heaven that anyone may be eating of it and may not be dying. I am the living Bread which descends out of heaven. If anyone should be eating of this Bread, he shall be living for the eon. Now the Bread also, which I shall be giving for the sake of the life of the world, is My flesh” (John 6:41-51).

There, in a synagogue of Capernaum, Jesus stressed the

importance of spiritual aspiration and sustenance. Here, we learn that many of His disciples came away, dropping behind, and walked no longer with Him (John 6:66). How sad that they had forgotten the ancient admonition to their ancestors that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord (Deut.8:3).

What caused them to turn away? Was it the final realization that they would not be receiving food? Was it the solemn statement, "The spirit is that which is vivifying. The flesh is not benefiting anything"(John 6:63)? Or, was it the repeated statement, "Therefore have I declared to you that no one can be coming to Me if it should not be given him of the Father" (John 6:65)?

Jesus challenged the twelve, "Not you also are wanting to go away?" Peter protested, "Lord, to whom shall we come away? Declarations of life eonian hast Thou! And we believe and know that Thou art the Holy One of God!" (cf John 6:67-69).

Despite Peter's earnest plea of devotion, our Lord was not persuaded. "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do not I choose you, the twelve, and one of you is an adversary?' Now He said it of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, for this man was about to give Him up, being one of the twelve" (John 6:70,71).

"Peter and the rest of the apostles probably had the impression that they had chosen Christ, and in this crisis, they seem to be confirming their choice of Him. With this background, how strange to hear Him reverse their thoughts and emphatically affirm His choice of them! On another occasion He asserted that they had not chosen Him. He reserves the right to choose His Own. A realization of this principle gives strength and stability to vacillating mortals, who look within and find no soundness, and look without on turmoil and strife, and fear for the

future of which they know nothing. To be chosen by One Who has power to keep and knows all gives satisfaction and rest. It is infinitely more precious to be His choice than to have the questionable satisfaction of feeling that we were free to choose Him. If we were, we would have chosen another. There is none that seeketh after God"¹

NOT UNTIL GOLGOTHA

In connection with this incident on the shores of Galilee, it would surely be inconsiderate of us not to remark on the physical hunger of the throng. Their needs were real enough. On a later occasion, Jesus fed four thousand men, apart from women and little children. How revealing are His tender words, "I have compassion on the throng, for already three days they are remaining with Me, and they have nothing that they may be eating, and I am not willing to dismiss them fasting, lest at some time they may be fainting on the road" (Matt.15:32).

Starvation will wreak havoc with the reasoning process. It is no easy or simple matter to ignore the dictates of the soul! In many such grim circumstances, matters of spiritual moment might even be considered slight or even trivial. But what acceptance will be given to the words of a preacher today who announces the truth that *none may be coming to Christ except and only if God should be drawing them?* Such a teacher will have a lean time in Christendom.

It should be noted that not *all* but *many* of the disciples came away (John 6:66). While we would not condemn these, neither did our Lord or His Father. Jesus knew that His Father was bent on revealing His love through His great sacrifice. Those who turned away from Him in Capernaum or throughout the land of Israel, indeed, all, across the entire length and breadth of the universe, have

¹ I. A. E. Knoch, CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.151.

to be subjected to an experience of evil, sin, and judgment. Not until Golgotha could Israel, and the entire creation, be graced with essential righteous access to God, *through the shed blood of His sacrificial Lamb!* Once more, however, it is emphasized that “. . . God locks up all in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all” (Rom.11:32).

CORRECTIVE AND PUNISHING JUDGMENTS

There was no independent choice or response due alone to the individual's will among those so chosen by Jesus, and this principle of selection applies equally with all of God's creatures. However, this unequivocal truth, amply attested throughout Scripture, will be vigorously rejected by many who affirm belief in God and His Son. In this present day of apostasy, these, with mock modesty, will concede that while their righteousness is a gift from God, through the sacrifice of His own Son, nevertheless, in their particular experience it could only become reality *through their own belief and acceptance!*

Disabled humanity is completely unable to perceive the absolute distinction between the unique, sublime wisdom and love of omniscient Deity, and inferior yet essential interrelationships of social responsibilities. In consequence, religious leaders have carried over into their beliefs the same uneasy obligations which obtain in human affairs. Disgracefully, in their theology, they degrade the Creator and elevate His creature, impotent man.

Social and political conditions of human society demand a clear recognition of specific rules and regulations. Do this or disobey that, and inevitable consequences will follow. Conformity in behavior to local, national, and even international rules, should, in the main, ensure a degree of peace, sometimes prosperity, and generally, a measure of security. However, because of human inability and disability, many complex judiciary systems have become essen-

tial for preservation, even survival. It is accepted that these are far from perfect, but they are the best plain ineptitude may devise. Alternatives of anarchy culminating in nihilism are too terrible to contemplate.

The judiciary systems have made some provision for minors and the insane, but many religious theorists in Christendom shake their heads in vague confusion when questioned about the innocents. Also they have no clear answers concerning the future of those who have not had the doubtful benefits of orthodox conception of truth. Traditional Christian standards of judgment would be unacceptable, even repugnant, in present courts of justice. With doctrines that border on arrogance, many blithely subscribe to a belief that, while they are *safe*, because of their belief, others, particularly those defined as “Christ Rejectors” must ultimately be consigned for eternity to unceasing, excruciating torment!

What stern retribution is reserved for purveyors of such heinous, grotesque distortions of truth? Once more, blessed to relate, these also have no choice. What sadness though, when they stand at the great white throne, before our gracious Lord and Saviour in all His exalted, worthy glory, and there are judged *according to their acts, but subject to His kind and corrective justice!*

THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER

It is a merciful relief to turn from such folly to sober reflection of God's wisdom. Through the glorious gift of His Own dear Son He clearly demonstrated the overwhelming wonder of His love. This is love beyond our comprehension. This is love which will not rest until every creature shall bow in humble adoration, and every tongue shall be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God the Father.

Shall those whom God designates beforehand—before

the disruption of the world—and whom He calls to be part of that august body known as the ecclesia which is termed the body of Christ be aware of this unique privilege of reflecting God's love? Further, shall they, learning of the splendid grace which is lavished, abuse or become indifferent to so great a love which refuses to be reckoning offenses? Let us be clear on these issues. They are of vital importance.

First, there is nothing which might be considered as proof. No documents of title, no evidence other than the precious Word of God. Clearly, this teaches, “. . . God's righteousness is being revealed out of faith for faith, according as it is written: ‘Now the just one by faith shall be living’” (Rom.1:17). Care with this record is urged. The superior faith referred to is no less than the faith of our own Saviour, Who died that all might live! Answering the second question concerning response, it must be conceded that of course there will be present abuse. Subject to the enervating influence of dying humanity, how could it be otherwise? Yet, as realization of the awesome cost to God and His Son dawns in our lives of corruption and despair, there is gradual, but certain transformation.

And so the great lesson is learned: Love alone must save. Fear can but enslave. “God is operating in you to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight” (Phil.2:12,13).

Donald Fielding

CHOSEN IN HIM

Among those chosen in Christ before the disruption of the world (Eph.1:4), recently put to repose, is **W. Wells Hough** of Almont, Michigan, at the age of 84. A cousin of our editor, Wells rejoiced, through both the pleasant and the painful experiences given him, in the truth that God is working *all* together for our good.

Another friend in the Lord, **Ken Warner** of Vincennes, Indiana, died late in 1997. Ken was a careful student of the Scriptures, a brother who enjoyed much enlightenment in the the evangel of the gratuitous grace of God in Christ Jesus.

He Shall Save His People

THE LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL

JESUS WAS COMMISSIONED to the house of Israel. He was commissioned to them, and He was not commissioned to anyone else. Jesus was commissioned to one people only, and they were a people who were lost (Matt.15:24). Furthermore, most shocking of all, this one, lost people to whom Jesus was commissioned to seek and to save (*cf* Matt.1:21; 2:6; Luke 19:10), remain, as a whole, unsaved!

THIS PEOPLE

To be sure, Jesus prophesied that only a few would be finding the way that led into life (Matt.7:14). Furthermore, He announced privately to His disciples that the prophesy of Isaiah 6:9,10, was filled up in this people whom Jesus was commissioned to seek and save: They heard and observed, but their heart was stoutered, lest they should understand and be healed (Matt.13:14,15).

It was not just Herod (*cf* Matt.14:1,2), who was, after all, an Edomite and extremely superstitious, but it was the most dedicated and disciplined out of Israel itself, who remained stubbornly in their lost state despite the miracles and healings and all the powerful deeds performed by the Lord. Again, Jesus cites Isaiah: “*This people* with their lips is honoring Me, yet their heart is away at a distance from Me. Yet in vain are they revering Me, teaching for teachings the directions of men” (Matt.15:8,9; *cit.* Isa.29:13).

This is the lost people Jesus came to save! Their heart was far from Him, and that warrants judgment, but it also is indisputable evidence that they were lost. We cannot dis-

miss the fact that Jesus did not save them by saying their behavior as lost sheep shows they did not deserve to be saved or calls for His everlasting rejection of them and condemnation to eternal hell. He did not come to save sheep that were well behaved and obedient, but sheep that were lost. And that was the obvious state of His people, Israel.

Even though many of them, “who have an illness” (Matt. 14:35) were “brought safely through” their physical debilities, they were not brought safely through their more serious debility of being lost in sin. Their leaders were blind, and they were leading the people who also were blind, so that they all would “be falling into a pit” (Matt. 15:14). Yet this danger was not pointed out to the crowds of people, but only to the disciples. To these few, Jesus gave warning, though even here not always in clearest of terms: “For whosoever may be wanting to save his soul shall be destroying it. Yet whoever should be destroying his soul on My account shall be finding it. For what will a man be benefited, if he should ever be gaining the whole world, yet be forfeiting his soul” (Matt.16:25,26).

The facts are that Jesus came to save a people He did not save; He spoke to the people in such a way that they would not understand; He explained what He was saying to only a few, who themselves had difficulty grasping it and sometimes denied it outright (*cf* Matt.16:22); God Himself had declared their blindness and stoutened heart centuries before; He alone could reveal the truth to them (*cf* Matt. 16:15), and He was not doing so.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

This does not mean that Jesus does not carry out His commission. Because the sheep were not found during this ministry does not mean they will never be found and saved. Because their hearts were stoutened does not mean they will not be granted mercy and enlightenment (*cf* Rom.

11:32). The truth was hidden from the masses, but the truth is that the entirety of Israel will be saved from its sins, that Israel will be blessed and be a blessing, that Jesus will be known as He is. If Jesus is not realized as Saviour, then it is not true that He saves His people from their sins.

Israel was a people like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36). Very pointedly Jesus asked those in the synagogue who put their interpretation of the law above the meaning of the law, “What man of you will there be, who will have one sheep, and if ever this should be falling into a pit on the sabbaths, will not take hold of it and raise it?” (Matt.12:11). Later He used a similar picture of a shepherd and a lost sheep to speak of His own work of seeking and saving “the little ones” of Israel, lest they should be perishing (Matt.18:12-14). In John’s account the analogy is expanded. Jesus’ testimony was that He was “the Shepherd ideal” Who lays down His soul for the sake of the sheep (John 10:11-16).

“YOU ARE PETER”

Peter becomes the privileged example of the lost sheep who is found and saved by the Shepherd. He had witnessed the Lord’s power over the storm and raging sea recorded in Matthew 8:23-27, crying out “Lord! Save us! We are perishing!” Now in 14:24-33 when they are again threatened by the raging sea, impetuous Peter asks the Lord to order him to walk on the water as the Lord Himself was doing. Yet fear and lack of faith takes over once again, and Peter cries out, “Lord, save me!”

Time after time Peter rushes ahead, wanders in accord with his own way, and gets himself in trouble, needing to be saved. Yet all these experiences are from God and for Peter’s good, so that he would learn to recognize Who Jesus is. The great avowal of Matthew 16:16 is not a formula for salvation, but rather it is the consequence of God’s

revelation to Peter through his failures and God's salvation granted to him of the truth: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is not a creed learned by rote in order to become saved. It is a testimony of having been saved, and of knowing it.

This is how the lost sheep of the house of Israel will be saved and how they will come to avow that Jesus is Lord (*cf* Rom.10:9,10). It will not be revealed by other human beings, but by the Father of Him Who saves them from their sins.

REVEALED BY THE FATHER

It was not given to the people as a whole, at this time, to understand the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens (Matt.13:11). They saw the signs that pointed to Jesus as their Saviour from sins, the miracles of healing and authority over powers of evil, but they were not healed of that universally human, inner leprosy of sin and hypocrisy and self-centeredness that was at the root of all their troubles and was of the essence of their lostness.

They, as a people, did not even recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Anointed Son of the living God. Instead, some were like Herod, and decided He was John the Baptist risen from the dead, or Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the prophets (Matt.16:14). Only a few were like Peter in recognizing the truth and knew the happiness of believing that here was the Saviour Who was the Anointed One and the Son of the living God (16:16).

Revelation and understanding could come only from the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not anything anyone could boast in. If the revelation of Christ could come only from the Father, no less would the work of the salvation of the lost sheep of Israel be that of God, *His* achievement, and all to *His* glory!

The revelation of Jesus as Saviour from sins, as the

anointed Christ Who would rule and bless, as the Son of the living God Who would manifest the power, wisdom and love of the Father, did not enter the hearts of this people. But that must ultimately be done. Otherwise Jesus is not their Saviour from their sins, their Good Shepherd Who finds the lost sheep, or the true Son of the living God. What His Name says He is, what He is called and designated to be, He will become in full recognition with joy and praise and thanksgiving.

FORFEITING THE SOUL

In making the saving work of the Good Shepherd dependent on the independent willingness of the sheep to be saved, the severity of the condition of being lost has been exaggerated beyond recognition. Since it was left up to Israel whether or not they would let Jesus save them, it is reasoned to be necessary that the results of a wrong choice be exceedingly harsh. Being lost was not enough. The lostness must involve eventual, everlasting, painful lostness. Otherwise, (it is supposed), the sheep might not think it worthwhile to admit their present lostness, or be motivated sufficiently to keep themselves within the confines of salvation and be faithful in following the Shepherd.

But this is not what is being presented in Matthew 16. Those, like Peter, whose will is directed to picking up their cross and following the Lord (Matt.16:24) would do so because of their recognition of Christ as the Son of the living God, *which recognition is given to them by the Father* (16:16,17). Such a happy recognition was not then given to the scribes and Pharisees or to the majority of that nation. The result for them is that they will be forfeiting their soul (16:25,26).

This is severe enough. But it is not a matter of suffering loss for all eternity in hell. *Soul* speaks of the senses and here especially of pleasant sensations. It has to do with the

joys and pleasures of that great *kingdom* which was promised to Israel, and will surely come and be clearly perceived (16:28). These will be forfeited by those of Israel who do not take up their cross (the temporary sufferings that precede the kingdom).

JUDGMENT IS NOT THE END

We say it is unfair for someone to suffer for something they were not given the grace of avoiding. But being lost in sin involves not only present misery but future suffering as well, as God deems best. The problem here is not the existence of future judgment and loss, but in viewing these future losses entirely as ends in themselves and as penalties entirely divorced from divine responsibility and purpose in wisdom.

The forfeiting of the joys of the kingdom is a sad thing in itself, but it must be viewed in light of God's operations. That sin has future repercussions needs to be made clear. But in making this clear we must never lose sight of God's great and triumphant and gracious dealings with sinners. With reference to Israel and the forfeiting of the soul-*ish* pleasures of the kingdom by many lost sheep of that nation, we must always keep in mind that Jesus came to seek and save these lost people of His from their sins. That will help put God's works of choosing some and revealing His truth to them, while still locking up others in stubbornness for awhile and bringing them into judgment as well, in perspective.

So we marvel at God's great grace to us in this day of darkness and human pride. Yet we rejoice that all God's operations, choosing and calling as well as judging and condemning, must finally be related to that great work of the cross and that glorious triumph of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour and Lord of us all.

D.H.H.

His Achievement Are We

INVOKING AND AVOWING

If ever you should be avowing with your mouth the declaration that Jesus is Lord, and should be believing in your heart that God rouses Him from among the dead, you shall be saved. (Rom.10:9)

This verse is probably employed more than any other in today's popular, formularized preaching in which advice is given concerning "how to get saved." Such an interpretation and application, however, is a gross misuse of the Word of God. This important text must not be taken out of its context, divorced from its setting, and assigned an altogether new purpose of our own devising.

In our consideration of this passage, it should first of all be noted that Paul is not speaking here concerning the nations, but Israel. The subject of the context is the salvation of Israel; the pronouns "you" and "your" are in reference to individuals of that nation. Their salvation was the delight of Paul's heart as well as his petition to God (Rom.9:31-10:1).

It should further be noted that the usage of "if ever," does not speak of a salvation that is in doubt, but of a salvation that is certain to occur—*for Israel*.

In the phrase "if ever," "if" is not the if of doubt but of argument. It is the practical equivalent of "whenever," in reference to the salvation which *will* then be occurring. The sense is, Whenever the sons of Israel should finally be avowing with their mouth the declaration that Jesus is Lord, and should be believing in their heart that God rouses Him from among the dead, they *shall* be being saved.

The teaching of practically the entirety of Romans 10 and 11 is that God does *not* thrust away His people whom He foreknew (Rom.11:2), and hence that the day will yet come when "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom.11:26a). Israel will then be saved not only out of her stubbornness and unbelief, but out of the great affliction which shall befall her in the conclusion of the eon. In that day, "Arriving out of Zion shall be the Rescuer. He will be turning away irreverence from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them, *whenever* I [Yahweh] should be eliminating their sins" (Rom.11:26b,27; cit. Isa.59:20,21; Psa.14:7; Jer.31:34).

Thus it is gloriously true that "if ever" Israel should be avowing with their mouth the declaration that Jesus is Lord, and should be believing in their heart that God rouses Him from among the dead, they *shall* be saved. They will then enter into the particular salvation which God has for them, that of life in the terrestrial kingdom in the coming eon, according to the writings of the prophets.

"Intense zeal, religious fervor, coupled with self-righteousness, does not lead to salvation. God demands subjection to His righteousness in Christ. The law should establish Israel's *un*righteousness and thus reveal God's righteousness, which is manifested in Christ. Israel, as a nation, will be saved when they see Him Whom they stabbed, and recognize Him as their Righteousness.

"The law demanded obedience first, and promised life to those only who continued to keep it. But even in the law there was provision for faith. It taught that Yahweh Himself, *He* was their Life (Deut.30:20). In the day when He gathers them out of the peoples and brings them back into the land He will bring the word of faith very near to them (Deut.30:1-14). In place of their own efforts He will put the humiliation and resurrection of Christ before them. Their salvation, under God, will depend on their avowal of Christ's lordship and resurrection.

"In the words, 'Whoever should be invoking the name of the Lord, shall be saved' (Rom.10:13; cit. Joel 2:32), there is an allusion to the ancient custom, still in vogue in eastern lands, of the right of sanctuary (*cp* Num.35:6-28). One who is in danger of death by the hand of the blood avenger, if he cannot reach a safe place in time, may invoke the name of some great and powerful person, and thus find salvation through his name. If the avengers of blood refuse to listen to his appeal, and take his life, it devolves upon the person on whose name he has called to take swift and summary vengeance. He gathers together all his friends and allies to assist him in punishing the outrage and in defending the honor of his name.

"Thus, 'Whoever should be invoking the name of [Yahweh], shall be saved.' When vengeance visits the earth, the only shelter will be the name of Yahweh. Therefore, it will require not only heart belief, but the avowal of the mouth. Thus it is that Israel will be saved and all others who, in that day, will seek refuge in His name."¹

The full text of Joel 2:32 (from which Paul cites in Romans 10:9 and 10:13) is: "And it comes that everyone who shall call on the name of Yahweh shall escape, *for* in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem *deliverance* shall come to be, just as Yahweh says; and among the survivors are those *whom Yahweh is calling.*" All such ones will then call on the name of Yahweh and escape, *for* in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, His deliverance shall come to be. Their invocation of His name will be *because* of His deliverance, according to His calling. Hence their invocation should never be conceived as a means controlled by man in order to gain His deliverance.

It is especially wrong, then, to wrench these words from their context and employ them as a "formula" today, set-

1. adapted from A. E. Knoch, CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.240.

ting these words before the listener as “how to” advice as to what requirements he must fulfill in order to “get saved,” or, become spiritual.

It is true, incidentally, whenever anyone today is graciously enabled to recognize and avow that Jesus is Lord and to believe in his heart that God has roused Him from among the dead, that he then enters into a certain salvation of his own. But it is a salvation from ignorance and unbelief, not from being unchosen by God prior to this time. And it is certainly not some sort of qualifying step which then obligates God to include him among His chosen ones in return.

Indeed, we were chosen by God long before we were born, in accord with His purpose and the grace given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian. In the counsels of God, it was actually “*given to us.*” This is what Paul says (2 Tim.1:9); not that it was merely made “available” to all who might one day qualify themselves for its possession. Membership in the body of Christ is by God’s grace, not by human qualification.

As long as we are altogether stubborn toward the things of God, we are “soulish, not having the spirit” (*cf* Jude 19). “Now the soulish man is not receiving those things which are of the spirit of God, for they are stupidity to him, and *he is not able to know them*, seeing that they are spiritually examined” (1 Cor.2:14).

One either has the spirit of God or else he does not. If he does not have it, he does not—he cannot—receive those things which are of God’s spirit. Indeed, the truth is, claim what he will, such a person considers them to be so much stupidity. He is unable even to know the things of God, much less to speak of them before others. “No one is able to say ‘Lord is Jesus’ except by [*en*, ‘in’] holy spirit” (1 Cor.12:3).

Those who do not yet have the spirit of God do not

receive Christ at all actually, even if they, in their own flesh, may attempt to do so, having been misled into such a course through false teachings. In such cases, the “faith” is “feigned,” in the sense that it is *simulated* (*eikê*, SIMULATEDLY; 1 Cor.15:2), not genuine. Human efforts toward self-conviction are all in vain; we truly believe only when God *graces* us to do so, in His own time and according to His own powerful operations (*cp* Gal.1:15; 1 Tim.1:16).

Only those who have already been given God’s spirit receive Christ; their receiving of Him is a *fruit* thereof, as natural—and as much the work of God—as the spring blossoms on an apple tree.

INVOKING THE NAME OF THE LORD

On this subject, Dean Hough wrote, “It is ironic that these words of Paul [in Romans 10:9] should have been taken as standardized directions which must be followed if a person wants to be saved. Faith itself is thus given a legalistic twist, contrary to the whole tenor of Paul’s apostleship. Even in addressing Israel, the apostle is not imposing a set of rules for them to follow in gaining their salvation. Rather he is showing the pathway Israel needs to take, and indeed *will* eventually take, for the enjoyment of the salvation God has provided for them. It is a pathway of discovery, not human achievement. The salvation does not arise from either the avowal or the faith, but is *found* through their exercise

“The previous verses [Rom.10:6,7] show what Israel must *not* be saying if they wish to exhibit faith in God’s words and enjoy the blessings of salvation. This verse shows the opposite. Here is what they *will* be saying in response to true faith in the heart. They will acknowledge the lordship of Jesus, the One Who walked among them as a servant and Who was crucified as a criminal. And they will believe that God roused Him from among the dead

“The acclamation of the mouth [Rom.10:10], in the Scriptures, is an open expression of what is honestly believed. It must not be false. The Lord said, ‘Out of the superabundance of the heart the mouth is speaking’ (Matt.12:34). The sacredness of such an avowal can be traced back to the ‘ten words’ of the law, where it is written, ‘You shall not take up the name of Yahweh your Elohim for futility’ (Ex.20:7). What is said concerning God and His operations is to reflect His glory and manifest Israel’s confidence in Him.

“However, . . . even that future expression of Israel’s faith will not actually make them righteous or gain them salvation. What Paul has written concerning us in the earlier chapters of Romans and what he says concerning Israel in chapter 11 will help us supply the ellipses, somewhat along the following lines: ‘For with the heart it is believed for [the manifestation of] righteousness [established by God], yet with the mouth it is avowed for [the continuing display of] salvation [gained through Christ’s descent, death and resurrection].’

“These matters in brackets, though helpful to us in following the overall teaching of Romans, are not of immediate importance in Romans 10. Here Paul is presenting the way to righteousness (by faith) in a manner most calculated to appeal to and be understood by Israel, so as to make the strength of Israel’s resistance all the more evident. He is not concerned here with the basis and purpose of salvation, but with the simple human situation which is the *evidence* of that salvation . . .

“The attractiveness of the evangel, especially to those zealous for righteousness, is so great that we can only marvel at the strength of Israel’s stubbornness. Yet we would be the same apart from the grace of God. Israel remains under the disgrace of disbelieving God, stumbling and tripping, desiring the anathema of rejecting Christ, while

we have the joy and peace of believing on Him Who is the Saviour of all mankind.

“‘For everyone, whoever should be invoking the name of the Lord, shall be saved’ (Rom.10:13). Once more Paul borrows from the Hebrew Scriptures, this time from Joel 2:32. This continued tying in of Old Testament passages with the message Paul was presenting before Israel should logically have made that message more welcome to them. The harmony of salvation through faith with the proclamations and pleas of the prophets is very striking, especially considering the place of the law in the days of such stalwarts as Isaiah and Joel. No wonder Paul testifies that the evangel of God was promised before through His prophets (Rom.1:1,2), and that the righteousness of God was ‘attested by the law and the prophets’ (Rom.3:21)!

“The differences between Paul and Joel are obvious to anyone who considers each passage in its context. But the similarities are what the apostle emphasizes here. The pathway to salvation is not distant, complicated or obscure. It is straightforward and near at hand. All Israel needs to do is believe, proclaim and invoke. But still they are *locked up in stubbornness* and will not heed a message of such bountiful mercy.

“As for us, we are aware that God is operating, and He is operating all, even the affairs of Israel. He is operating all these matters together, in a harmonious and glorious way. And He is operating them all together for good. This is the faith that God has implanted in our hearts and which we rejoice in acclaiming with our mouths, to the glory of God the Father.”²

DECEPTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY

Spontaneous informal petitions, prayers, pleadings, and

2. *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.74, pp.91-96, “Faith in Heart and Mouth.”

thanksgiving to God, as circumstance evokes or occasion inspires, are but the natural outflow of our spirits. As the desire or need arises, such prayer and praise, even if very brief, is often most heartfelt and earnest. If we *are* walking in spirit, in the course of everyday life many occasions arise, or may well be before us continually, in which either petition or praise are regularly in our consciousness if not on our lips, even as they become our intermittent experience, in spirit. Conversely, often, when we are *not* walking in spirit, it is both the painful trials and the special joys of the day that serve to awaken us to reliance upon God even as to thanksgiving and praise unto Him, in the name of Christ.

In order to minimize the intrusion of the flesh, ordinarily, except for brief public blessing or supplication, prayer should be made “in hiding”; that is, either privately or in silence (so to speak, “in your storeroom,” after “locking your door”; Matt.6:6). Indeed, it is the “hypocrites” who are “prolix” (i.e., abundant and extended) in prayer (Luke 20:47), who thus engage themselves that they may be seen of men, making “useless repetitions even as those of the nations” (Matt.6:7). Even though such prayers are directed to the God of Israel, faithfully speaking, they are largely but “useless repetitions,” even so. The Lord Jesus declared of such ones, “They are supposing that they will be hearkened to in their loquacity. *Do not, then, be like them*, for aware is God, your Father, of what you need before you request Him” (Matt.6:8).

Devoutness in general and communion with God in particular, must be natural and sensible, not contrived, artificial, or sensuous. Yet as a technique by which they suppose they can regulate the flesh and “gain” the spirit, some will repetitively vocalize such phrases as, “O Lord Jesus! O Lord Jesus!” doing so with much zeal and great gusto. Though this mantra-like practice is termed by some,

“Calling on the name of the Lord,” it might more aptly be called, “Calling *out* the name of the Lord,” since, as ordinarily practiced, with much repetition of phrases, it becomes not so much a prayer of dependence upon God as a mood-altering technique, controlled by man.

Doubtlessly, if such procedures are practiced with sufficient frequency and sincerity, certain positive effects will be obtained as a result—especially if one is taught to expect such results. Such essentially pagan practices will often induce a certain ephemeral euphoria, which, in turn, deters those thus distracted from certain overt sins. One’s dependence upon such subjective, self-generated emotionalism, however, hinders if not precludes one’s dependence upon God.

Such exuberant vocalizings and related practices are, in fact, as fleshly and injurious in their way as those more conventional fleshly thoughts and deeds which they are designed to attenuate. Self-regulated experiences of ebullience, albeit in the name of Christ, constitute a spurious spirituality. Irrational, self-generated emotionalism is unhealthy, not to mention unwise. For some, such religiosity may gratify the senses or distract the flesh; but it cannot truly nourish the spirit of any. Nor is any such aura of religious euphoria somehow useful in preparation for the spirit’s presence—as if the Almighty had need of our crude devices in order that His testimony might be heard or His influences rendered effectual.

“INVITATIONS” AND “ALTAR CALLS”

Many have been deceived into conceiving of the evangel in proud and conditional ways through the false teachings of those who have been unfaithful to its message. Ever so many have been put through the paces of taking part in an “acceptance” of Christ which supposedly only brought salvation to them inasmuch as they fulfilled its “terms.” Such

claims and practices have only perpetuated confusion and deception. Wherever God intends, however, the power of the evangel itself still works salvation—in spite of the presence of these errors.

The customary invitation or altar call of today is simply a vain tradition of men (*cp* Mark 7:8). It is used because it “gets results.” Through such means, many become converts to the “Christian religion.” Such popular techniques are based upon the false idea which has well been termed “decisional regeneration.” The number of those from among such throngs whom God Himself has already chosen is known to Him, not to us.

Entrance into the terrestrial kingdom under law is one thing; the apostle Paul’s evangel of grace among the nations is quite another. Yet on the basis of Matthew 10:32,33 (and Luke 12:8,9), many today are warned that they must not only believe but also “confess” Christ before men in order to be saved. The scope of these words, however, is confined to the Circumcision. It is true that it was necessary for those called into Christ *through the evangel of the Circumcision* to heed all such instructions if they would enter into life. God, however, graciously fulfilled in His chosen ones all essential obedience (*cp* Isa.26:12). They would have life eonian only if they obeyed; but their obedience was due solely to His grace.

In the Circumcision calling, personal righteousness and endurance are *essential*, but they are not provided by man. Those in Christ of that calling, whether in the beginning or end of their life of faith, are saved entirely in grace, as much as ourselves. The throngs at large, some of whom had a certain recognition of Christ, must be distinguished from those who were truly chosen of God, “begotten anew” and “in Christ.”

Such matters as these do not concern us; it is a corruption of Paul’s evangel to attempt to incorporate them into

his message, especially when the *grace* which alone can fulfill the essential obedience of that calling is denied.

For ourselves, it is not that we must acclaim Christ, but simply that we gladly do so, according to His grace. We should not speak of “confessing” Christ, but of “acclaiming” Him. When *exomologeō* (OUT-LIKE-LAY [say]) is used in a positive sense, the CV translates it “acclaim” (e.g., Matt.11:25). When it is used concerning sin, it is translated “confess” (e.g., Matt.3:6). If a new believer should wish to share his first joy in Christ with others during a meeting of his fellow believers, this should be encouraged. But such actions must not be psychologically induced, or made into veritable laws or ceremonies.

Many may actually believe for some time before they ever “go forward” at a church service. *If so, they are already in Christ, and complete in Him* (*cf* Col.2:10). But if their faith has lacked commitment and obedience, not yet knowing His grace, they may well suppose that by taking part in this tradition they will somehow motivate God to bless them in return. Indeed, “orthodoxy” teaches this error, and proclaims it as truth.

If any should genuinely believe for the first time during such a meeting, this will be so only because God has decided to grant them faith in the message of “Christ crucified” upon this particular occasion. If so, one should glory in God in it all, in God’s good pleasure to be graciously granting faith, and not taint such a marvelous occasion with an abundance of boastful imaginings about “having done one’s part” by going forward at the altar call.

May our God and Father give us grace not only to be invoking (calling *upon*, or petitioning) the Lord out of a clean heart (2 Tim.2:22), but to be correctly cutting the word of truth (2 Tim.2:15), heralding the evangel of His grace to the honor of His name.

J.R.C.

THEN YAHWEH ANSWERED

THE TEMPEST described by Elihu in Job 37 forms the background for the appearance and address of Yahweh. It parallels the tempest of sorrow and pain that has struck down Job, and so also the words of Yahweh concerning His wisdom and power and constant involvement in the great world of the earth and skies parallel His wisdom and power and constant involvement in Job's little world.

HUMAN DARKNESS AND IGNORANCE

Job had reached the beginning of knowledge with his fear of God. The Word of God which he had heard was, as we have noted, that great account of creation and the patterns for approach and praise and shelter from divine indignation, which we have today in Genesis.

But Job was darkening counsel, and doing so without knowledge (Job 38:2) when he spoke of his own past record of good acts and pointed to the comparative ease of wicked people round about. These points, for all their truth, would not bring Job to an understanding of Deity. It is only when Job focused his thoughts on God and His connection with his sufferings that he was speaking what is rightly so (Job 42:7). We can know this because Yahweh speaks now only of His responsibility for both the physical and animate creation, whether we fear or enjoy it, or are indifferent to it. Yahweh has nothing to say about Job's moral record. The knowledge that sheds light on counsel and wisdom is the knowledge of God as He reveals Himself.

JOB 38:1-38

38 ⁺Then Yahweh ^lanswered ^YJob
from the tempest, ⁺ saying:

² ^aWho is this who **darkens^l counsel**

ⁱBy declarations without knowledge?

³ **Belt up your loins ^{pr}now like a master;**
⁺ I shall ask of you, and you **inform Me.**

⁴ **Where ^bwere you ⁱwhen I founded⁻ the earth?**
Tell if you know with understanding.

⁵ ^aWho ^{pl}determined its measurements—
for surely you ^lknow!

Or ^awho stretched out a measuring tape upon it?

⁶ **On what were its sockets sunk?**

Or ^awho directed its cornerstone in place,

⁷ ⁱWhen the stars of the morning
were jubilant⁻ together,

And all the sons of Elohim ^craised a joyful ^lshout?

⁸ ⁺ Who ^lshut in the sea ⁱwith double doors

ⁱWhen it rushed forth⁻, it came ^lforth from the womb,

⁹ ⁱWhen I ^{pl}made⁻ the cloud its clothing

And murkiness its swaddling band,

¹⁰ ⁺When I ^limpressed My statute upon it

And ^{pl}set bar and double doors,

¹¹ ⁺When I ^lsaid, Unto here shall you come

⁺but shall not proceed farther,

And here a limit is ^lset ⁱto your swelling billows?

¹² ^fIn all your days have you ever instructed the morning?

Have you made known to the dawn its ^{ri}place,

EARTH AND SEA AND SKY

Yahweh speaks first of His founding of the earth, but expands on the word given in Genesis 1:1. He informs Job of His exact determining of measurements and laying of foundations (Job 38:5,6). The earth was neither founded without a plan nor without a wise carrying out of the plan. The result was so marvelous that “the stars of the morning” and “the sons of Elohim” exulted with joy.

This exultation of the celestial beings who raised a joyful shout when God founded the earth (Job 38:7) testifies to an expectation of deliverance from the corruption that had entered the universe (compare the language and thought of Romans 8:19-21). There was a feeling that God was doing something especially significant in forming this world. This was a work that was intimately related to the removal of evil from creation, a truly important matter to Job, and to us all.

Hence, Yahweh turns from the glorious, initial act of creation to speak of matters associated with evil, the rushing forth of the sea, of its billows and of murkiness and confusion. These forces were not outside the divine operation, and certainly not beyond His control (38:8-11). They may involve destruction, but by setting bars and limits to their powers, Yahweh makes known His superior power and the direction toward order and beauty of His activity.

This is shown further by the reference in 38:12 to the morning and the dawn. These daily evidences of hope and renewal are also of God. If Job is disheartened by the wickedness around him, the light of each new day should remind him that God will bring all wickedness to an end (13-15).

God knows all about the wickedness of the world, just as He is familiar with all the dark places of the sea and vast expanses of the land, and of death itself (16-18). These are not surprises or mysteries to Him.

- 13 **That** it might take **hold** ⁱof the **wings of the earth,**
And the wicked be 'shaken ^fout of it?
14 **It 'turns** itself to hues **like sealed clay**
+Till they are stset like those of **clothing.**
15 **+Then from the wicked their light is 'withheld**
And the exalted' arm is 'broken.
16 **Have you ever come unto the seepings of the sea**
+Or walked about in the fathoms of the abyss?
17 **Have the gates of death been revealed to you,**
And have you 'seen the gates of the blackest shadow?
18 **Have you comprehended** the ^fvast width of the **earth?**
Tell if you know all of it.
19 **Where is this, the pathway where light 'tabernacles,**
And where is this, where darkness has its ^{ri}place,
20 **That you may take it^o to its territory,**
And that you may understand the tracks to its home?
21 **You know, for you were 'born back then!**
And the number of your days is vast!
22 **Have you entered into the storehouses of snow,**
And have you 'seen the storehouses of hail,
23 **Which I have kept back for the season of distress,**
For the day of attack and war?
24 **Where is this, the pathway where light is 'apportioned,**
Where the east wind is 'scattered over the earth?
25 **Who has divided off a trench for overflowing rains**
And set a pathway for the thunderbolts,
26 **To ^cbring rain on a land where no^t man is,**
A wilderness with no^t human in it,
27 **To satisfy areas of ruination and wasteness,**
And to cause verdure to sprout ~from the arid place~?
28 **Is there a father for the rain?**
Or ^awho has begotten the globules of dew?

38:20 it: i.e., either light or darkness.

38:27 --- from the arid place: Hb place for bringing forth.

SNOW AND WIND AND THUNDER

If Job is going to know God as the One Who is operating all and doing so with power and wisdom, then his mind has to be cleared of any self-centered pride of goodness and achievement, and of blame and independence in control over his destiny as well. He also must view all things in his life, whether good or evil, as of God and under His control. What is relevant in the matter of Job's misery, and alone of purpose and meaning in it all, is centered in God alone.

Therefore, Yahweh speaks of His responsibility for all things. That is the word Yahweh has for Job.

There is divine intelligence and purpose behind the existence of snow and ice in unexplored regions of the earth, and of light and wind in their apportioned pathways and in the movements of the stars. Over all these God has the superintendence (22-32).

These are not accidents or arrangements of arbitrary chance. Wildernesses and deserts are placed by design where God has placed them, no less than the constellations, or the individual stars and galaxies in space that compose them. All of this must put Job's sufferings into perspective. Job is not the master of his fate. If God, in His wisdom, wills to bring pain and loss and sorrow into Job's life, all of Job's human righteousness and noble deeds will not keep it from coming. Satan also is left out of the picture. The creation is under the direction of the Creator, and therefore His purpose for it will be achieved.

God is there laying down laws of physics and superintending over the earth (v.33). He has full control over the clouds and lightning bolts, directing where moisture shall fall and where dry clods of earth shall be opened by the rain, and where they shall still remain (34-38). He is over all things, both good and evil.

D.H.H.

- 29 **From "whose belly has the ice come forth?**
And the hoarfrost of the heavens, "who has generated it,
 30 **When water 'hides itself as stone,**
And the face of the abyss is 'frozen over?
 31 **Can you 'tie up the windings of the Pleiades?**
Or can you 'unloose the draw-cords of Orion?
 32 **Can you 'bring 'forth the constellations of the zodiac**
in their season?
And the Great Bear ^{on}with her cubs, can you 'guide them?
 33 **Do you know the statutes of the heavens?**
if Or can you ^{pl}establish its superintendence 'over the earth?
 34 **Can you 'raise up your voice to the thick clouds**
+ That the accumulation of water may cover you?
 35 **Can you 'send forth the lightning bolts "that they may go?**
And do they 'say to you, ^{bd}Here we are?
 36 **"Who has set wisdom in the hidden parts?**
Or "who has given understanding to the intuition?
 37 **"Who can 'number the ^{sky}clouds in wisdom?**
And the waterskins of the heavens, "who can 'tip down,
 38 **"When the soil is solidly set into lumpy casts,**
And the clods are 'clung together?

NOTES AND NOTICES

The *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Hendrickson, 1997) is a recently published English edition of a work of German scholars, providing current thinking on the meaning of Hebrew terms. Concerning the word *olam* which we translate *eon* or *eonian*, we read: "The Eng. translation 'eternity' . . . is inappropriate for a number of OT passages with *olam*, and, even when it seems appropriate, it may not be permitted to introduce a preconceived concept of eternity, burdened with all manner of later philosophical or theological content." It is satisfying to find this admission, but we wonder how the word "eternity" (or "forever," or "everlasting") could ever be used apart from the burden of philosophical or theological content in Bible translations.

By the time our readers receive this issue of our magazine, Volume 89 (1997) of *Unsearchable Riches* should be available for shipping (hardbound, green cloth, 288 pages; \$20, plus \$2.00 s&h).

THE BEST OF THE FLESH

“THE war against the Philistines was unyielding all the days of Saul. When Saul saw any masterful man or any son of valor, he would add him to his host” (1 Sam.14:52). “David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father’s house heard, they went down there to him. And others convened around him: every man under constraint, every man who had a creditor, every man bitter of soul. He became chief over them” (1 Sam.22:1,2).

Saul was continually conscripting the best of Israel’s men to be added to his fighting force. And yet they were never able to overcome their foes. On the other hand, David did finally see peace. But notice the difference in David’s acquisition of those who became his mighty men. They came to him. They loved him. They needed him. And they were not necessarily “the best.” So is Christ’s acquisition of those who will be His in the oncoming eons and in the complement of the eras when all is headed up in Him.

AMALEK, A TYPE OF THE FLESH

This contrast sets the tone for the fifteenth chapter of 1 Samuel. The first three verses of the chapter are one of those passages which many people consider difficult to understand. God instructed Israel to utterly destroy Amalek, “both man and woman, both infant and suckling, both bull and flocking, both camel and donkey.” History has shown that Israel failed to obey such commands repeatedly, and the ultimate result was always the corruption and failure of the chosen nation.

Amalek was a descendent of Esau and represents the flesh—ever struggling against faith, attacking when defenses were weak, and warring with the chosen perpetually. In their journey through the wilderness the children of Israel were attacked by Amalek at a time of great vulnerability, just after their encounter with thirst and the consequent despair and rebellious thoughts that had taken hold of them (*cf* Exodus 17).

Now again, as recorded in 1 Samuel 14, the forces of Israel spent all their energy in the battle with the Philistines. In their exhaustion the hunger of the flesh overwhelmed them, and they sinned grievously. But Jonathan was refreshed and satisfied because he was depending on God rather than on his own strength. Saul had invoked a curse on anyone who stopped to eat before he was avenged of his enemies.

But chapter 15 is where the curse should have been pronounced. “Cursed be anyone who reaches out his hand to take what God has doomed!” But instead of heeding God’s simple and uncompromising directive, Saul and the soldiers deemed themselves wise enough and with sufficient discretion to save *only the best* (1 Sam.15:15). The king of Amalek was spared, and the stout fatlings, and only the most desirable of the property (15:9).

Saul’s actions betrayed his heart. Saul went to Carmel and raised a signpost to himself. Then he went to Gilgal (15:12). Saul was glorying in himself and the victory that God had given him, and, in such a frame of mind, he went to the place renowned for the cutting off of the flesh, to sacrifice to God! Gilgal means *rolling*. That is where the reproach of Egypt was rolled off Israel with the reinstatement of circumcision, and the renewal of covenant relationship to God (Josh.5:2-9).

Abraham’s circumcision clearly spoke of the deadness and inability of the flesh to perform God’s will. Yet Saul

was glorying in the flesh, and he was saving the best and most appealing things of the flesh, and he was offering the fruits of the flesh to God.

GOD WILL NOT ALLOW THE FLESH TO RULE

God's response is that this kind of rule will not continue to reign over His chosen ones. As always the flesh has its excuses: "Blessed be you [God's prophet] by Yahweh! I have carried out the command of Yahweh . . . I have brought [the animals] from the Amalekite, because the soldiers spared the best of the flock and the herd in order to sacrifice them to Yahweh *your* Elohim" (1 Sam. 15:13-15). (We are reminded of words in Genesis chapter 3: "The woman that You gave me . . . the serpent beguiled me.") Honesty would have been compelled to say, "We saved what appealed to us because I failed to rule what was under my authority."

What is God's opinion of such service? Samuel asked the question (1 Sam.15:22). What does God delight in? What is it that brings joy and satisfaction to God? Can we mortals please God by enriching Him with our gifts? Is there anything we can hold in our hand that will win God's heart after our actions have told God that we believe our wisdom is greater than His and our ways are better than His? Can we fail to live as we understand God desires us to live, and then purchase His smile with presents? Will God deny Himself and His truth for the sake of the works of our hands? To reject God's word and direction is rebellion and insubordination (v.23). It is taking guidance from and honoring other sources.

In accord with God's wisdom, the flesh rules our lives for awhile, for our education. But this is not the permanent rule in the life of faith. And so Samuel cut down Agag at Gilgal (15:33). Samuel showed the true meaning of Gilgal to be the cutting off of the flesh. Then he departed from

Saul, never journeying to see his face again. The Nazirite (*cf* Num.6:2), totally dedicated to God, cannot fellowship where the flesh is exalted over the will of God.

CRUCIFIXION OF THE FLESH

Paul called the death of Christ a circumcision—a stripping off of the body of flesh. It is in accord with the evangel of our crucifixion with Christ that the apostle writes, "Now those of Christ Jesus crucify the flesh together with its passions and lusts" (Gal.5:24).

How powerful and solemn it is, coming from God, that this crucifixion of the flesh is so fitly displayed in the command to Saul to utterly destroy man and woman, infant and child and every beast. Nothing the flesh values, no matter how innocent or appealing its appearance is to be carried over into the new life. The cross of Christ says, "Count your life and works as dead and laid in the tomb with Christ, and depend upon God to raise up a new life within you."

J. Philip Scranton



Concordant Version of 1 Samuel 15

15 + Samuel ^lsaid to Saul, It was ^YI whom Yahweh sent to anoint you [›] king over His people, over Israel. +So now hearken to the voice of the words of Yahweh. ² Thus says Yahweh of hosts, I have noted ^wwhat Amalek did to Israel, ^wwhen he ^{pl}stood [›]against it ⁱon the way ⁱas it came ^{up} from Egypt. ³ ⁷⁺So^s now go, + you must smite ^YAmalek and ⁷doom him and [~]all ^wthat is his. + You shall not spare ^{on} him; +but you will ^cput to death ^fboth man

*f*and woman, *f* both infant and *fr* suckling^l, *f* both bull and *fr* flockling, *f* both camel and *fr* donkey.

⁴ + Saul summoned the *wi*force and *m*mustered them ⁱat Telaim: 200,000 footmen, and 10,000 men of Judah. ⁵ + Then Saul ^badvanced as far as the city of Amalek and ^{7c}lay in ambush in the wadi. ⁶ + Saul said to the Kenite, ^{9o}Come, withdraw, go down from ^{mid}among the Amalekite, lest I ~sweep you off~ with him. + As for you, you ^dshowed kindness ^{wi}to all the sons of Israel ⁱwhen they came up from Egypt. + So the Kenite ^bwithdrew from ^{mid}among the Amalekite. ⁷ + Then Saul ^bsmote the Amalekite from Havilah ⁷as far as Shur, which is adjoining Egypt. ⁸ + While he ^bapprehended Agag king of Amalek alive, + he doomed all the people to the edge of the sword. ⁹ + But Saul and his *wi*soldiers ^bspared ^{on} Agag and ^{on} the best of the flock and the herd, + the ^Mstout fatlings^s and ^{on} the butting lambs, and ^{on} all that was good, and they would not doom them. + As for any property that was despised and ~rejected~, they doomed it.

¹⁰ + The word of Yahweh ^bcame to Samuel, > saying-, ¹¹ I regret that I caused Saul to reign as king, for he has turned ^{af}away from following Me and has not carried out My ^{sp}commands.

+ Now > Samuel grew ^{hot}angry and he ^bcried out to Yahweh all that night. ¹² + When Samuel ^crose early to meet Saul in the morning, + then > Samuel was ^btold, > saying-, that Saul had ⁱⁿgone to ^dCarmel + ^{bd}where he ^cerected a monument^l as a signpost to himself. + Then he had turned about and ^bpassed on and ^bdescended to Gilgal.

¹³ + Samuel ^bcame to Saul, ⁷+ just ^{bd}when he' had ^cof-fered up an ascent approach to Yahweh of the first of the loot ^wthat he had taken from Amalek. + When Samuel came ^bnear to Saul^o, + then Saul ^bsaid to him, Blessed^l be you > by Yahweh! I have carried out the command of Yahweh. ¹⁴ + Samuel ^{sa}replied, What + then is this bleating of

the flock in my ears, and the lowing of the herd ^wthat I am hearing? ¹⁵ + Saul ^{sa}answered, ^{7I} have brought them from the Amalekite, ^wbecause the *wi*soldiers spared ^{on} the best of the flock and the herd in order to sacrifice them to Yahweh your Elohim. + Yet we have doomed the rest^l. ¹⁶ + Samuel ^{sa}replied to Saul, Hold back and let me ^btell > you ^wwhat Yahweh spoke to me last night. + Then he ^bsaid to him, Speak.

¹⁷ + So Samuel ^{sa}apprised ^{7Saul}cs: Is it not true that ^{if}though you were small in your own eyes, you became head of the tribes of Israel? + Yahweh ^banointed you as king over Israel, ¹⁸ and Yahweh ^bsent you ⁱon a ^{way}mission, + ^bsaying, Go and doom those sinners, the Amalekite; + ^bfight against them until ^{7you}cs have ^{all}finished them. ¹⁹ + Then why did you not hearken ⁱto the voice of Yahweh? + Why did you ^bpounce on the loot and ^bdo what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh? ²⁰ + Saul ^{sa}replied to Samuel, ^wBecause I hearkened ⁱto the voice of ^{7the} *wi*soldiers-. + When I ^bwent ⁱon the ^{way}mission on which Yahweh sent me, + I ^bbrought back Agag, the king of Amalek, and I doomed Amalek. ²¹ + Yet the *wi*soldiers ^btook from the loot some small cattle and large cattle, the first parts of what had been doomed, to sacrifice to Yahweh your Elohim ⁱat Gilgal.

²² + But Samuel ^bsaid,

Does Yahweh > have as much delight
in ascent offerings and sacrifices
As in hearkening- ⁱto the voice of Yahweh?
Behold, to hearken- is better ^fthan sacrifice,
To ^cpay attention ^fthan the fat of rams.

²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
+ Insubordination-, like the lawlessness of teraphim.
Because you rejected the ^{sp}command of Yahweh,
He has + also ^brejected you from ^{7b}being-^o king
⁷over Israel^o.

²⁴ + Saul ^{lsa}replied to Samuel, I have sinned, for I have ^ptransgressed ^tthe bidding of Yahweh and ^your ^{sp}instructions, ^tbecause I feared ^tthe ^{wi}soldiers and I ^lhearkened ^tto their voice. ²⁵ + Now I pray, bear ^twith my sin and return with me, so ⁺that I may prostrate myself ^ybefore Yahweh ^tyour Elohim^s. ²⁶ + But Samuel ^lsaid to Saul, I shall not return with you, for you rejected ^tthe ^{sp}command of Yahweh, ⁺so Yahweh has ^lrejected you from ^bbeing-king over Israel.

²⁷ + As Samuel turned ^laround to ^{go}leave, ⁺ ^tSaul^Q ^cheld ^lfast ^tto the hem of his robe, and it was ^ltorn. ²⁸ + Samuel ^lsaid to him, Yahweh has torn ^tthe kingship over Israel ^{om}away from you today and has given it to an associate of yours ^twho is ^{better} ^fthan you. ²⁹ + Moreover, the Permanent One of Israel does not ^mdeal ^lfalsely and ^tthe Holy One of Israel^Q does not ^{repent}, for He is not like a human ^ythat He should ^{repent}.

³⁰ + But ^tSaul^Q ^{lsa}pleaded, I have sinned, ⁺yet^s now, I pray, ^mbring glory to me in front of the elders of my people and in front of Israel. ⁺ Return with me, so ⁺that I may prostrate myself ^ybefore Yahweh your Elohim. ³¹ + So Samuel ^lturned back, following after Saul, and Saul ^lprostrated himself ^ybefore Yahweh. ³² + Then Samuel ^lsaid, ^cBring close to me ^tAgag king of Amalek. ⁺ Agag ^lwent to him haltingly. And Agag ^lsaid, ^{so}Surely the bitterness of death has withdrawn. ³³ + Samuel ^{lsa}replied, Just as your sword has bereaved other women, so shall your mother be bereaved ^famong women. And Samuel ^lcut down ^tAgag before Yahweh ⁱat Gilgal.

³⁴ + Then Samuel ^lwent to^d ^tRamah; ⁺as for Saul, he went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. ³⁵ + Samuel did not come again to see ^tSaul until the day of his death, though Samuel mourned for Saul, ⁺because Yahweh regretted that He had ^cmade ^tSaul king over Israel.