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**MAY, 2000**

**Volume XCI**

**Number 3**



UNSEARCHABLE RICHES, volume 91, number 3, May, 2000, Portable Document Format (PDF) Edition, for use with Acrobat® Reader. Copyright © Concordant Publishing Concern, 15570 Knochaven Road, Santa Clarita, CA 91350, U.S.A. This publication may be reproduced for personal use (all other rights reserved by copyright holder).

**UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR MAY 2000  
BEING THE THIRD NUMBER OF VOLUME NINETY-ONE**

**EDITORIAL**

BROTHER A. E. Knoch's 20-page article, "What is Judgment?" originally appearing in *Unsearchable Riches*, volume 34, pages 315-334, is excerpted in the present issue under the title "The Object of Divine Judgment." I hope that the abridgment will invite a wider consideration of this important study in our own times. But I recognize that, in the process of editing, some helpful insights have been omitted. I have been mulling over one paragraph in particular among those deleted, and would like to share it here in this editorial. Brother Knoch was commenting, in a personal way, on his translation work:

"I have been the center of much friction in connection with the translation and interpretation of God's Word. My experience has taught me some valuable lessons. Each critic, of course, considers himself right. I have noticed that those who are gracious, diffident, and reluctant, usually are right. Those who are confident, or insistent, or impatient, often are not. And those who are self-assertive, absolutely sure, and abusive, even when they are capable, are almost always wrong. It is just the reverse of what should be expected. A humble spirit seems a better safeguard than great gifts. One thing is sure, it leads to harmony and truth, while pride precipitates strife, and promotes error" (p.326).

This, of course, is a conclusion based on human observation, but it does accord with Paul's instruction concerning the believers' disposition toward others: We should be "mutually disposed, having mutual love . . . with humility, deeming one another superior to one's self" (Phil. 2:2,3; *cp* Eph.4:1-3; Col.3:12,13). In our association with

others, especially with fellow believers, the humble recognition that we are sinners saved in grace, gratuitously justified through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus (see p.107) is vitally appropriate. But this is important also in such service in the Lord as Scripture translation, evangelizing and teaching. Yet in this context Paul does not stress a spirit of humility but one of boldness. Hence he reminded Timothy: “God gives us not a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and of sanity” (2 Tim.1:7).

A spirit of power, love and sanity is not opposed to a spirit of humility. No matter what we are doing we must never forget that, like Paul, we are what we are by the grace of God (1 Cor.15:10). Indeed God has His ways of bringing us into “wilderness experiences” as He did David (see p.135) where our ministries may seem drastically curtailed (as Paul’s was in prison), and these certainly teach humility.

But the point is that a spirit of humility is not identical with a spirit of timidity. Brother Knoch speaks boldly against the “orthodox” doctrine of hell (p.101). I call the same teaching “unfaithfulness” (p.115). Similarly, starting on page 117, Brother Coram exposes errors in thinking and in interpreting God’s Word. This is not being “self-assertive” but assertive for the word of truth. It is not being “abusive” but being filled with a desire to help others in pulling down bulwarks against the evangel of Christ (*cf* 2 Cor.10:4).

Whether or not we always succeed in following these ideals we are thankful for what God’s grace has done for us, and we do not forget in dealing with human opposition that only God can open eyes to the truth. We are blessed with astounding blessings (*cf* p.129) which we long for our fellow believers to recognize. There are definite dangers, to be sure, in heralding revelations which are widely rejected and opposed. But God is working all together for our good, and ultimately for the good of all.

D.H.H.

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*The Just Judgments of God*

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### THE OBJECT OF DIVINE JUDGMENT

IT IS A SAD COMMENTARY on the human race to find that the word “judgment” is so unstable and liable to deterioration. This must be because men are so unjust and vindictive themselves. The word has come to mean condemnation and punishment almost exclusively, when it ought to be neutral. How seldom is it used in a good sense among us! It will be worth a good deal of effort to restore its true meaning, if only to keep us from distorting it in connection with the great white throne. Let us note first what company it keeps in the Greek Scriptures.

The Pharisees were not slow to *condemn* others. Yet our Lord rebuked them for passing over *judgment* and the *love of God*. They neglected the reparatory side of judgment. The *poor* (Prov.29:14; Psa.72:4) they failed to judge, and the *fatherless* (Isa.1:23; Psa.10:18); that is, they did not protect them in their rights. Our Lord combined *judgment* with *mercy* and *faith*. These, the weightier matters of the law, they neglected. Such a “judgment” certainly did not mean punishment. Instead of so judging, the scribes devoured widows’ houses, though they were swift to condemn those who did not keep the traditions (Mark 12:40).

Perhaps the best place to show that judgment is always *right*, is found in Abraham’s appeal to the Lord, when He spoke of the state of Sodom. The AV reads, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do *right*?” (Gen.18:25). I agree that they expressed the sense correctly, yet I deplore the fact that, in doing so, they passed up a notable opportunity of anchoring the true meaning of the word *judgment* in

our language. The Hebrew reads, "the Judge of the whole earth, is He not doing *judgment*?" It is clear that anything wrong would not be judgment in Abraham's eyes. If anyone in Sodom should suffer unjustly that would not be *judgment*, and would be wrong. *There is absolutely no injustice in divine judgment.* It is rather, *the righting of what is already wrong.*

#### THE CONDEMNATION OF ALL

About a dozen times the AV renders the word *judgment condemnation* or *damnation*. This itself is to be drastically *condemned*, for when the translators damned others, they themselves were far more guilty, because they sinned against light and mutilated the most precious possession of mankind. With this before him, the editor of the Concordant Version text was inclined to choose the word *judge* rather than *condemn*, when the reading of the original was not absolutely certain. In the final occurrence of *judge*, dealing with the fate of those before the great white throne (Rev.20:13); however, he was compelled against his inclination to read *condemn*, where the AV has simply *judge*. The Greek texts differ at this place, but the best of them, Sinaiticus, reads *condemn*. In this text there are many omissions and, as the three letters (*kat*) which make the difference, could easily be omitted, but hardly be added, they deserve a place, as they probably were found in the original. Even if rendered *judge*, the fact that all were condemned is clearly established from other passages.

The apostle Paul makes it clear that Adam's one offense brings condemnation to all mankind (Rom.5:18). Not only shall God *judge* the world (Rom.3:6), but not one will be found just—not even one (Rom.3:10). One sin brought condemnation (Rom.5:16). These things are racial, and go back to Adam for their origin and scope. It is not an individual matter. The great white throne judging does

not determine this. It was known long before. It simply confirms the previous verdict, after considering the acts of those who inherited mortality from Adam. The same is true of justification. It will not depend on the acts of those who enjoy it, but upon Christ, and *His* obedience. When Paul, upon a later occasion, speaks of condemnation, he makes it worldwide (1 Cor.11:32). Moreover, everyone who accepts Christ thereby acknowledges condemnation apart from Him. Only in Christ Jesus is any mortal of Adam's race free from condemnation (Rom.8:1).

"Punishment" is a word that I have come to hate, for men have so fearfully misused it of God's operations. Once we see that all of God's dealings are with a view to the eventual reconciliation of all, the idea of punitive retribution, introduced by corrupt theology, will become abhorrent. If the great white throne sentenced all those who stand before it to eternal torment or annihilation, such a thought might be entertained. But we must remember that the object of all God's operations are rooted in love and fruited in reconciliation. If God is love, He cannot be "orthodox." The experience before the great white throne must prepare each one for the consummation, for that is what lies before him. Before there can be a universal reconciliation, each one must be set right with God, and this is accomplished at the judging. Such, indeed, is the true meaning of judgment, which is almost lost, because of the penal character of human adjudication.

The orthodox "hell" completely nullifies all judging and justice. What is the sense of bringing anyone before a judge if he has already been suffering torment for a thousand years and is due to undergo the same eternally, no matter what his sentence is? Such a system would not be tolerated even among the most unjust and cruel of mankind. Justice demands that the sentence suit the crime. It must be adaptable to the most innocent infant as well as the

most ungodly adult. This is impossible if the term is infinite, for infinity does not admit of gradations. Moreover it is highly immoral to torment anyone without some useful end. A man who would be guilty of such a thing would be adjudged mad, and confined to an asylum.

#### RIGHT AND WRONG

What is right and what is wrong? There are multitudinous questions which crowd into our daily life, and which must be set right before the great white throne. The debts of the unbeliever, his unfulfilled obligations, his trespasses, his crimes, as they affect his fellow men may be very great as viewed from the usual standpoint, but the enormity of his obligations to God throw these debts into the background, and they are judged automatically, as a rule, when God's claims are settled. The few actual previews we have been given of the judging are not so much concerned with questions between man and man, but between man and God. Those very wicked cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, on which men would pass the severest sentence, will be treated with more toleration than those cities in our Lord's day which rejected one of the twelve disciples of Christ. The implication is that they were on a much higher plane of morality than the cities of the plain, which were destroyed by fire for their iniquity (Matt.10:15). But this may refer to kingdom judgments, commencing the thousand years. So it was with cities in which our Lord did most of His mighty deeds. They would not receive the consideration shown to Tyre and Sidon, because they did not give Christ His rightful place when He appeared among them.

Ninevites and the queen of the south did not live at the same time as the men of our Lord's generation, and they will not have a place in the kingdom, so that, in this case (*cf* Matt.12:41,42), we seem certain that we have an actual preview of the great white throne judgment. Our Lord did

not bring up the personal sins of anyone, though the Ninevites probably had plenty of them. The crucial point is, How did they treat the representative of God? The contrast is a double one. Jonah and Solomon cannot compare with the far greater Prophet and King Who was rejected by Israel. The Ninevites *repented* at Jonah's heralding, and the queen of the south *came to hear* Solomon, while the men of that generation *rejected* Christ. Condemnation will come to those of His generation because of their failure to treat God's Anointed rightly. This will overshadow their individual iniquities. But we may be sure that, when they see Him on the judgment throne, they will not only accept the condemnation of the Ninevites, but will condemn themselves, and their whole lives, and thus be set right in their attitude toward God, which is the prime necessity preceding their reconciliation.

The fundamental and underlying sin is the failure to have God in recognition (Rom.1:28). The judgment is not primarily to set right the relations between man and man. That is accomplished indirectly by bringing the sinner into a realization of God. Believers are exempt from judging because they have already acknowledged God. Men who seem to be moral and who appear to lead an exemplary life cannot escape the judging, for they still need to realize their great lack and their failure to give God His place, apart from which He cannot be All in them.

#### GOD'S RIGHTS ARE PARAMOUNT

The only possible way to determine right from wrong is to acknowledge first of all the place and purpose of God. None of our rights can rest on injustice to Him. We cannot have any clear idea of the nature of the great white throne judgment unless we know what will accrue to God by means of it. Perhaps the most terrible misconception of its function has come from the unscriptural and abomi-

nable teaching that all who are judged will be tormented forever in the lake of fire which follows it. In that case it is utterly futile and harmful, and so it is sheer injustice to God, for He will lose all and gain nothing as a reward for His vast expenditure of creative power and provision. The injustices that men have practiced toward men—and how great is the sum of them!—not all of them together would amount to so unspeakable an injustice as that men's acts should not be righted in their relation toward the *Deity*, so that *He* may reap the harvest of His work.

What is right? Man has no standard by which to determine this except the feeble flicker of conscience and the monitions of nature. We will probably discover, some day, that most of his rights were wrongs, and even that which seemed altogether right contained an admixture of wrong. This is difficult to discuss unless we take a concrete example. The best is property rights. You have a certificate of title to a piece of land. You can trace its ownership back until someone took it “by right of discovery” perhaps. But what right is that? The land was created by God, and belongs to Him until He gives a valid title, which He will never do because you cannot pay for it, and it is not for sale. Property rights! They will never be right until they revert into the hands of the only rightful Owner and Creator. All human rights will be found only in Him. So He will become their all.

The fatal failure in almost all human justice is that the relations between men are adjusted without any regard for the rights of the Creator, the Sustainer, the true Beneficiary. All is *for Him*, first of all. This modifies and may cancel every right that we seek to claim for ourselves. The innumerable and inextricable maze of man's inhumanity to man would present an almost impossible and interminable problem at the judgment if human rights were not adjusted to God's.

The Son of God will be there to affectionately press His Father's claims, which will open the eyes of mankind to see that the “rights” for which they otherwise would contend are selfishness, egotism, unfounded pride, the repudiation of God's rights. The Pharisee will not stand up in the judgment to boast in his tithes. He once imagined that he had settled his score with God, that he had given Him what was right. Then he will see that he had robbed God of nine-tenths of His due, for *all* that he had was a gift from the All-Sufficient. The Pharisee prayed to himself, and was well pleased with his treatment of the Lord, but all his righteousness was iniquity (Luke 18:11,12).

The tribute collector did not talk to himself, or compare himself with others, but anticipated the judgment by renouncing all claims to righteousness. He had no confidence in himself that he was just, so asked only for a propitiatory shelter. Yet *he* was justified, rather than the Pharisee (Luke 18:13,14). I suppose that, from the merely human viewpoint, this was a gross miscarriage of justice. The Pharisee probably was an exemplary character, who tried to keep the law, and was orthodox in his interpretation of the Scriptures. He claimed that, if others were unjust, he was not. Under ordinary circumstances such people would rise in the judging and contend for their own righteousness. The Pharisees would insist that they are right and the tribute collectors are wrong. What an endless debate there would be if all of those before the great white throne should try to settle all disputes among themselves as they do in this life! But if all is made bare and open, the opposite will be the case. All will be condemned by the realization of their utter failure to be just to God.

#### GOD'S JUST JUDGING

In contrast to human judgments, our Lord emphasized the character of His judging. It is always *just* and

*true* (John 5:30; 7:24; 8:16). He will not condemn without cause. Indeed, it would almost seem as if, in judging, He will not need to condemn at all, for men themselves will attend to this (compare Rom.2:3). Ninevite men, who heard and heeded the heralding of Jonah, will condemn those who heard and did not heed our Lord. The queen of the south will condemn them also, for she came from far to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and they would not listen to the One Who is the Wisdom of God (Matt.12:41,42). I am practically certain that the judging will be of such a nature that all will condemn each other, and be themselves condemned when all is exposed and made bare in the presence of the great white throne.

Today all is camouflaged. No act is seen as it is. Sin seeks to work in secret. Motives behind men's acts are hid. Men pay more attention to the outward appearance than to the inward reality. In the judging this will be reversed. Everything that is now covered shall be revealed. What is hidden shall be made known (Matt.10:26; Mark 4:22; Luke 12:2). Then the hidden things of humanity will be judged (Rom.2:16).

This will probably reverse many a human judgment automatically, without any tedious investigations, or any attempts to evade or distort the open evidence. To my mind this, though painful, will be most wholesome for all concerned, and is absolutely essential to their future welfare. There can be no consummation without it. No reconciliation with God can be considered apart from it. How can God be All in anyone who harbors secret sin, and who does not begin to realize how far he falls short of His holiness? Once we see that judging is the necessary preparation for reconciliation, we will not only bear with it, or acquiesce in it, but we will be thankful for it, and praise God for this provision.

A. E. Knoch

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*If One Died For the Sake of All*

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### THROUGH OUR LORD, JESUS CHRIST

As we follow Paul's presentation of the evangel in Romans we are directed more and more to the conviction that God is wise and good, loving and righteous, and powerful beyond the most optimistic of human imaginings and hopes. Regarding the destiny of the human race as a whole we are prepared for the conclusion of Romans 5:18,19 long before it is given.

We have already noted that God's righteousness is revealed and made manifest in the evangel (Rom.1:17; 3:21). All mankind are sinners and can never be justified by human efforts (Rom.1:18-3:20,23), but since Christ died for the irreverent (Rom.5:6) we may anticipate that "life's justifying" will be granted for all mankind as we are told specifically in Romans 5:18, and that the "many" who are constituted sinners through Adam's disobedience will be constituted just through the obedience of Christ (5:19).

Despite more than nineteen centuries of wear and tear, failures in translation, stumblings in heralding and obscurities in understanding, this evangel set forth in Romans still stands sure and uncompromising. God's good news concerning His power, righteousness and love channeled through the death of His Son for sinners is still there in His Word, and is still being heralded even if often mixed with error:

#### THROUGH JESUS CHRIST'S FAITH

It is the evangel of God *concerning His Son Jesus Christ* that Paul is announcing. The good that is in the good news is built upon *the work of Jesus Christ*, upon His faithful-

ness and obedience in His death for sinners, followed by His resurrection out from among the dead.

The evangel tells us: God's righteousness is manifest *through Jesus Christ's faith* (Rom.3:22). In light of the fact that all sin (3:23), justification can be gained and granted in only one way, gratuitously in God's grace, *through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus* (3:24). *Jesus our Lord was given up* because of our offenses, *and was roused* because of our justifying (Rom.4:25). For *Christ*, while we are still infirm, still in accord with the era, for the sake of the irreverent, *died*. (Rom.5:6). God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, *Christ died for our sakes* (5:8). We are justified *in His blood* (5:9). We were conciliated to God *through the death of His Son* (5:10). We are glorying also in God, *through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom* we now obtained the conciliation (5:11). *Through the obedience of the One*, the many who were constituted sinners through Adam's disobedience, shall be constituted just (Rom.5:19).

The fact that Jesus Christ died for sinners is the most sacred tenet of our faith, the most important and most central revelation of the evangel. The Son of God has faithfully and obediently endured the fearful shame of the cross and has died for us all. This is what was required for the salvation of sinners, and this is what He has done.

#### CHRIST DIED FOR SINNERS

What Christ did was fearful, but what He accomplished is so vast and good that we cannot comprehend its full significance. Yet that does not mean we should not try to grasp its glory and seek prayerfully to appreciate its meaning for us and the entire world, and for God, at least as far as this is made known in the Scriptures.

In these studies I am focusing on the meaning of Christ's death for humanity as a whole. I see that Christ died for

all, and I believe this must finally result in good for all. This is important not because I want to win an argument or exalt myself over someone else, but because of what it means to God and to the believer. It glorifies God, exhibiting His evangel as it truly is, as God's good news. Furthermore, the good this truth does for the believer especially in these times of indifference to God and the revelation of Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ, is incalculable.

All of the passages cited above from Romans tell us of God's way of righteously justifying sinners. He does this *through the death of Jesus Christ*, followed by His *glorious resurrection*. This is the channel and the only channel through which God brings about a righteous elimination of sin and a righteous establishment of a righteous human race.

This is made clear in Romans 5:12-19, but even before that exultant shout of triumph over sin and death, the apostle sets forth the evangel as a work of God that is bound to bring good to all. It is because the evangel centers on God's achievement through the gift of His Son for sinners that we trust this achievement will embrace all.

#### JUSTIFIED GRATUITOUSLY

Immediately after, and grammatically connected with, the declaration that all sin and are wanting of the glory of God, we are told that God's achievement in justifying sinners through the deliverance which is Jesus Christ is *gratuitous* as far as human works and deservings are concerned (Rom.3:23,24). The death of Christ is the means of deliverance. God purposed Him as the great Antitype of the propitiatory shelter which in the Hebrew Scriptures spoke of access to God opened up by the sprinkling of the blood of animals (Rom.3:25; cf Lev.16:1-16). Justification is out of the faith of Jesus (Rom.3:26); it is solely based on Christ's faithfulness in dying for sinners; it is not due to our works or even our faith.

The gratuity of justification as far as human actions are concerned is made doubly clear in Romans 3:27 where the apostle concludes, "Where, then, is boasting? It is debarred!" Justification is in the blood of Christ (*cf* Rom.5:9), not in the activities of humanity. It is so gratuitous that there is no room whatsoever for us to do something in which we could boast.

Boasting is debarred because of "faith's law" (Rom. 3:28). It might be supposed at first that Paul is placing us under a law which says, "You must believe in order to be justified." But no, if that were so, then we could boast in carrying out a law that tells us what we must do. "Faith's law" is the authoritative truth that says, "You are justified gratuitously in God's grace through the deliverance that is in Christ Jesus." It does not speak of requirements placed upon us, but rather it is a law that operates upon us from outside ourselves (even as, for instance, the law of gravity operates and influences us) as we believe what God tells us. As we believe that we are justified gratuitously, apart from our works, boasting in ourselves is effectively evicted.

#### DELIVERANCE IN CHRIST JESUS

But the gratuity of justification applies not only to the believer. If our present believing does not earn the justification which comes through Jesus Christ's death, so also anyone's present failure to believe does not lose the justification that comes through Jesus Christ's death.

The deliverance which is in Christ Jesus is deliverance *from* sin and *from* our want of God's glory, and it is deliverance *into* justification. It is not that we made our way from sin to righteousness, but that God delivered us from the one to the other. And He did so in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. This deliverance is not established by our believing, but by the faithfulness of our Lord and Saviour. It is reckoned to us when we believe (*cf* Romans

4), and so we begin to enjoy its authoritative effects, but it has been gained as the divine response to the fact that all sin and are wanting of the glory of God.

#### POSSIBLE, PROVISIONAL AND POTENTIAL

If we are believing that Christ died for our sins, that He was entombed and has been roused the third day, we are not now making it true by our believing it. If we are believing that we are justified gratuitously through the deliverance that is in Christ Jesus, we are agreeing that it is already so that there is deliverance in Christ Jesus into gratuitous justification.

Some will speak of justification as possible or provisional or potential for all, but never to become actual for all. If such terms are used in order to allow for eternal damnation of some sinners, we must object. The motive is all wrong. Restrictions and doubts are being introduced on the basis of wrong translation and false assumptions. If such terms must be used, the believer will say that what God has made *possible* will become actual, and what God has made *potential* will be realized. If God has *provided* for the salvation of sinners in the death of His Son, sinners will be saved. There is no place in the evangel for doubts as to its goodness. There is no warrant for believers limiting the gratuitous justification which is established in God's grace through the deliverance that is in Christ Jesus.

#### CHRIST DIED FOR THE IRREVERENT

The gratuity of justification makes it difficult to maintain that some people will be condemned forever because of what they themselves did or did not do. Similarly, the fact that Christ died for the irreverent (Rom.5:6) makes it difficult to maintain that Christ died only for the elect.

God does justify us whom He designates beforehand and calls (Rom.8:29,30); but Christ died for us as sinners

(Rom.5:8), not simply as His chosen ones. In proclaiming the evangel Paul identifies us with all mankind. We are not distinguished from the unbeliever in our need for a Saviour, and the fifth chapter of Romans is especially forceful on this point. Christ died for us who are infirm, irreverent, sinners and enemies, and in this respect we are no different from anyone else.

Romans 1:18 speaks of God's indignation against the *irreverence* and *injustice* of humanity. Romans 5:6 speaks of Christ dying for the sake of the *irreverent* in connection with being *justified*. There in a nutshell is the need for the evangel and the provision for that need made in God's gift of His Son. We must not forget that we are part of that race of descendants of Adam who are effecting evil and are unable to stand justified in God's sight by works of law. We have this in common with all mankind, and it is with respect to what we have in common with all that Christ died for us. It is wholly mistaken to suggest, as some seem to suggest, that Christ's death for us distinguishes us from sinners who remain unbelievers during their present lives. God's choice and designation beforehand of us do distinguish us as objects of His grace in the present and in the oncoming eons, but we are not distinguished from the rest of humanity with respect to the evangelical pronouncement that Christ died for the irreverent and infirm, for their justification.

#### THE FOCAL POINT OF FAITH

The cross of Christ should always be the focal point of our faith. We begin by believing the evangel of our salvation, that Christ died for our sins and was roused on the third day. Then as we mature we see how central that revelation is to our "walking in newness of life" as Paul shows in Romans 6:2-11. The evangel concerning the death and resurrection of Christ is basic to our walk and expecta-

tion, but it is also the fundamental issue in the matter of the destiny of all mankind.

So it is puzzling to find believers speaking of the death of Christ in a restricted way. In his book offering "A Case for Unlimited Atonement," where he takes up the question of whether Christ died for all or for only the elect, Robert Lightner assures us that "the cross was not an accident which defeated the purpose of God or which caught Him off guard. It is true that Christ was crucified by wicked hands, but it is also true that He was 'delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God . . .' (Acts 2:23) and 'slain from the foundation of the world' (Rev.13:8). If the crime and gloom of Golgotha are evidenced by the sin committed there, the glory is seen in the divine accomplishments and exaltation of the Savior. For the Father took Christ, the rejected one, and brought triumph to Himself through the very event men view as a tragedy. He took the gloom and sorrow and turned it into glory, grace and salvation."

Yet almost immediately after bringing this evangel to the readers' attention, Dr. Lightner declares that "Evangelicals on both sides [Calvinists and Arminians] agree that not all will be saved."<sup>1</sup>

This is certainly *not* an evangelical way in which to proceed with a discussion of the meaning of the death of Christ. God's triumph spoken of so clearly and evangelically on one page is narrowed and restricted and tragically darkened by the strange and unaccountable stand of "Evangelicals" recorded a page or so later. The evangel is no longer the premise of the discussion. Acts 2:23 and Revelation 13:8 are made submissive to human philosophy. God's determinate counsel in the giving up of

1. Robert P. Lightner, *THE DEATH CHRIST DIED*, (Regular Baptist Press, Schaumburg IL, 1967, pages 29,30,33).

His Son to death included, in the view of “Evangelicals,” the premise that not all will be saved. The One Who was slain, in this “view of the atonement,” did not remove the greatest gloom of all and turn it into glory and salvation.

Another writer, R. B. Kuiper, dealing with the same matter in a “Study of the Divine Design of the Atonement” finds that the Scriptures “unmistakably” teach “the eternal punishment of the wicked.” Consequently, he agrees that not all will be saved. But in this case there is a recognition that the death of Christ must have some good effects for all, even the unbeliever. “Certain benefits of the atonement accrue to men generally, including the non-elect.”<sup>2</sup> The difficulty comes in defining these benefits and then in scripturally relating them to the death of Christ. Expressions such as “common grace” and “universal offer of salvation,” are introduced, but the real problem still remains: Since all mankind are sinners and irreverent, and Christ’s death for the irreverent is the basis for gratuitous justification, how can the believer believe some sinners will not be saved but will suffer forever in hell?

All these efforts to find scriptural evidence for “common grace” or a kind of “universal reconciliation” that will exclude salvation for those in hell would be much better spent in examining the evidence for possible mistakes in understanding passages dealing with judgment. In that way it could very well be found that God’s works of judgment are affected for good by the obedience of Christ. In any case, these works of judgment cannot alter the plain meaning of the evangel. Christ died for sinners.

#### THE EVANGELICAL PREMISE

As long as we keep to the premise of the evangel we will

<sup>2</sup> R. B. Kuiper, *FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?* Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI, pp.16,78).

not be led astray concerning God’s goal for all mankind. If our premise is that Christ died for irreverent and unrighteous humanity, so that God’s righteousness is made manifest in gratuitous justification, we cannot end up supposing that God’s Word teaches, or even allows for, the everlasting loss of anyone. If, for instance, Matthew 25:46 or 2 Thessalonians 1:9 suggest such a calamity to us, then there is a problem of translation or of our understanding of these passages, or some other failure in human thinking. Let God be true, and every man a liar!

Believers who believe that Christ died for their sins must never build on the premise that not all will be saved. That is as presumptive as it is pessimistic. Even more so it is unscriptural and contrary to the evangel that we believe. It is unfaithfulness.

But it is not surprising. Like Israel of old our faith wavers, and we become discouraged and disheartened by what we see all around us of sin and corruption and insubjection and disdain toward God and our Lord Jesus Christ. We are all prone to be influenced more by what we see than by what God has said in His evangel which we believe. This is how the Adversary deceives us. We judge by present experiences and situations which are apparent to us and not by the Word of God.

It will be objected that it is the Bible that speaks of divine indignation and judgments, of death and Gehenna and the lake of fire. But it is the gracious privilege and glorious advantage of the believer to see all these consequences of human sin in light of the evangel that Christ died for sinners.

In considering the unbelief and sinfulness of humanity and God’s just judgments of unbelievers and sinners, our premise should not be that all will not be saved but that Christ died for all. The sinfulness of the human race is great, and God’s judgments of humanity is serious and sure.

There can be no disputing that. But we who are believing that Christ died for our sins must bring this conviction into any consideration of the ultimate destiny of mankind.

#### EVANGELICAL OPTIMISM

Of all people, believers should be the most optimistic about ultimate human destiny. We see what a great change has come about because of God's grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. If for no other reason than that Christ died for a sinner like me, I must believe His death will bear its blessed fruit for all. It is because of the evangel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ that I know there is something radically wrong with the common translation and traditional interpretation of Matthew 25:46 and 2 Thessalonians 1:9 and similar passages.

The need of humanity is so great, the cost to our Lord so truly sufficient and the benefits so sure that we can harbor no doubts about the significance of what God has done *through His Son*. There can be no limitations in accomplishment and realization.

D.H.H.

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#### REPOSING IN CHRIST

Our brother, **Willard Breckenridge**, of McAllen, Texas, was put to repose on April 4, 2000, at age 84. He was one who meditated deeply on the Word of God and, like many saints of old, he often expressed his faith in what God has said in poetic terms. In this there is great consolation, not only for his wife, Berniece, who survives him, but for all who knew him.

Our friend Ron Voth of Oxnard California recently reported to us the passing of our brother in the Lord, **Terry O. Thompsen**, of Clinton, Washington, on May 7, 2000: "I had occasion to visit with Terry and his family just before his death. His wife Jan, and sons Per, Hans and Ian were with him when he succumbed. I knew Terry for 33 years. He was a strong believer in God's infinite grace, and an inspiration to all who had contact with him. It was he who introduced me to Dean Hough and the Concern way back in 1974."

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### Questions and Answers

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#### UNDERSTANDING AND ASSURANCE

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"CORRESPONDENT RANSOM"

"CORRECTLY CUTTING"

#### Question:

I long to be "sound in the faith," even as Paul instructs (Titus 2:2). Yet I realize that practically every teaching is disputed by someone, and, that the Concordant teaching is usually a minority view, often even an extreme minority view. Can you help me in my quest for understanding and assurance?

#### Answer:

IN our quest for faithfulness, let us realize and rejoice that, ultimately speaking, maturity in faith is not our own work but is the Lord's work in us. While the usual claim that the believer "must cooperate with the Holy Spirit" is, strictly speaking, true, yet as popularly understood, it is false. The self-control which one must exercise in order not to quench the spirit is itself the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:23). Therefore, if it may truly be said of us that we have been "cooperative," let us not boast in ourselves that this is so, but thank and praise God that this is so.

Each believer belongs to the Lord; thus we are His "slaves." Accordingly, we are, so to say, His "household servants" (AV), His "domestics" (CV, Rom.14:4). Since we are but domestics ourselves, it is not our place to be judging *Another's* domestic (Rom.14:4a). We are not in charge. Consequently, not to us, but "to his own Master he is standing or falling" (Rom.14:4b).

Concerning the fellow domestic who has been “infirm in the faith” (Rom.14:1), the good news is this: the time will come when “*he will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make Him stand*” (Rom.14:4c).

Accordingly, then, in our quest for a faithful walk, my best advice is to take Proverbs 4:7 to heart, which is: “The principal thing is *wisdom*; acquire wisdom, and with all your acquisition, acquire *understanding*.” Similar wise counsel is found in Proverbs 23:23: “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, [even as] wisdom and *discipline* and understanding” (Prov.23:23).

When we “understand” a certain thing, we truly discern its meaning. “Wisdom” is the faculty by which we make the highest and best application of knowledge. Since all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are concealed in God (Col.2:3), “the assurance of understanding” (Col.2:2) is that which we have when God makes our faith grow up (1 Cor.3:5-7). Until then, “it is the glory of Elohim to conceal a matter” (Prov.25:2).

A man cannot hunger and thirst for that for which he has no taste. Apart from desire—*sufficient* desire—we cannot and therefore will not apply ourselves sufficiently to reach our goal. While progress in the faith is *by* and *in* the grace of God, it is *through* our own efforts, according to our strongest desires. One who is wise, therefore, will realize that “a man cannot get anything if it should not be given him out of heaven” (John 3:27).

May the following thoughts be helpful to you in *slaving* for the living and true God, while *waiting* for His Son out of the heavens, Whom He rouses from among the dead, Jesus, our Rescuer out of the coming indignation (*cf* 1 Thess.1:9,10).

#### REALIZATION IN PRAYER

Just as proficiency in any field requires training and

experience, progress in the faith is impossible apart from *prayer* and education. This is God’s *way*; it is His “means of grace.” It is unrealistic and foolish to minimize the importance of either of these two entities.

In prayer, as in our walk in general, we are to become imitators of the apostle Paul; as he says, “according as I also am [an imitator] of Christ” (1 Cor.11:1). Thus we have the apostle “for a model” (Phil.3:17). We do well to note that his concerns and petitions to God are not for soul-ish welfare but for *spiritual enlightenment*. Among Paul’s most notable prayers are these; may they be our guide as we seek wisdom from above and spiritual understanding:

“Therefore, I also, on hearing of this faith of yours in the Lord Jesus, and that for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may be giving you *a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him*, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, for you to perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His allotment among the saints, and what the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing, in accord with the operation of the might of His strength” (Eph.1:15-19; *cp* 2 Cor.4:13).

“Be rejoicing *in the Lord* always! Again, I will declare, be rejoicing! Let your lenience be known to all men: the Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, that is superior to every frame of mind, shall be garrisoning your hearts and your apprehensions in Christ Jesus” (Phil.4:4-7).

“We are thanking the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always praying concerning you, on hearing of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints, because of the expectation reserved for you in the

heavens, which you hear before in *the word of the truth of the evangel*, which, being present with you, according as in the entire world also, *is bearing fruit and growing*, according as it is among you also, *from the day on which you hear and realized the grace of God in truth*, according as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow slave, who is *a faithful dispenser of Christ* for us, who makes evident to us *your love in spirit*.

“Therefore we also, from the day on which we hear, *do not cease praying for you* and requesting that you may be *filled full with the realization of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*, you to walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in *the realization of God*; being endued with all power, in accord with the might of His glory, *for all endurance and patience with joy*; at the same time *giving thanks to the Father*, Who makes you competent for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light” (Col.1:3-12).

#### FOUR VITAL QUESTIONS

In studying any passage of Scripture, we must always ask ourselves: (1) *What* does it say? (2) *Whom* does it concern? (3) *When* does it apply? and (4), *In what sense* is it true?

Unless we have no opinion at all concerning a certain subject, it will be impossible for us not to make some type of judgment concerning it with respect to these questions, even if we do not consciously rehearse these points or even know they exist. Therefore, it is by far the wiser course to keep these questions ever before us as we seek further light, and, as God grants it to us.

(1) *What* does it say? In order to judge correctly here it is essential that we learn the difference between an actual scriptural declaration and a mere human inference therefrom. We need to be especially clear as to the enormous difference between a *corollary* (that which, though not

expressed, must be true, in light of what *has* been said) and an *inference* (that which not only has not been expressed, but may well not be true at all, and, in any case, cannot be known to be true). We must not self-confidently presume that a writer is making an implication when it may well be that it is only we ourselves who are making an unwarranted inference.

It will not suffice to note that a certain translation may state a certain thing in a certain passage; for, for all their accord, there are many differences in rendering among translations, from one version to another. These differences are often by no means trivial or confined simply to choice of phrasing or even to significantly distinct ideas though only concerning minor points of teaching. To the contrary, in some cases, differences in translation declare completely opposite thoughts, even concerning subjects of the greatest consequence.

It is totally inadequate, not to mention dangerous, to approach the Word of God with no more in hand than the Authorized Version or some other all-too-frequently lawless and discordant translation. Indeed, we need much guidance and wisdom even with a faithful translation before us, and cannot hope to gain a good understanding without an accurate, concordant version.

If we would not blindly follow others, our only recourse, then, is to the authority of the Scriptures themselves, through a careful consideration of their own definitive usages of the words of inspiration. Such a pursuit entails, at minimum, at least some measure of intelligent, personal use of a concordance, one which provides access to all occurrences of those words of the Original concerning which the meaning is disputed.

(2) *Whom* does it concern? and (3) *When* does it apply? It does not follow from the fact that a certain revelation is “in the Bible,” is “in the New Testament,” or is included

among “the very words of Christ,” that such a revelation therefore concerns ourselves. *This may or may not be the case.* Furthermore, some things that have a vital application, whether for Israel or the nations, are nonetheless only applicable within a certain era or under a certain administration. They are not necessarily in effect continually and interminably even for those to whom they do apply, much less with respect to all.

Such important questions as these must be intelligently and patiently considered; we must endeavor not to make rash judgments, decisions that are the fruit of our own imprudence and impatience, according to our ignorance and prejudice.

For example, in the matter of determining the scope of those who come under the purview of any certain passage, the word “all” is frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted. It must be recognized that even where the word “all” or any other “universal” expression is used (e.g., “each,” “any,” or “every”), the reference is always to *all*—to “each” and “every” one—of *those who are in view* within the scope of the subject matter of the text in question.

In some instances, the reference is to all believers (or, as the case may be, to all saints, humans, or even creatures) without distinction—apart from any limitations—whether of era or administration. In other cases, either the actual *context* of a passage or the nature of the case *limits* the application of such “universal” terms. It limits them solely to all those of a certain group or class, to those living at a certain time or under a certain administration or economy. Similarly, it is essential to recognize that a phrase which possesses mere *close proximity* to a *different context*, is not at all the same thing as a phrase which is inherently a part of the subject being addressed.

(4) *In what sense* is it true? Even if we have succeeded in discerning what has been said, whom it concerns and

when it applies, we are not ready to come to a conclusion until we resolve the vital question which remains, *In what sense* is this declaration true? That is, is it to be understood literally or figuratively; absolutely or relatively; and, peremptorily or provisionally?

All literature is comprised *primarily* of literal expressions, even if many figurative expressions should also be employed. Indeed, without an understanding of the literal it is impossible to discern the message of the figurative, for literal meaning is the basis of figurative application.

Therefore, the adage “whenever possible, literal” is essentially sound advice. We would prefer to refine this slightly, however, and say, “Whenever *viable*—all things considered—literal.” Taking this approach will not close the door to the recognition of true figurative passages or otherwise diminish our insight to discern that which is *spiritual* (which is an entirely different matter from that which is *figurative*). To the contrary, it will form a sound basis for our study of literary figures and will tend toward awakening us to their presence. Though there are many figures of speech, by far the most common ones, metaphor and metonymy, are concerned, respectively, with either likeness to or association with the literal. Of course, when considering literal meaning, we must not confound essential *meaning* with derived *usage*. Similarly, we must note the difference between the many lexical *definitions* of a word’s usage, and the vital, definitive *essence* of the word itself, which distinguishes it from other expressions.

When judging between the literal and figurative, if, because it would entail absurdity or contradiction to take a phrase literally we are constrained to deem it figurative, we must still ask ourselves, Of what does the figure consist and what is the literal *idea* behind the figure, which it merely serves to convey?

Yet wherever there is no compelling reason to take a

statement figuratively and we therefore judge it to be literal, we must still decide whether this literal statement is *absolute* or *relative*. If we should judge it to be truly absolute, we must regard it as universally so, without limitation of any kind. If we should regard it as relative, we must decide the *scope* of the subject matter to which this literal statement may be *applied*. Few scriptural passages are fully absolute, without limitation of any kind, even if they should be practically absolute. And many statements are by no means absolute, but are true only as they relate to a certain subject. It is strictly a matter of wisdom and discernment, based upon our total knowledge of all facts that have a bearing on a matter, as to whether we should judge a statement in one way or another.

It will not suffice merely to make bold claims as to the significance of a passage, especially when, if the truth be known, we may never have realized that such a thing as varied senses in which a passage may be taken even exists.

All these matters are concerned with wise and astute judgment. They are matters of “interpretation,” which is merely to say they are matters concerning which we must make correct decisions. Though it is not *literally* true that “the Scriptures interpret themselves,” nonetheless, the spirit of this aphorism is certainly true, as expressed through this metonymical figure!

The literal idea intended is that if we would truly *understand* (i.e., make out the meaning of) a certain text, we must make many correct decisions concerning it as we are guided by the many related scriptural matters with which it is associated or otherwise connected or dependent.



**Question:**

Why, in 1 Timothy 2:6, did Mr. Knoch translate using the two words, “correspondent Ransom”? My wife

asked me, “What does that mean?” I told her that I did not know why Mr. Knoch chose to use two words; and since the single word here in the Greek, *antilutron*, is only found once, there is nothing else to compare it with. I figured that what was meant by “correspondent [Ransom],” is “equal to the whole,” or something similar. But it does not seem that the word “correspondent” was necessary in order to convey that thought, since it is followed immediately by “on behalf of all.”

**Answer:**

I am pleased that your wife asked about this, that I might share a few words with you both concerning it.

Please see the *Unsearchable Riches* article, “For or Instead?” concerning this question (vol.81, pp.145-151; this article also considers the Greek word *huper* [OVER, or “for the sake of”], and is quite helpful in responding to the common claim that Christ is our “substitute”).

While the compound *antilutron* only appears in 1 Timothy 2:6, *anti* is found in quite a few passages and *lutron* in several. The first element of *antilutron*, of course, is *anti*; it is sometimes rendered “for” in the CV (with a superior “id”)—in the sense of “an eye *for* an eye” (i.e., “an eye *corresponding to* an eye”).

The verb *lutroō* (LOOSEN) is translated either “ransom” or “redeem.” “Loosen’ is used many times in the Septuagint for each of two Hebrew words, *gal* (‘redeem’) and *phde* (‘ransom’). ‘Ransom’ is used only in relation to the claims of Yahweh, especially as to the firstborn of man and beast (Ex.13:13,15; 34:20; Num.3:46-49), as well as of vows involving death (Lev.27:3; 1 Sam.14:45).

“‘Redeem’ is used of human rights, as property (Ruth 4:4,6; Lev.25:25,54; 27:13,33), and the avenger (Num.5:8; 35:12,27). ‘Ransom’ involves the divine; ‘redeem,’ the human: the former is religious in scope; the latter, social,

and is seldom used in the later Scriptures (Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14)” (Keyword Concordance, p.239).

While, as a standard, we have assigned INSTEAD to *anti*, nevertheless, the essential thought, common to all contexts, is that of “corresponding to.”

For example, Matthew 2:22 contains the phrase, “hearing that Archelaus is reigning in Judea *in the stead of* his father Herod . . .” concerning which it is evident that the sense is that Archelaus was now reigning *in correspondence to* the fact that Herod was now dead.

Similarly, in Luke 11:11 Jesus declared: “Now of some father of you a son will be requesting bread. No stone will he be handing him! Or a fish, also. *Not, instead of* a fish, a serpent will he be handing him!” (Luke 11:11). Even as every father knows that there is no suitableness in giving a stone to a son who asks for bread, he likewise knows that there could be no fit correspondence in handing a serpent to a son who had requested a fish: “Not [in correspondency to] a fish, a serpent will he be handing him!” since he knows very well that there is no fitting correspondency in acting thus in response to such a request.

Hence it is evident that the literal “instead” should not be understood in the sense of a replacement or substitute, but in the sense of an equivalence or correspondence. For example, the phrase “an eye for [lit. “instead”] an eye” (Matt.5:38), does not have in view the *substitution* of the aggressor’s eye for his victim’s, so that the eye of the victim was spared, and only the aggressor’s eye was destroyed. “This was not true. Both eyes perished. One eye did not replace the other. The law demanded an *equivalent*, not a substitute.”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, in those instances where *anti* is idiomatically rendered “for,” the discerning reader will recognize that

<sup>1</sup> I. A. E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.81, p.148.

the sense, in fact, is “corresponding to.” Thus such passages constitute definitive evidence of the actual force of this word.

In order to incorporate the literal “instead” in the case of the common phrase “evil *for (anti)* evil,” we might, however awkwardly, express Romans 12:17 thus: “To no one render [a new act of] evil *in the stead of* [i.e., in correspondence to the former act of] evil.”

Thus, through these considerations of the essential meaning of *anti*, we learn that Christ is giving Himself as a “*corresponding-to-Ransom*” (i.e., idiomatically, as a “correspondent Ransom”), a *correspondent* Ransom which is given for the sake of *all*. That is, His sacrifice constitutes a ransom that *corresponds* to the needs of all sinners: a *Saviour* Who would die for the sake of *each and every* individual, and thus actually *save* each one for whom He died.



**Question:**

Since all of the New Testament is true and is written by Christians for Christians, how can you say that only part of it applies to us?

**Answer:**

All Scripture is truth for today concerning the subject with which it deals and with respect to those who are concerned in it. All Scripture is *for* us in the sense that it is in some way beneficial to us, whether for teaching, exposure, or correction; and it is all given to us with a view toward our instruction in righteousness (2 Tim.3:16), so that we might know what is true. This is all unto the end that the man of God might truly be “equipped, fitted out for every good act” (2 Tim.3:17).

Yet if we should wish truly to engage in *faithful* acts, we must come to “know that which concerns [ourselves]”

(Col.4:8), and to distinguish it from what does not concern us, insofar as any certain act of human obedience, divine blessing, curse, promise, warning, or other teaching is concerned.

It is by no means ideal for us to take to ourselves those things in the Bible which do not belong to us. Such practices are mere religious thievery, no matter how hallowed by antiquity. The apostle Paul refers to those who (however sincerely) were taking up with those things which are concerned with the flesh and with the nation of Israel, as “curs,” as “evil workers,” and entreats the Philippians to “beware” of them (*cf* Phil.3:2-9).

It is true that we must not contrive artificial distinctions, imagining differences that simply do not exist. Yet it is just as true that we must not fail to note and heed all genuine distinctions; no matter how many of our own traditions may have to be set aside as a result.

Misplaced truth becomes insidious error, for it seems to have scriptural support. As little as it may be heeded, at least the principle of proper application seems to be acknowledged among virtually all believers. For example, hardly any seek to apply *all* the laws of Moses to themselves, or even *all* the imperatives of the Lord Jesus, which He declared within the compass of His personal ministry to Israel. We have yet to hear of any today who wish to make either male circumcision or animal sacrifices compulsory for salvation. This is so however much these same ones may differ among themselves or seek to press other “requirements” into service unto the same end.

Therefore, nearly all, even if tacitly, at least assent to the *principle* of “correctly *cutting* the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), insofar as this entreaty has in view the fact that while all Scripture is for us, it is not all *to* us; it is not all applicable to believers today, to those who are the members of the body of Christ.

J.R.C.

## ELOHIM IS BLESSING

GOD’S GREAT WORK of blessing is mentioned three times in the opening portion of Genesis. In these references we see a further reflection of divine wisdom and power beyond what is revealed in His operations of creating and making, speaking and seeing, calling and separating. The activity of *blessing* is an expression of purpose for good which God has in view and intends to fulfill. We can also see a development in this activity starting with the prospect of good directly for the individual being blessed, going forward to the blessing of being a blessing to others, and culminating with a blessing that draws attention to the blessedness of God.

God’s work of blessing is first mentioned with His creative activities on the fifth day: “Elohim created the great sea monsters and all the moving living souls with which the waters swarm according to their kind. And Elohim saw that it was good. Elohim *blessed* them, saying: Be fruitful and increase; fill the waters in the seas, and let the flyers increase on earth” (Gen.1:21,22). Here Elohim blesses the creatures of the sea and air in multiplying them and making them prosper in their realms. This work of blessing is concerned with direct good to the creatures being blessed.

This activity of God is noted again on the sixth day with the creation of humanity: “Elohim *blessed* them, and Elohim said to them: Be fruitful and increase; fill the earth and subdue it. Hold sway over the fish of the sea and over the flyer of the heavens, over every domestic animal, over all the earth and over every animal that is moving on the

earth" (Gen.1:28). Here the blessing not only involves the personal prosperity of humanity which is being blessed, but also it is directed to the good of other creatures over which humanity is to hold sway. The good extends beyond the self to others.

The third reference to blessing takes us a step farther, beyond the self and beyond other creatures to God's blessing as it honors God. Thus we read in Genesis 2:3, "And Elohim *blessed* the seventh day and hallowed it, for in it He ceased from all His work that Elohim had created by making it."

#### GENESIS 1:22

The first occurrence of the verb *ble*ss in Scripture appears in Genesis 1:22. The Hebrew might be rendered more literally as follows: "And He is blessing, He, Elohim, them." Or, in order to bring out the distinctive verb form used here, we might even read the Hebrew verb as "He is *mak-ing* blessed." This will help to lay emphasis on the blessing being established in God's own activity and in accord with His skill and design.

The unadorned, direct wording of English idiom, "Elohim blessed them," is excellent in conveying the simple fact. The various features of the Hebrew verb which bring out thoughts of an on-going activity in accord with intelligent design add emphasis and clarification to the simple fact. Since it is Elohim Who blesses, the activity of a continuing *ble*ssing is that which accords with what Elohim is. And since it is Elohim Who is making these creatures blessed, we are becoming acquainted with Elohim through this activity.

The verb itself expresses a wish or desire. Yet when human beings bless God or one another, a sense of uncertainty often enters into the thought simply because of the limitations of humanity. In fact, the Hebrew word comes

to be used for the act of *kneeling* (cf 2 Chron.6:13; Psa. 95:6). It is connected with prayer as well as being a term of greeting and benediction. But because of Who He is, when God blesses, the desire is backed up by supreme power, divine design and certainty.

What is the good, then, that God desires and will certainly provide for the creatures of air and water? It is that they will increase and fill their environment. They will have and hold a specific and unique place in the world. They will be where they belong and prosper in accord with what is both fitting to their environment and pleasing to God. That is blessing indeed.

#### GENESIS 1:28

Humanity also is blessed with a unique place in the world, but this place is more specifically defined. It embraces more than abundance within a location. The place with which Elohim blesses humanity includes a position of positive function upon the earth. Not only does God bless humanity with the prospect of fruitfulness and increase, but He gives them a distinctive and beneficial place in relation to the other creatures. This blessing of position over other creatures is neither a challenge to the human nor a ground for human pride. *It is a work of God*. The fact that humanity is not presently subduing and swaying over the lower creatures in any ideal sense does not mean that it will not be blessed in holding this place effectively for good. It is God Who blesses humanity with this function.

Furthermore, God's blessing of humanity is for the good of the earth and all creatures of the earth. God's blessing of humanity gives humanity the blessing of being a blessing.

In the meantime creation is subjected to vanity by God "in expectation that the creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (cf Rom.8:18-25). The promise of

Genesis 1:28 will be fulfilled, as we are reminded by God's blessing of the seventh day in Genesis 2:3.

God always brings His blessing into realization.

GENESIS 2:3

The full realization of God's blessing, however, will involve a recognition of the blessedness of God Who blesses. This is suggested in His blessing of the seventh day. God blessed the seventh day, "for in it He ceased from all His work that Elohim had created by making it." Later, in the law given at Sinai, the seventh day is said to be "a sabbath to Yahweh your Elohim" (Ex.20:10). The seventh day is blessed by being set apart and distinguished. It is also blessed because it brings a blessing to humanity (*cf* Mark 2:27). But it is blessed even beyond this by being an instrument for the blessing of God. The sabbath is "to Elohim." It is a time especially set apart or hallowed for reminder and appreciation of God as Creator.

Although Genesis 2:3 is not concerned with God blessing us, it does complete the significance of Genesis 1:28. Humanity is blessed with its own increase. It also is blessed by becoming a blessing to other creatures of the earth. And finally it is blessed by blessing God in its realization of God's achievements. We can trace this pattern of the divine work of blessing throughout the Scriptures. The following examples seem especially significant:

YAHWEH BLESSES ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS

When Moses conveyed the law to Israel in the wilderness he spoke of their special relationship to Yahweh their Elohim. Within this great discourse, and in terms of blessing very similar to Genesis 1:22,28, Moses declares of Yahweh, "He will love you and *bless* you; He will multiply you and *bless* the fruit of your belly and the fruit of your ground, your grain, your grape juice and your clarified oil,

the calving of your domestic animals and the lambing of your flock, on the ground about which Yahweh had sworn to your fathers to give to you. *Blessed* shall you come to be above all the peoples" (Deut.7:13,14).

Yahweh's certain desire for Israel's good is associated with increase within a particular environment in which He places them. But part of this blessing, which was often forgotten by Israel, was that all the other nations would be blessed in Israel. Thus Yahweh said to Abraham immediately when He called him out from his kindred: "I shall bless you; I shall indeed make your name great, and you will indeed be a blessing . . . In you all the families of the ground will be blessed" (Gen.12:2,3).

Psalms 67 exults in God's blessing of Israel which shall embrace His salvation among all nations, a salvation that involves the awe ("fear") and acclamation of God with rejoicing and jubilant song. The environment is the earth and the abundance is all the peoples of the earth:

*May Elohim be gracious to us and bless us;  
May He light up His face toward us.  
In knowing Your way in the earth,  
Your salvation among all nations,  
May the peoples acclaim You, O Elohim!  
May the peoples acclaim You—all of them!*

This is God's blessing of Israel, but like God's blessing of humanity the blessing involves becoming a blessing to others. And it involves very clearly the blessing of God, as expressed again in Psalm 72:17-19.

*His Name shall remain for the eon;  
Before the sun shall His Name be propagated,  
And all nations shall bless themselves in Him  
and call Him happy.  
Blessed be Yahweh, Elohim, the Elohim of Israel,  
Doing marvelous works by Himself alone,*

*And blessed be His glorious Name for the eon!  
The entire earth shall be filled with His glory!*

## GOD BLESSES US

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ” (Eph.1:3).

Both abundance and environment are in view here. Our “realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil.3:20). “God, being rich in mercy, because of His vast love with which He loves us . . . vivifies us together in Christ (in grace are you saved!) and rouses us together and seats us together among the celestials, in Christ Jesus” (Eph.2:4-6).

The spiritual blessings among the celestials, in Christ, with which God blesses us involve His purpose to display “the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Eph.2:7). Once again God’s work of blessing involves the blessing of being a blessing to others. And like the preparation of light and air and water and soil, so the good works in which we will be walking are prepared beforehand by God (Eph.2:10).

But more than this, all of God’s blessings in making His chosen ones a blessing to others also bless God. “For *His achievement* are we” (Eph.2:10). Paul does not refer to the seventh day in speaking of the blessing of praising God for bringing His works to their consummation. But he reminds us that “the consummations of the eons have attained” to us (1 Cor.10:11). It is God’s vast blessing to us that He has brought before the eyes of our hearts the view of the consummations of all His glorious works of the eons, when He will be All in all. Hence Paul speaks three times in Ephesians chapter one concerning the blessing of lauding God’s glories (Eph.1:6,12,14). Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! D.H.H.

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*Notes on 1 Samuel*


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## DAVID IN THE WILDERNESS

**23** + They <sup>1</sup>told <sup>2</sup>David, <sup>3</sup>saying, Behold, Philistines are fighting <sup>4</sup>against Keilah, and they are robbing <sup>5</sup>the threshing sites. <sup>6</sup>+So David <sup>7</sup>asked <sup>8</sup>inquired <sup>9</sup>of Yahweh <sup>10</sup>saying, Shall I go and <sup>11</sup>smite <sup>12</sup>these Philistines? + Yahweh <sup>13</sup>replied to David, Go! + You must smite <sup>14</sup>the Philistines and save <sup>15</sup>Keilah. <sup>16</sup>+Yet David’s men <sup>17</sup>said to him, Behold, we are fearful while here in Judah; + how much more so <sup>18</sup>if we <sup>19</sup>go to Keilah <sup>20</sup>against the arrays of the Philistines! <sup>21</sup>+So David <sup>22</sup>proceeded to <sup>23</sup>ask <sup>24</sup>inquire <sup>25</sup>of Yahweh <sup>26</sup>again, and Yahweh <sup>27</sup>answered him, + saying, Arise, go down to Keilah! For I am <sup>28</sup>delivering <sup>29</sup>the Philistines into your hand. <sup>30</sup>+Then David and his men <sup>31</sup>marched to Keilah and <sup>32</sup>fought <sup>33</sup>against the Philistines. <sup>34</sup>+When they fled before him, <sup>35</sup>he <sup>36</sup>drove away <sup>37</sup>their cattle and <sup>38</sup>smote <sup>39</sup>them with a great smiting. <sup>40</sup>+Thus David <sup>41</sup>saved <sup>42</sup>the dwellers <sup>43</sup>of Keilah. <sup>44</sup>+ It came to <sup>45</sup>be, <sup>46</sup>after Abiathar son of Ahimelech had run away <sup>47</sup>to David, <sup>48</sup>that he <sup>49</sup>went down <sup>50</sup>with David <sup>51</sup>to Keilah with the ephod in his hand.

<sup>52</sup>+When <sup>53</sup>Saul was <sup>54</sup>told that David had come to Keilah, <sup>55</sup>then Saul <sup>56</sup>thought, Elohim <sup>57</sup>has sold <sup>58</sup>him into my hand; for he has locked himself up <sup>59</sup>by entering <sup>60</sup>a city with double doors and bars. <sup>61</sup>+So Saul <sup>62</sup>summoned <sup>63</sup>all the <sup>64</sup>soldiers of war, to march down to Keilah and to besiege <sup>65</sup>David and <sup>66</sup>his men.

## DAVID DELIVERS KEILAH

In the last chapter Gad, the prophet, had instructed David to return to Judah. The anointed leader of his peo-

ple should be in his home country. Yet Saul's persecution of David was intense, and trying to hide oneself in a country the size of Judah was difficult, not to mention the increased difficulty of hiding with an entourage of 600 men. The circumstances forced David to be unrestingly vigilant. Whenever David and his men would perform a military rescue of some city, such as Keilah, the country's attention would focus on David's whereabouts. Then David and his men would be forced back into hiding.

This is very similar to the situation of Christ in His later ministry. Especially in John's account may be traced visitations and withdrawals from Jerusalem. He would go to Jerusalem, teach, perform a sign and prod the religious leaders with the goad of truth. This repeatedly inflamed the jealousy and persecution of the Pharisees and Sadducees. So Christ would withdraw until their fervor waned, and then would return again, with untiring efforts, laboring to woo the stubborn with the truth. The birds have nests, and the jackals have dens, but David and his greater Son lacked a place to lay their heads.

#### THE RESCUE OF KEILAH

In the first verse of chapter 23, David was told that the Philistines were raiding Keilah. He knew that he was God's anointed, but he did not presume that having knowledge of a situation designated him as its champion. He inquired of God first.

Receiving God's instruction to deliver Keilah, David prepared to go, but his men balked. "We're already in danger for our lives, and you want us to go to war also?!" This sounds much like the complaint of the Lord's disciples, "Rabbi, the Jews now sought to stone Thee, and art Thou going there again?" (John 11:8). Saul disobeyed God and lost the throne, because he took direction from those who were his followers (1 Sam.15:10-26). But David inquired

of God again, to receive specific instruction, and then led his men to Keilah. The result was the deliverance of the Jews in Keilah. True spiritual leadership requires a devotion to God which will act with or without the approval of those around.

#### INQUIRING OF GOD

<sup>9</sup> + **Since David 'knew that Saul was engrossed' in planning 'evil <sup>on</sup> against him, + he <sup>lsa</sup> told > Abiathar the priest, Do 'bring close the ephod!**

<sup>10</sup> + **Then David 'said, O Yahweh Elohim of Israel, Your servant has heard, yea heard- that Saul seeks' to come to Keilah to wreck > the city 'on 'account of me. <sup>11</sup> Will the possessors of Keilah 'surrender me into his hand? O Yahweh Elohim of Israel, I pray, tell > Your servant! + Yahweh <sup>lsa</sup> replied, He will come 'down. <sup>12</sup> + David <sup>lsa</sup> continued, Will the possessors of Keilah 'surrender 'me and 'my men into the hand of Saul? + Yahweh <sup>lsa</sup> replied, They will 'surrender you.**

Verses 9-12 give some details of David's inquiry. It is interesting to see that the inquiries appear to be given in the form of questions that may be answered with a simple yes or no. Other passages, such as 1 Samuel 14:36-42, seem to suggest a simple "choice A," or, "choice B," as might be obtained in a casting of lots.

The Urim and Thummim were located in the breastplate of the priest's ephod. This explains the repeated mention of the ephod. In cases where detailed information needed to be given, God had spoken through prophets and dreams. How wonderful it is today to have a completed revelation that could only come after God had spoken through His Son. How wonderful that the cloudy reflections of the previous eras have given way to "face to face" clarity (1 Cor.13:12).

As a final thought on this topic, it seems that it would

have been difficult for David to inquire of God at the tabernacle through Ahimelech (chapter 21). Would he ask of God regarding success on a mission for Saul, when, in fact, he was on no such mission? The fact that David was not truthful at the tabernacle raises some doubt that he would have inquired of God. If that is true, then Doeg's report that Ahimelech had inquired of God for David was a lie.

#### SAUL'S SUPPOSITIONS

When Saul heard that David had delivered Keilah, he took it for granted that David would oblige himself of Keilah's hospitality. Therefore he prepared to march against Keilah, fully expecting David to remain there. Saul's opinion was that the deliverer, especially himself, was entitled to rewards. He saw himself as the active deliverer, not God. David realized that deliverance was a gift from God. "Yahweh's is the battle," he had proclaimed to Goliath's face. And if the battle is won with God's direction, then the course taken after the battle should also meet with God's approval and direction. The flesh forgets this.

Keilah has been interpreted as meaning "citadel" or "fortress." It was a strong, walled city. But Keilah was not to be the place of David's throne. David's throne would be situated on a mount so impregnable that it could be guarded by the lame and blind (2 Sam.5:6). But David was not allowed a place of rest. Those of faith are not to become quickly wearied in their ideal deeds. God will provide a better place of rest at the proper time (Gal.6:9).

#### THE FEAR OF SAUL

Without a doubt, the news that Saul had ordered the slaughter of the priests, spread throughout the land. The excuse that the priests had conspired to commit treason was an unfounded and extraneous detail. The stark truth of which the nation became aware was that no one could be

guaranteed exemption from Saul's wrath. Further evidence of this was the slaughter and disposition of the Gibeonites. No city or group of people or individual, could take their safety for granted. The city of Keilah would give up David. They might be grateful and secretly devoted to him, but the threat of death to their families and the loss of all their properties was too great and real for them to take a stand against the king and armies of their own nation. David did not have a place of refuge within the walls of Keilah.

#### WHERE IS SAFETY?

<sup>13</sup> +So David <sup>l</sup>arose <sup>+with his men,</sup> <sup>as</sup>about 600 men; + they marched <sup>l</sup>forth from Keilah and <sup>l</sup>went <sup>i w</sup>wherever they could <sup>l</sup>go. +When <sup>γ</sup>Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, + he <sup>l</sup>desisted <sup>γ</sup>from going forth<sup>-</sup>. <sup>14</sup> +So David <sup>l</sup>stayed in the fastnesses <sup>i</sup>of the wilderness; + he <sup>sit</sup>remained in the hill country, in the wilderness of Ziph. + Saul was seeking him all these days, +but <sup>γ</sup>Yahweh<sup>Q</sup> did not give him into his hand. <sup>15</sup> +Yet David <sup>~</sup>was <sup>l</sup>fearful<sup>-</sup> that Saul had come forth to seek <sup>l</sup>his soul <sup>+while</sup> David was <sup>i</sup>at<sup>d</sup> Horesh in the wilderness of Ziph.

<sup>16</sup> +Then Saul's son Jonathan <sup>l</sup>arose and <sup>l</sup>went to David at<sup>d</sup> Horesh; + he <sup>l</sup>encouraged <sup>l</sup>his hand in <sup>γ</sup>Yahweh<sup>Q</sup> <sup>17</sup> and <sup>l</sup>said to him, Do not <sup>l</sup>fear, for the hand of my father Saul shall not find you. + You' shall reign over Israel, and I myself shall become <sup>γ</sup>second to you. + Even my father Saul knows<sup>l</sup> this is so. <sup>18</sup> And the two of them <sup>l</sup>contracted a covenant before Yahweh. + David <sup>l</sup>remained <sup>i</sup>at<sup>d</sup> Horesh; <sup>+as</sup> for Jonathan, he went to his own house.

David was living in fear of Saul (v.15), and Jonathan came and strengthened David in the Lord. It was a great encouragement to David. Then Jonathan returned to his house, and David remained hiding in the wilderness. Who was more safe, David or Jonathan?

Jonathan's love and devotion to David was true, but he would never be David's right hand man as he said (v.17). This was the last time these friends would see each other. Jonathan would fall on Mount Gilboa.

"Jesus said . . . 'No one, putting forth his hand on a plow and looking behind, is fit in the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:62). What if Jonathan had given up his position as heir apparent to the throne? What if he had taken his wife and family and lived in the wilderness with David? Had he done so, he would probably have been rescuing the inhabitants of Ziklag while his father and brothers were dying on Mount Gilboa (cf 1 Sam.30,31). Perhaps he planned to wait until the throne was his, and then he would be the gracious benefactor who placed the royal scepter in David's hand.

We struggle daily with decisions of priority, safety, devotion and loyalty. We know not where safety is. But we know the One in Whom we are safe.

#### THE ZIPHITES

<sup>19</sup>+ Some **Ziphites** went **'up to Saul at<sup>d</sup> 'Gibeah, > saying**, **Is not David concealing himself <sup>wi</sup>among us in the fastnesses 'at<sup>d</sup> Horesh 'on the hill of Hachilah which is <sup>f</sup>south of the desolation?** <sup>20</sup>+**So now, according to all your soul's yearning, 'O king, come down, yea > come down!** **And our >part shall be to surrender him into the hand of the king.** <sup>21</sup>+ **Saul <sup>sa</sup>replied, Blessed' be you >of Yahweh, for you spare <sup>on</sup> me.** <sup>22</sup>**Go <sup>pr</sup>now <sup>7</sup>and<sup>0</sup> prepare further! Become acquainted \with his <sup>ri</sup>place and <sup>see</sup>observe where his <sup>7</sup>swift~ foot comes to 'be; for someone <sup>sa</sup>told > me, he' is 'crafty, very crafty.** <sup>23</sup>+**Hence <sup>see</sup>observe and get to know<sup>f</sup> all the hiding places where he 'hides himself! + You must return to me > prepared!; +then I will go \with you. + It will come to be that, if he is in the area, I will +also search > him out 'among all the thousands of Judah.**

<sup>24</sup>+**So they 'arose and 'went toward Ziph, before Saul,**

**\*while David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah > south of the desolation.**

The superscription of Psalm 54, 1 Samuel 23:19 and 1 Samuel 26:1 are nearly identical. Saul tried repeatedly to capture David, and he was helped by the Ziphites more than once. The Ziphites, like David, were of the tribe of Judah, but they treated David as if he were a foreigner. Their loyalty was to Saul. David was well acquainted with the bitter sting expressed in John's words: "To His own He came, and those who are His own accepted Him not" (John 1:11). Psalm 54 and comments on it may be found in *Unsearchable Riches*, volume 68, pages 132,133.

#### FLESH AND FAITH

We have seen throughout the book of 1 Samuel that Saul displays a life in which the flesh rules, and David displays a life in which faith rules. The theme of the flesh struggling with the spirit is repeated from many perspectives throughout the Scriptures. Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Ishmael and Isaac, and Saul and David are but a few.

1 Samuel 23 suggests a close analogy between David and Paul. David was God's anointed king of the dynasty that would follow Saul. Paul was God's chosen herald for the administration of grace that would reign with the displacement of the flesh and law. Saul persecuted David relentlessly. The Jews persecuted Paul relentlessly. Both David and Paul labored tirelessly to deliver their nation. Both David and Paul were betrayed by their nation, yet neither of these men would retaliate against their nation.

David inquired of God, receiving revelations and direction for what he should do. Paul received special revelations defining the evangel he was to bring. David's receiving of direction from God came after God had stopped speaking to Saul. Paul's revelations came with the setting aside of Israel in God's purpose, and the cessation of prophets and

signs in Israel. Saul's headquarters were in Gibeah, meaning "hillock" or "small hill." David's headquarters would be Mount Zion, Jerusalem. The Jews' allegiance was to Mount Sinai and the law. Paul's allegiance was to that which calls us in the grace of Christ.

#### THE PERPLEXING TRIANGLE

Occasionally we find there are relationships between things or people which seem to be contradictory. One of these is the threefold relationship between God, those seeking to serve God in the flesh, and those seeking to serve God in faith. This is the relationship noted above and displayed in God, Saul and David, and then again in God, the Jews and Paul. Both Saul and the Jews of Paul's day claimed to be serving God. In this service, they struggled against the enemies of Israel. Saul fought the Philistines, and the Jews struggled under Roman domination. Saul and the Jews considered this a divine service. And they also considered it their divine duty to persecute and eradicate anyone that might take their place. Notice that when Saul thought he would catch David, he expressed the sentiment that God was delivering him into his hand (1 Sam.23:7,21). And Christ Himself said to his disciples, "... Coming is the hour that everyone who is killing you should suppose he is offering divine service to God" (John 16:2).

But the perplexing part is that faith must struggle on two fronts. It must struggle against the foes of God's people, and it must struggle to bear with those who believe they are serving God. And, in the latter struggle, there must be no retribution. Notice how David suffered at the hands of Saul, but never lifted his hand against him. Remember how Paul was forced to flee from city to city, and yet proclaimed, "... the delight of my heart and my petition to God for their sake is for salvation" (Rom.10:1). And today also, those whom God has chosen to be bearers

of the truth may suffer as much at the hands of those who are outwardly God's people, as they would at the hands of God's enemies. The maturity, of which Paul spoke so frequently, is evidenced in this attitude.

#### THE CRAG OF APPORTIONMENTS

<sup>25</sup> +Then Saul +with his men <sup>l</sup>went to seek <sup>7</sup>him<sup>o</sup>; +yet <sup>7</sup>David was <sup>l</sup>told of it, and he went <sup>l</sup>down <sup>7</sup>to<sup>o</sup> the crag and <sup>l</sup>stayed in the wilderness of Maon. +When Saul <sup>l</sup>heard of it, + he <sup>l</sup>pursued after David <sup>7</sup>into<sup>o</sup> the wilderness of Maon. <sup>26</sup> + Saul <sup>7</sup>and his men<sup>o</sup> <sup>l</sup>went <sup>l</sup>on one side <sup>l</sup>of this <sup>l</sup>mountain, +while David and his men were <sup>l</sup>on the other side <sup>l</sup>of this <sup>l</sup>mountain. +So David <sup>l</sup>was hurrying away, <sup>7</sup>go<sup>o</sup>running<sup>-</sup> from the presence of Saul; +but Saul and his men were encircling <sup>7</sup>David and <sup>7</sup>his men in order to apprehend them. <sup>27</sup> +Yet a messenger came to Saul, <sup>7</sup>saying<sup>-</sup>, Do hasten and <sup>go</sup>come, for the Philistines are ransacking <sup>on</sup> the land. <sup>28</sup> +So Saul <sup>l</sup>returned from his pursuit <sup>of</sup> of David and <sup>l</sup>went to meet the Philistines. Therefore they called <sup>7</sup>that <sup>ri</sup>place the Crag of Apportionments. <sup>29</sup> +Then David went <sup>l</sup>up from there and <sup>l</sup>stayed in the fastnesses of En-gedi.

The twenty-third chapter closes with David's deliverance from Saul. David was trapped. Saul's troops were encircling him from both sides of the mountain. David had nowhere to run or hide. At the last possible moment, word came to Saul that the Philistines were ransacking the land, and he had to leave off pursuing David to protect Israel. "Therefore they called that place the Crag of Apportionments" (1 Sam.23:28).

The relationship of this name to the event is not fully clear. The word is used for both the sense of "slick" and "portion," leading some to associate it with a certain "smoothness" of David's escape, and others to speak of the "division" established between David and Saul. The Hebrew term clearly

carries the idea of "portion," but the "portioning" taking place in the text was the division of Saul's men into separate companies so that they might surround David. The writer is not fully satisfied with any of these suggestions, nor that the following thoughts sum it up either.

Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to consider the "portions" given to the characters of this chapter. The chapter highlights the inquiries to God, and keeps the reader mindful that all which is occurring happens by divine purpose. It was the portion of Keilah to be delivered from the Philistines, but not to be the city of the king. It was not Jonathan's portion to stand at David's right hand. All that is of the flesh, no matter how lovely, must be cut off. It was not the portion of the Ziphites to be the captors of David nor recipients of rich rewards from the king. Saul's portion was to struggle continually and unsuccessfully against the Philistines.

David's portion was Yahweh. "Yahweh is the assigned share of my portion and my cup; You are the One upholding my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, the allotment is seemly for me. I shall bless Yahweh Who has counseled me; indeed, in the nights my innermost being has admonished me. I poise Yahweh in front of me continually; because He is at my right hand, I shall not slip at all" (Psalm 16:5-8). God denied David a home and place of rest. God denied David a feeling of security. God denied David the comfort of open friendship and a place in his community. But in denying these things to David, God showed David that he had a much greater treasure: "Behold, Elohim is my Helper; Yahweh is the Grand Supporter of my soul" (Psalm 54:4). When those whose lives he rescued had turned their backs on him, and when his kindred betrayed him, and when Saul's army had him surrounded, he found that the only One with the indisputable power to save was caring and providing for him.

J. Philip Scranton