

Contents:

- 97 Editorial
- 99 Unity by Crucifixion
- 103 Galatians Four
- 105 "You Fall Out of Grace"
- 117 Lord! Save Us!
- 123 Mutually Solicitous
- 128 Israel's First Two Kings
- 134 1 Samuel 9 and 16
- 139 The Thunder of God's
Masterful Deeds

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UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR MAY 1997
BEING THE THIRD NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY-EIGHT

EDITORIAL

“If” is a little word that sometimes brings big trouble into our minds. It conveys a sense of urgent and even hopeless responsibility many times in the Lord’s ministry (*cf* Matt.6:14,15,22; 10:13; 17:20; 21:21). Yet as we have been discovering in the studies on Matthew (see p.117), such instructions must not be divorced from the promise given to Israel in Matthew 1:21. The conditions will be met, but only as God provides His spirit under the new covenant and on the basis of the salvation gained through His Son.

For us as well, Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 2:12, “. . . *if* we are disowning, He also will be disowning us,” are sobering. Yet again, by keeping this in context, we realize His disowning relates to future reigning and not to eonian life, for He cannot disown us who have been graciously called and placed as members of *Himself*. And this appreciation of the completeness of our salvation, in turn, increases our appreciation for our Lord and strengthens our confidence in Him to Whom we belong.

But these are human *ifs* concerning future and unknown developments. The *ifs* concerning divine operations channeled through Christ are quite different and carry much the same sense as *since*: “*If* God is for us . . .” (Rom.8:31); “. . . *If* One died for the sake of all . . .” (2 Cor. 5:14). In this class is such a word as Romans 6:8, “. . . *if* we died together with Christ.” Here is a way of expressing the evangel that Christ died for our sins; it is a fact, and the *if* is used in order to get us thinking about the significance of this fact.

Thus, very often the *ifs* of Scripture direct our hearts to

joyful and glorious thoughts, away from fearful doubts to exultant assurance. We can even add them to various revelations of truth and connect them to their scriptural conclusions. For instance, in Brother Knoch's articles on the cross (see p. 99), he has been saying in effect: "*If* we have been crucified with Christ, then we all are on the same level as the malefactors and Saul of Tarsus, great sinners in need of grace."

So also Brother Fielding reminds us (see p.123), that *if* we have been chosen and called as members of Christ's body we may be mutually solicitous for one another. Brother Scranton traces a pattern in the lives of Saul and David (see p.128), that can be expressed similarly, using Paul's words in Ephesians 2:1-10. *If* God saves us in grace from a spirit of *stubbornness*, then we are God's achievement for His display of transcendent riches of grace and for good works which He makes ready beforehand.

Again, *if* God was operating with wisdom and power in Job's sufferings (see p.139), then Job could endure them all with expectation. *If* darkness and storm and chaos are under divine control, then they must have a purpose that corresponds with His character of righteousness.

Already with these examples the word *if* is becoming a word of delight. This is because we are noticing the condition upon which the word rests. *If* it rests on God's promise or achievements, the word *if* is full of assurance and joy. *If* our freedom and benefits (see p.105) are dependent on our act of circumcising then we are debtors to do the whole law, but *if* they are dependent on God's grace in and through Christ, then we are brought into the realm of faith operating through love (Gal.5:1-6). *If* Christ truly died for our sins and God actually reconciles us through the blood of His cross, then we are overwhelmed by grace. *If* the evangel is true, then there is joy and peace and endurance and love being poured out into our lives. D.H.H.

The Word of the Cross

UNITY BY CRUCIFIXION

PAUL writes of his personal relation to crucifixion twice. Once, in connection with the Corinthians, he insists that he had *not* been crucified *for* them (1 Cor.1:13). And again, in relation to his own justification, he says that he *had* been crucified *with* Christ (Gal.2:20). As he was the foremost of sinners (1 Tim.1:15), these seemingly contradictory statements may help us to clarify our own relationship to the shameful death of our Saviour and Justifier. The point is that neither Paul nor any other man is the center and unifier. They are all reckoned as crucified criminals. Christ alone was crucified *for* them, and so He is the Center and Basis of unity.

Death by crucifixion is the basis of the unity in the joint body of Christ. Any other method will divide. Baptism is a good example. It united believers of the Circumcision in the Acts period. Cornelius, the proselyte was also joined to them by baptism (Acts 10:47-48). Paul himself was baptized (Acts 19:10), and baptized others. Why did he not continue?

Baptism is not nearly so *offensive* as the cross. Hence Paul says to the Corinthians (1:17), "Christ does not commission me to be baptizing, but to be bringing the evangel, not in wisdom of word, *lest the cross of Christ may be made void.*"

PAUL AND CRUCIFIXION

First of all, let us acknowledge that Paul really had been the greatest of all sinners, for he not only endorsed

the assassination of Stephen, but he devastated the ecclesia, going into the homes, dragged out men and women, and gave them over to jail (Acts 8:1-3). Besides breathing out threatening and murder against the Lord's disciples in Jerusalem, he requested letters from the chief priest, so that he might bind the saints in Damascus and lead them to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2). Was there ever any other private person who went to such lengths to wipe out the disciples of Christ? The Saviour endured a most shameful death Himself in order to reconcile and glorify sinners, but Paul sought to deal out distress and death to the saints.

Some might suggest the high priests and Pilate, who actually were responsible for Christ's crucifixion, were the most reprehensible, so they have the foremost places in the rank of sinners. But God does not reckon that way. They were officials, and probably deemed it their duty to please the populace. Pilate, especially, was not doing what he wished to do. Besides, they were under the compulsion of the divine decree, and fulfilled the page of prophecy. Their heart was not in it as was the case with Paul. So we cannot well dispute Paul's claim to the foremost place in the rank of sinners.

PAUL CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

Paul is probably the best example we have of crucifixion *with* Christ. Although easily the foremost and finest example of the so-called "Christian" life, his experience, his sufferings, his debasement, were a tremendous contrast to the fortunate and honorable positions of the leaders of today. Paul sought no following, no glory from men.

For his dastardly deeds Paul was crucified in God's reckoning. The unbelieving malefactor blasphemed Jesus and demanded "Are not you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" Then, "answering, the other one, rebuking him, averred, 'Yet you are not fearing God, seeing that you are in the

same judgment! And we, indeed, justly, for we are getting back the deserts of what we commit, yet this One commits nothing amiss' " (Luke 23:39-41). This should be the language of every believer in this era of God's grace. When our eyes are opened to see ourselves in His light, then we acknowledge that the crucifixion of Christ *for* us, demands that, in spirit, we are crucified *with* Him.

PAUL NOT CRUCIFIED FOR US

Negatively, Paul was *not* crucified *for* us (1 Cor.1:13). This is of far greater importance than appears on the surface, especially in these last days. Positively it may be stated thus: In Paul's ministry the *crucified Christ* is the *only Center of unity*. No other one was crucified for us, so *He alone* is the focus of our affections. In Christendom great men, good men, pious men, capable men, have risen and gathered disciples about themselves or their teaching, but they have created conflict and confusion, and destroyed the unity which depends alone on Christ and His crucifixion.

CRUCIFIXION UNITY

The Corinthian ecclesia was richly endowed with gifts, yet inclined to division by following human leaders. In the beginning some of the Corinthians became partisans for Paul. Some preferred Apollos, others Cephas. Yet others would not join them, so made their own division under the name of Christ. Thus they not only parted Christ among them, but strove with one another as to the right leader. At that early stage of minority, before most of present truth had even been revealed and some of it would eventually be discarded, when they were still observing by means of a mirror, in an enigma (1 Cor.13:3-13), there was much more excuse. Christendom today is mostly in the same condition.

It is easy to see why some of them were Paulists. He was

the one who brought the evangel to them. As he reminds them later, he *planted*. Apollos came later, and *irrigated* (1 Cor.3:6). There seems to be no record that Cephas ever went there. But none of these proclaimed themselves, but *Christ*. That there is a tendency today to be partial to Paul, especially among those who are, in a measure, mature, can easily be understood. But it is a very different matter than forming an exclusive party. Indeed, Paul personally is not in question, but his teaching, and that should unite *all* the saints, especially as a part of it is this very passage, which bases all unity on *crucifixion*, which applies only to Christ Himself (1 Cor.1:10-13).

Crucifixion is the proper basis of all *vital spiritual* unity among believers among the nations. As offenders against the Divine Majesty we *all* alike deserve crucifixion. Not one is worthy to head a separate party. Especially today, almost all saints are immature, and in different stages of development, and under the influence of false teaching and practice, so they choose, or rather drift, into a “body” with another head than the crucified Christ.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED

There is only one Christ and one cross, and this should be the center and rallying point of all believers in Him. Paul and Apollos and Cephas were all good and great men, but they divided those who followed them. Even Paul, although he is the *channel* of the truth for us today, is not the center. He was not crucified for our sakes! Christ is the focus of all God’s operations and the Head of the body. But, for us, He is the Crucified, and we are associated with Him, not in the earthly glories, but in the cross of His shame. There He was the lowest on earth, and we with Him. Only thus can we be with Him as the Highest in glory (1 Cor.1:13-31).

A. E. Knoch

Studies in Galatians

The following abstract of our writings on Galatians 4, summarizes the articles “Getting the Place of a Son” (4:1-16) and “Children of Promise” (4:17-31), which appeared in volume 82 (pp.155-164; 219-231):

GALATIANS FOUR

IN Galatians 4, Paul continues in defense of his evangel of justification by the faith of Christ. Earlier he had called the Galatians foolish for thinking they were incomplete apart from maintaining the precepts of the law. The Galatians were *wanting* to be under the law (Gal.4:21) and were looking at Paul as their enemy (4:16). This tendency to bring in law-keeping has increased today where some form of “conditional” salvation is widely taught and defended.

Abraham’s enjoyment of an allotment being based solely on God’s promise, and therefore in grace, is a prototype of the evangel. Believing Israelites like Paul were once enslaved to the elements of the Mosaic system (Gal. 4:1-3). But Christ coming under the jurisdiction of the law reclaims those under the law giving all believers the place of a son (Gal.4:4-7), a place of great worth, near and dear to the Father’s heart.

The blessings we have are given to us gratuitously and are not altered by our obedience or disobedience. To proclaim this evangel is a struggle. Even where it is not opposed it is often accepted halfheartedly and is neglected or ignored.

Prior to receiving the evangel the Galatians were slaves of the jurisdiction of darkness, and now they were wanting to turn again to a condition of slavery, albeit in a new form of law-keeping (Gal.4:8-11).

Paul, who once observed the law, wants the Galatians to become as he was now and as they used to be with respect

to the law (Gal.4:12). In denying the evangel they were only injuring themselves. When Paul first announced the evangel of grace to them the Galatians responded with a happiness of solicitude toward Paul. Now they were occupied with law-keeping and looked on Paul, who kept pointing to God's grace, as their enemy (Gal.4:13-16).

Those who were disturbing the Galatians were jealous, or zealously enthusiastic toward them because they wanted the Galatians to be jealous indeed to their ways and ideas. Despite the fact that the Galatians considered Paul their enemy, Paul sees them as his beloved "little children" and points them to the properly directed jealousy or zeal (Gal. 4:17-20). Out of his perplexity he decides to tell them an allegory based on the story of Hagar and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac (Gal.4:22-31; *cf* Gen. chapters 16,17, and 21).

If the Galatians worked to become such ardent devotees of the law, Paul would have them only to comply with its own dictate as recorded in this story (Gal.4:21,22) which essentially teaches that the works of the flesh debar entrance into God's allotment.

This allotment of glorious life and joy in the presence of Christ Himself in the oncoming eons is promised to us by God in His grace. Thus it is that we now are blessed like Abraham, Sarah and Isaac of old, in accord with God's gracious promise. This word of promise for us is the evangel of the salvation brought by Paul.

Our God has determined to bless us (*cp* Gen.17:2), to take note of us (*cp* Gen.21:1), and grant us our allotment according to His own promise in grace. This is simply to affirm that we have no say in the matter, which is good news indeed.

Thus Paul would have the Galatians toss aside the law as the toys of infancy that they might enter into the glory and freedom of the filial relation: the place of a *son* for God through Christ Jesus (4:1-7; *cp* Eph.1:5). J.R.C.

Studies in Galatians

"YOU FALL OUT OF GRACE"

(Galatians 5:1-15)

THE BLESSINGS of Paul's evangel, which are our allotment in grace, are blessings which the God of all grace, Who does not lie, *promises* "before times eonian" (Titus 1:2b). Even as, if a blessing is out of works, it is no longer *grace* (Rom.11:6b), thus also, if the enjoyment of an allotment is out of law, it is no longer out of *promise* (Gal.3:18a).

Since God has graciously granted Abraham his allotment through promise (Gal.3:18b), and since, in the gracious blessings of the evangel, we, in principle, are of "Abraham's seed," we too, *like* Abraham's seed, are enjoyers of an allotment according to promise (*cf* Gal.3:29). Hence, Paul further joyously declares: "you brethren, *as Isaac*, are children of *promise*" (4:28; *cp* Rom.9:9).

The Galatians did not realize that "the law is *not of faith*" (Gal.3:12a). That is, they failed to recognize that law-obedience and resultant blessing, is not of the nature merely of faith, of that in which one simply trusts in God's promise. The law, rather, in one's obedience to its precepts, is of the principle that the one who *does them* "shall be living [i.e., finding life and blessing] *in them*" (3:12b; *cit.* Lev.18:5).

Since the law is not of faith, neither does it accord with grace (*cp* Rom.4:16). It has no place in relation to the evangel brought by Paul, which bestows the transcendent grace of justification *apart* from law, on *all* who are believing (Acts 13:39; Rom.3:21,24).

For freedom Christ frees us! (5:1a)

In Christ Jesus, Who has become to us wisdom from God, besides righteousness and holiness and deliverance (1 Cor.1:30,31), we are *complete* (Col.2:10). Therefore, in

Him, in the benefits afforded us through His sacrificial death, we are *free* from any need to be “justified in law” (*cf* Gal.5:4). Christ is the “consummation” of “law for righteousness” (Rom.10:4). Obeying law in order to become righteous, is something which is quite impossible for mortals (Rom.3:9,10; 8:3,7). In spirit, “law for righteousness” must ever point to Christ, in Whom alone its goal is realized (*cp* Rom.8:3,4). Only in Him is that which the law sought actually achieved. Through the one just award of Christ, life’s justifying comes into all mankind (Rom.5:18). Through Him alone, this entire vast company shall be constituted just (Rom.5:19).

While eventually, *all*—whether those in the heavens or those on the earth—will be headed up in the Christ (Eph. 1:10), the Galatians were already in Christ and blessed according to the revelations of Paul’s evangel. Therefore, since the blessing of being righteous in Christ had already been bestowed upon them, they had been liberated from any need for following “law for righteousness.”

Strictly (since the dative case is used, together with the definite article), it is, “*Into this* freedom Christ frees us!” (5:1). This freedom, allegorically speaking, is the freedom of being “not the children of the maid, but of the free woman” (4:31), which is to say, the freedom of Isaac; the freedom of being children of promise (4:28), according to grace.

It is the freedom of, “At ‘this season’ I shall come ‘and there will be for Sarah a son’” as in the case of “Rebecca also [who] is having her bed of *one*, Isaac, our father. For, not as yet being born or putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a *choice*, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling, it was declared to her that “The greater *shall* be slaving for the inferior” (Rom.9:9-12).

Stand firm, then, and be not again enthralled with the yoke of slavery. (5:1b)

“In the Greek, it is simply ‘TO-YOKE-OF-SLAVERY.’ That is, we must not become ‘enthralled’ (spellbound or enslaved) by *any* ‘yoke of slavery.’ Yet any ‘Christian teaching’ or ministry which takes the position that the believer’s righteousness or at least the benefits which this righteousness entails, are granted to him, in the last analysis, not because of what Christ has done but because of what he himself has done, is both a deception and a yoke of slavery.

“This freedom, then, of which Paul speaks, for which Christ frees us, is freedom from any need even to attempt to become righteous by works of law. We enjoy the blessings of the untraceable riches of Christ (Eph.3:8). We are not participants in the economy of the law, and are by no means subject to its curses. Christ *reclaims* us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse for our sakes (Gal. 3:13). Consequently, since God is for us, who is against us (Rom.8:31)?

“We were conciliated to God not through our faith in God’s Son or through our faith in His death, but *through the death of God’s Son* (Rom.5:10). God did not, reciprocally, *take* us to Himself consequent to our acceptance of Christ. That would not have been a *choice* (*cf* Rom.9:11), but an obligation. Instead, He actually *chose* us in Christ, even ‘before the disruption of the world’ (Eph.1:4). God graciously grants faith to all His chosen ones (*cp* 1 Cor. 1:24-29; Rom.12:3; Phil.1:29). Therefore, the believer’s faith does not constitute an entitlement to salvation, but a surety of salvation, a surety to the believer that he (or she), indeed, is one of God’s chosen ones.”¹

DEBTORS TO THE LAW

Paul’s question to the Galatians, who wanted to be under

1. *Unsearchable Riches*, “For Freedom Christ Frees Us!” vol.81, pp.227,228.

law, had been whether they had indeed “heard” the law itself, in its testimony to those who presume that they are able to keep it, and that thus, by their own obedience, gain its proffered blessing (Gal.4:21; *cp* Ex.19:8). If the Galatians truly wished to “hear” the law, that is, act in accordance with its testimony, then they were to “cast out this maid and her son” (4:30), which, in Paul’s allegory of the free woman and the maid, is identified as the covenant from mount Sinai with all its legal precepts (4:24,25).

Lo! I, Paul, am saying to you that if you should be circumcising, Christ will benefit you nothing. Now I am attesting again to every man who is circumcising, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Exempted from Christ were you who are being justified in law. (5:2-4a)

Note the emphasis of the apostle’s declaration here: “Lo! I Paul am saying to you . . .” Still, the words “if you should be circumcising, Christ will benefit you nothing” must not be wrenched from their context; much less are they to be understood categorically, for this would contradict not only the entire tenor of the epistle, but the very evangel itself. Paul speaks relatively, in relation to justification in law. The sense is, If you should be circumcising (in the interests of *justification*), Christ will benefit you nothing (*in justification*). Thus, *Christ—or Circumcision: which shall it be?*

Indeed, in circumcising, one is only fulfilling a single point of law, not the entirety of the law. This one point of law by no means stands in isolation, as if nothing more need be done. To the contrary, the situation is rather that “every man who is circumcising . . . is a debtor to do the whole law.” This accords with Romans 2:25: “For circumcision, indeed, is benefiting if you should be putting the law into practice, yet if you should be a transgressor of law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision”; as well as with James 2:10: “For anyone who should be keep-

ing the whole law, yet should be tripping in one thing, has become liable for all.”

The phrase “Exempted from Christ,” like the words “if you should be circumcising” is to be understood in connection with justification. Those who saw themselves as being justified *in law* were, as far as their appreciation was concerned, exempted from being justified *in Christ*. That is simply to say that if we hold the position that we *are* justified in law, we are saying we are *not* justified in Christ. One precludes the other. Thus, in one’s own perception, one “nullifies” or “makes unproductive” (as the Greek word translated here “exempted” is elsewhere rendered) the work of Christ in justification. Hence, in nullifying the true benefits of Christ, the Galatians repudiated the grace of God (*cp* 2:21).

Any teaching, then, that represents justification as being granted on the basis of obedience to law, is false teaching. This includes the teaching that represents faith in Christ as a lawful requirement of salvation. The essential error consists not in the advocacy of any particular law for justification, but of any law whatsoever for justification.

You fall out of grace. (5:4b)

Indeed, this is just what one does who seeks a right standing before God by means of law, even if he should freely acknowledge the sacrificial death of Christ on behalf of his sins. In one’s own recognition, one falls *out of grace*, not by practicing sin, but by falling *into law*. In truth, however, simply because it is *grace*, it is impossible for one to remove himself from its blessing, even by the darkest of deeds.

“In withdrawing from a real relation to the *Saviour*, the Galatians ‘fall away’ from *grace*. The verb ‘fall out’ (*ekpiptō*) is applied, in Acts 27:17, 26, 29, 32, to the course of a ship driven out from her course. The image of a drifting vessel is reinforced in verse seven, by the figure of a race. These racers made a fine start, but they have stumbled (3:3; 5:7);

the vessel set out from the harbor in splendid style, but has been caught and set adrift by the ‘winds of doctrine.’

“This ‘falling out’ bears no resemblance to the ‘falling away’ doctrine. It is rather the exact opposite of ‘stand firm’ in 5:1. In terms of theology to fall away means ‘final and eternal loss.’ This theological fiction is a positive hindrance to the understanding and enjoyment of truth. True, Scripture speaks of ‘loss’; but that loss is temporary, strictly confined to the creature’s experience, and, like Israel’s loss, becomes the ‘riches’ of the world, in the good providence of God.”²

“‘Falling from grace,’ is not, as usually supposed, a loss of the benefits of Christ’s salvation through *breaking* the law, but is rather a loss of a realization of those benefits through attempting to *keep* the law. He who falls into sin does not forfeit the grace of God. Blessed to relate, grace abounds in such a case (*cf* Rom.6:1). But he who seeks to establish his own salvation by works has no need of the grace of God . . . He thus repudiates grace. He falls out of the sphere where grace operates.”³

ENTREATY FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE

For we, in spirit, are awaiting the expectation of righteousness by faith. (5:5)

Until the day of Christ’s advent, we, in spirit, “as if present” (*cp* 1 Cor.5:3), are awaiting the *expectation of righteousness* [i.e., of justification], and we are doing so by faith. We await that expectation which relates to righteousness, that is to say, which relates to our conformation to the image of Christ together with the transfiguration of the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of Christ’s own glory. Even as, though we are already sons of

2. Vladimir Gelesnoff, PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS, p.121.

3. A. E. Knoch, THE CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.284.

God yet are awaiting the sonship, the deliverance of our body (Rom.8:23b), thus also, though we are already justified, we are awaiting the expectation of righteousness, that glory which God has appointed for us in coming eons and beyond. Thus, proleptically speaking (i.e., in a spirit of anticipation), we *are* justified; for, literally speaking, we *will be* justified, in that day.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is availing anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith, operating through love. (5:6)

Faith, operating through love, alone is that which avails. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision—nor any other human deed either of obeying or of omitting to obey law—avails anything at all, *in Christ Jesus*. It is in Christ Jesus alone that all aspects of salvation are achieved, “through the blood of His cross.” Law obedience, as such, with necessarily attendant curses for violation thereof, simply has no place in our salvation.

“*All is allowed me,*” says Paul, “but not all is expedient.” “*All is allowed me, but I will not be put under its authority by anything*” (1 Cor.6:12). “*All is allowed me, but not all is edifying*” (1 Cor.10:23). The words which immediately follow, then, “Let no one be seeking the welfare of himself, but that of another” (1 Cor.10:24), are not to be understood as a legal requirement under pains of the repeated violation of which one will “lose his salvation,” or any other blessing in Christ.

What is achieved in Christ, cannot be forfeited by man. Hence all such entreaties, such as that of 1 Corinthians 10:24, should simply be understood as that which is expedient or edifying, pleasing to God and beneficial to man. Though all such words of entreaty of our apostle have a vital place in our service (even as the counsel of all necessarily universally-applicable words of wisdom throughout all Scripture), even so, no scriptural entreaty of upright-

ness at all, however important, has any place whatsoever in our justification, in which we are complete in Christ.

You raced ideally! Who hinders you not to be persuaded by the truth? (5:7)

These words are reminiscent of Paul's previous fulmination, "O foolish Galatians! Who bewitches you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was graphically crucified?" (3:1). How painful it must have been for Paul to see his own "little children" in faith (4:19), so misapprehend the evangel of their salvation, especially when they had once "raced ideally" (cf 4:13-15; Acts 18:23). As with the Corinthians, it was true of the Galatians as well in relation to Paul: "If you should be having ten thousand escorts in Christ, nevertheless not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus, through the evangel, I beget you. I am entreating you, then, become imitators of me" (1 Cor.4:15,16).

Further, Paul recognizes that his opposers have hindered the Galatians from being persuaded by the truth, and this softens the edge of his repeatedly piercing words.

This persuasion is not of Him Who is calling you. (5:8)

Even though, ultimately speaking, *all* is not only out of God, but through and for Him as well (Rom.11:36), relatively speaking, there is much that is "not of God." Such is the case at hand. Faithfully speaking, this persuasion which the Galatians had mistakenly embraced was *not* of God; Paul's teaching *was* of God; for he had received it directly through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:12).

A little leaven is leavening the whole kneading. (5:9)

The Galatians were stark proof of the truth of this saying. Under the law, leaven was a type of sin (e.g., Ex.13:5-7; Matt.16:12). Leaven, such as yeast, may only be a small entity in itself, but it soon permeates and affects the whole kneading, from which many loaves may be made. Similarly, the "leaven" of the misplaced truth of circumcision, a small thing in itself, had given rise to a wider desire

among the Galatians to be under law in general. Accordingly, as Paul was informed, they were now "scrutinizing" days and months and seasons and years, all in a sedulous effort to observe the holy times of the law in their precise appointed seasons (cf Gal.4:10).

I have confidence in you in the Lord that in nothing you will be disposed otherwise. (5:10a)

Literally, Paul's confidence here, was certainly not "in" the Galatians themselves. It was rather "into" (*eis*) them. That is, they were the objects of Paul's confidence, which was "in the Lord," Paul's confidence that "in nothing you will be disposed otherwise." Specifically when this would be so, Paul could not say. He simply knew that the infirm in the faith will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand (Rom.14:4). In the meantime, he could only wait, seeing whether God may be giving them repentance to come into a realization of the truth (2 Tim.2:25b).

Now he who is disturbing you shall be bearing his judgment, whosoever he may be. (5:10b)

These words remind us of those of 2 Timothy 2:14, 15: "Alexander the coppersmith displayed to me much evil: the Lord will be paying him in accord with his acts—whom you also guard against, for very much has he withstood words of ours." Such disservice to the saints will surely call forth corresponding requital upon all such bad works when considered at the dais of Christ, and will mean the forfeiture of wages in the case of many in that day (1 Cor. 3:14,15; 2 Cor.5:10).

Now I, brethren, if I am still heralding circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? (5:11a)

It is evident that Paul was faced with opposition on all sides. From certain appearances, some may have inferred the mistaken impression that the apostle, effectually at least, was "still heralding circumcision" (cf Acts 21:20-26). These or others, through jealousy and gossip, may have

led still others to suppose that this was actually so. Paul's logic, however, is unassailable: "If I am still heralding circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?" Many knew well that Paul was *not* heralding circumcision, and were most displeased that this was so (*cf* Acts 15:1,2a,5). If he had only continued to do so, all corresponding persecution would have ceased.

Consequently the snare of the cross of Christ has been nullified. (5:11b)

Conversely, however, if Paul had continued to herald circumcision, the *snare* of the cross of Christ would have been nullified. A "snare" (*skandalon*) is "a means of tripping or a cause of falling" (Keyword Concordance, p.275). The glorious truth associated with Christ's cross becomes just this to many, by means of which they trip, and fall into opposing error. That truth is the revelation that salvation is in grace and through Christ alone. This scandalizes both human pride and fleshly ethics, by which most are enslaved.

The evangel is simply unacceptable to those who wish to boast in something of themselves—something that *they* have done. In most circles today, "accepting Christ" (or alternatively, obeying Him as Lord) has supplanted first-century circumcision as the fancied "requirement" for salvation. Among the exponents of such views today, just as surely as among the circumcisionists of Galatia, thus the *snare* of the cross⁴ is nullified. By denying its truth, they remove its offense.

Would that those who are raising you to insurrection struck themselves off also! (5:12)

Out of exasperation, Paul resorts to sarcasm. In his ebullient hyperbole and irony, he wishes that those who had roused the Galatians to insurrection, might finish their

4. For an extended consideration of this subject, see the article, "The Snare of the Cross," *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.81, pp.269-278.

work of mutilation of the flesh by striking themselves off also. Then they could no longer deceive the saints. On the principle that a little cutting is good, surely a lot of cutting is better still.

FREEDOM AND FAITHFULNESS

For you were called for freedom, brethren, only use not the freedom for an incentive to the flesh (5:13a)

The literal reading is, "[You were called] *on* freedom." It is on a basis of freedom from needing to seek "law for righteousness" that we are called. And, into such freedom Christ frees us (5:1)! Far from denying this truth, Paul would only add, "use not [this] freedom for an incentive to the flesh."

Left to ourselves, the "flesh," that is, we ourselves, considered in our own foolishness and weakness, would misuse this very truth, if not through abject abandonment, at least in careless neglect or apathy. In consideration of this tendency, as a complement to the truth of the evangel itself, we need to be reminded that there are still "many foolish and harmful desires which are swamping men [believers not excepted] in extermination and destruction" (1 Tim.6:9).

Though only certain such injurious desires, in some cases, may lead to bodily extermination and destruction, many such fleshly foibles regularly lead to the quenching of the spirit even as to the diminution if not destruction of a life of faithfulness. "So that, let him who is supposing he stands beware that he should not be falling" (1 Cor.10:12).

. . . but through love be slaving for one another. For the entire law is fulfilled in one word, in this: "You shall love your associate as yourself." (5:13b,14)

Truly, love is the greatest thing, for apart from it we are nothing. Of all the sagacities of wisdom, walking in love heads the list. "To no one owe anything, except to be loving one another, for he who is loving another has fulfilled

law” (Rom.13:8); and “. . . if there is any other precept, it is summed up in this saying, in this: ‘You shall love your associate as yourself’” (Rom.13:9b).

It is not enough for us to be loving only those loving us. As the Lord declared, “What thanks [or ‘grace’] is it” to be doing that (Luke 6:32)? His entreaty was rather, “Be loving your enemies . . .” (Luke 6:35a), even as Paul further confirms in Romans 12:20, 21, adding, “Be not conquered by evil; but conquer evil with good.”

“Love pervades the Pauline writings. According to him, it is love that imparts to freedom, as to all else, virtue and meaning. It derives from love the element of preciousness. He says, ‘*through love* be slaving for one another’

“Love transcends and glorifies all things because it is absolutely disinterested. It is the only thing in all the universe that ‘seeketh not its own.’ Everything else seeks something, because though other things may be *self*-sufficient [i.e., they may afford sufficiency to themselves], they are not *all*-sufficient [i.e., sufficient for all else as well]. Faith seeks an object to rest on; hope, an object to look to. Love alone seeks naught else but to give—to bestow itself. It is the rest of faith and the goal of hope.”⁵

Now if you are biting and devouring one another, beware that you may not be consumed by one another. (5:15)

O the injury to the cause of Christ even as impediment to the furtherance of the evangel, that results from a failure to give heed to this warning! Indeed, being “consumed” is that unto which “biting and devouring” leads. Through anger, bitterness, envy, gossip, and faction, even as disrespect, ingratitude, pride, selfishness, and implacableness, greater evil is repeatedly done from within than the aggregate evil that accrues from without. May God give us grace to spare us from such declension, or cause us to cease and desist therefrom where we have had a part. J.R.C.

5. Vladimir Gelesnoff, PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS, p.128.

He Shall Save His People

LORD! SAVE US!

JESUS SHALL SAVE His people from their sins (Matt.1:21). But even after speaking to them of the perfection enjoyed in this salvation and its high standards of thinking and acting (Matt.5-7) there seemed to be no interest in this great operation, at least as the Saviour’s achievement. A leper came to Jesus for cleansing from leprosy (Matt.8:2). A Roman centurion came, requesting healing for his boy who was dreadfully tormented in paralysis (8:5-8). They brought to Him many demoniacs, “and He cast out the spirits with a word, and all those who have an illness He cures” (8:16). But no one came to ask for salvation from sins.

The people may have forgotten this mission of the Lord’s, if indeed they had ever given it much thought. But Jesus was fully aware of the work He was involved in and the hardships it involved along the way (*cf* Matt.8:20), as well as the ultimate humiliation needed in order for this salvation to be gained. The cleansing of the leper, the healing of the paralytic and curing of the diseased were pictures of that fuller cleansing from sins that God would accomplish through His Son.

WE ARE PERISHING

No one approached Jesus, saying, “Lord! Save us from our sins!” even though all were perishing with that most universal and devastating of diseases. But His disciples who had followed Him aboard a ship approached Him when a storm from an earthquake threatened their lives. They

roused Him, for He was drowning, and cried out, "Lord! Save us! We are perishing!" (Matt.8:23-25).

What the disciples said here is what all Israel will say when their eyes are opened to the dangers they are in and to their helplessness in themselves and need of the Saviour. But the disciples lacked one essential element that they and all Israel will possess when they are saved from their sins. That is the blessing of faith in the Saviour and reliance on His goodness, power and love. Jesus criticized the disciples for being "timid" and "scant of faith" (v.26). This will not be so under the new covenant when they all shall know the Lord from the smallest of them to the greatest (Jer.31:34). Then the Rescuer will come out of Zion, and He will establish His covenant and eliminate their sins, and all Israel shall be saved (Rom.11:26-28).

The disciples were right in recognizing this helplessness and in going to Jesus for salvation, but they were wrong in their lack of confidence in the Saviour. To be sure this was a very human sin, and something that we all are guilty of time and time again. But that does not make it right and only indicates that the disciples were not yet saved from their sins. Their sin of unbelief was not as great as the sin of unbelief shown by the scribes and Pharisees, but we must not suppose that the Saviour is concerned only in saving from small sins. The fact that Jesus was the Saviour of these disciples from the churning sea and will save them from all their sins, including that of unbelief, is evidence for, not proof against, the eventual salvation of the unbelieving leaders of Israel from their sins including the sins of unbelief and enmity.

COURAGE, CHILD!

In Matthew 9:1-8 we read about the faith of some in the Lord's ability to heal. These "brought to Him a paralytic, prostrate on a couch," and *perceiving their faith*, He healed

this paralytic with the words, "Courage, child! Pardon are your sins!" This took the people by surprise, and some of the scribes, who correctly associated pardon of sins with God, immediately inferred that Jesus was speaking blasphemy. Powers for healing were sometimes given to certain people, but the power to pardon sins was something most unusual except in prophecy concerning the Messiah. "[Yahweh] is pardoning all your depravity, Who is healing all your ailments" (Psa.103:3; cf Isa.43:25; Jer.33:8).

The pardon of sins is not the same as salvation from sins, but it has this great blessing in view. By saying "Pardon are your sins," Jesus was employing His authority as Saviour. He would be saving His people from their sins, and in view of that certain achievement He could speak the present pardon of the paralytic. For the paralytic, this pardon was the basis for his present physical healing. The healing was given to one who exhibited even more faith than the disciples had shown on the Sea, but the faith of the paralytic was not the cause of his healing, but rather only a means or channel by which the Saviour brought His work of saving from sin (itself in the restrictive form of pardon) into his life.

BROODING WICKEDNESS IN HEART

Some of the scribes who heard Jesus pardon the sins of the paralytic and witnessed this work of healing were "brooding wickedness" in their hearts rather than being invigorated by faith (Matt.9:3,4). They had even less faith than the disciples who were "scant of faith" (8:26). But those (excluding Judas) who were so often scant of faith will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (cf Matt.19:28), and these scribes will likely be included among those sons of the kingdom who will be cast out into outer darkness with lamentation and gnashing of teeth (Matt.8:12).

Furthermore, Jesus called many who were "tribute col-

lectors and sinners” (Matt.9:10-13) rather than the Pharisees who were more diligent in heeding the law. Obviously this was not because the tribute collectors had been meeting the standards laid down in Matthew 5-7. Their careers were full of disobedience to laws that were not at all the least of the precepts (*cf* 5:19). But, like the lepers and the crippled and the diseased, many of the tribute collectors and similar sinners, were aware of their need of a Saviour.

Jesus explained to His disciples, “No need have the strong of a physician, but those having an illness . . . For I did not come to call the just, but sinners” (Matt.9:12,13). Yet the Pharisees also were sinners. They did not admit it, at least outwardly, but more to the point, they had not been given that righteous honesty to recognize their need; they were not granted even that scantness of faith that was given to the disciples.

We observe in this that the lepers and diseased, and the tribute collectors and noted sinners, were more “fortunate” than the highly disciplined Pharisees and the healthy and prosperous leaders of Israel of that day. There was more opportunity in the lives of Matthew and Peter for the display of God’s power for salvation, and His mercy to sinners, than in the lives of the scribes and Pharisees. We rejoice in this operation of divine wisdom and glory. But all this glory is obscured and confused by the teaching that the outer darkness reserved for these Pharisees is an everlasting punishment in hell, both for them and for all who are not called into faith.

HE WHO ENDURES TO THE CONSUMMATION

Jesus did indeed make it clear that there would come a day of judging. For Sodom and Gomorrah it would be more tolerable in that day than for the cities of Israel where the message of warning and hope carried by the disciples

would be rejected (Matt.10:15). Those who would persecute and kill the disciples will face the future prospect of the destruction of their soul and their body in Gehenna (Matt.10:28). And those who would disown Jesus in front of men will be disowned in front of His Father (10:33).

In fact, Jesus indicated that even those who start out following His commission of Matthew 10:5-10 but do not endure under persecutions “to the consummation” might not be saved (10:22). Not only must they have faith, but they also must have endurance in faithfulness.

Still, in the end faith and endurance must be seen as gifts of God, connected to His providential placings and shapings of individuals. A woman was given a hemorrhage for twelve years and so was led to seek healing outside of herself and her own efforts (Matt.9:20-22). A tribute collector named Matthew experienced the disdain of his own people and was given the honesty of knowing some of his sins, such as, perhaps, greed and cowardice. We do not know all the factors that were involved, but it is clear that he was well prepared for a deeper revelation of salvation, one that went beyond physical healing or deliverance from earthquakes on the sea.

On the other hand, many in Israel were calloused and given a spirit of stupor (*cf* Rom.11:7,8). The fact that God determined the course of Peter’s life, with all his scantness of faith, and that of the scribes who brooded wickedness in their heart, does not change the fact that each will be judged in accord with his acts. And James the brother of John will be given a throne in the kingdom, while Herod who instigated the assassination of James (Acts 12:1,2) will be condemned to the destruction of his soul and body, as we may well infer from our Lord’s words in Matthew 10:28.

Exactly how the Judge will judge all these matters, in consideration of all the factors of each one’s life, is beyond

our comprehension. Like David we thankfully leave this to God, Who alone knows all these things. But we must not confuse judgment with the work of the Saviour in saving from sin, and certainly not think of condemnation in the eons ahead as a final state that keeps Jesus from being the Saviour of His people from their sins, and that keeps God from being manifested as the Saviour of all mankind.

EVERY TONGUE SHALL ACCLAIM

It is a great source of frustration that our commonly used translations of the Bible should have rendered certain scriptural terms in such a way that our Lord's teaching concerning judgment confuses and even contradicts His teaching concerning salvation from sins. The fact is that none of the warnings and prophecies of Jesus concerning judgment make it impossible for Him to save all His people and all sinners of all time from their sins. Those who are condemned will be brought to a recognition of need for salvation that surely will surpass the recognition of need possessed by the disciples in the fierce tossing of the Sea, and the paralytic in his seeking out of Jesus, and Matthew the tribute collector in the awareness of his disobedience and disloyalty, and Peter after denying the Lord.

It is beyond such judgment and condemnation that the most stubborn and calloused of sinners out of Israel and all mankind will be blessed with both a realization of their need of a Saviour and appreciation of Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Then, they also will look to Jesus and cry out in faith "Lord! Save us from our sins!" And He will do so on the basis of His death for sinners. Then, in accord with God's own timings, they will join Matthew and the ex-Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, in acclaiming the Lordship of Jesus the Saviour, Who is the Christ, and this for the glory of God, the Father (Phil.2:10,11).
D.H.H.

Paul the Prisoner

MUTUALLY SOLICITOUS

INSTINCTIVELY, most of us enjoy the companionship and support of others. Much of this was denied the apostle Paul when he suffered imprisonment in Rome.

Yet if Paul's incarceration brought a sense of loneliness and frustration, we find also much that is invigorating and encouraging. He was suffering evil unto bonds as a malefactor, *but the word of God was not bound* (cf 2 Tim.2:8-10). In the letters which were penned within those prison walls are recorded the most wonderful revelations ever to be confided from our gracious Father to His privileged children. In the light of such gracious blessings already lavished on those least deserving, our glorious expectation assures that God has a vast treasure store of such love gifts. What future precious disclosures might possibly compare with these:

"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, in love designating us beforehand for a place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus; in accord with the delight of His will, for the laud of the glory of His grace, which graces us in the Beloved" (Eph.1:3-6).

"For in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God's approach present, not of works, lest anyone should be boasting" (Eph.2:8-10).

"For let this disposition be in you, which is in Christ Jesus also, Who, being inherently in the form of God,

deems it not pillaging to be equal with God, nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity, and, being found in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

“Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God the Father” (Phil.2:5-11).

“. . . Who is the image of the invisible God, Firstborn of every creature, for in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him.

“And He is Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first, for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross,) through Him, whether those on earth or those in the heavens” (Col.1:15-20).

OF CAESAR'S HOUSE

Just imagine. For two years there was a constant stream of guards, each daily taking their place of duty alongside the great apostle. We talk today of a “captive audience,” but in those circumstances just who was the prisoner and who was the guard? These same guards must have witnessed frequent meetings between Paul and his visitors. They must have listened to some truly amazing discussions! It is highly unlikely that they would have the slightest interest in becoming proselytes in the religion of the despised

Jews, yet there was nothing in Paul's evangel which might provoke conflict in their loyalty to the Empire. There is joy for us as we read the closing words of Paul's “love letter” to the believers in Philippi:

“Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. Greeting you are the brethren with me. Greeting you are all the saints, *yet especially those of Caesar's house*” (Phil.4:21,22).

The above italics have been added to illustrate that far from being bound, the apostle's evangel was widely proclaimed and received. The soldier guards must have relayed the prisoner's words to their families, and of course, to their superiors. During the time of Paul's imprisonment the authorities were most sensitive concerning the stability of the empire. Any threat of rebellion was summarily crushed. But the apostle taught with all boldness, unforbidden, that which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ. His authority for this commission was plainly established when he emphatically suspended the heralding of God's kingdom to the apostate nation of Israel. His declaration of Isaiah's prophecy clearly indicated that this apostasy was to remain, “. . . until the complement of the nations may be entering” (Rom.11:25).

“Let it be known to you, then, that to the nations was dispatched this salvation of God, and they will hear” (Acts 28:28).

THE TIE THAT BINDS

During his exemplary service, Paul suffered grievous persecution. The proud believers in Corinth provoked him into listing these (2 Cor.11:22-33), which doubtless served as a rebuke. However, in his thankful letter to those in Philippi, there shines a most ingenuous quality. Here he presented just a little of himself, his impressive background—which he set aside—his complete commitment, and his earnest expectation. This he fervently yearned to share

with all, and especially those who had so generously contributed to his needs while in prison.

Yet he suffered! He lamented! Fully aware that his confinement would be bringing concern to those in Philippi, he expressed real anxiety that they should not sorrow, but rather rejoice. How touching to read of Epaphroditus being depressed because they had heard that he was infirm. What mutual solicitation is here! Although the apostle urged, "Be rejoicing in the Lord always! Again, I will declare, be rejoicing" (Phil.4:4), his heartache now as he observed the envy and strife and faction indicates that this was among the sorest trials of his life.

"THE LORD IS NEAR"

As we approach what we discern as the last days of this present eon, we must all suffer more and more the daunting experience of isolation. Yahweh Elohim, the Creator, in His wisdom knew that the condition of aloneness was not good for humankind (*cf* Gen.2:15-18). The members of the ecclesia share the blessed boon of being God's dwelling place, in spirit (Eph.2:22), but cut off from this great communion, "... the entire creation is groaning and travailing together until now" (Rom.8:22).

Even we, ourselves, who are awaiting the sonship, the deliverance, are awaiting it with endurance. We have learned not to be downcast with the apathy which often greets our witness. Daily, we find the most encouraging guidance and comfort in God's precious Word. We have this same consolation without, and we have within, the link, the union of love, which is through His indwelling spirit.

In the circumstances of Paul's imprisonment, he suffered from the knowledge that this would bring sadness to those in Philippi. Do we have this same anxiety for each other? Are we so preoccupied with our own pride and vainglory as to be indifferent to the circumstances of

fellow saints? Are we contentious; envious? Our wonderful blessings should so inspire us that our conduct ought to be in stark contrast to the hypocritical, self exaltation which infects Christianity today. We have not so learned of the humility and self-abasement of our Lord.

To be mutually solicitous for one another is a natural outcome of those who are honored with the unique distinction of being chosen to be members of the body of Christ. The apostle expressed this so searchingly: "And whether one member is suffering, all the members are sympathizing, or one member is being esteemed, all the members are rejoicing with it" (1 Cor.12:26).

Beloved in Christ; whoever you are; wherever you are; comforted in companionship; alone or isolated through location, death, or sad divergence of faith; take heart! "The Lord is near" (Phil.4:6).

Donald Fielding

MEDITATION

Lord, let me meditate upon Thy Word.
How pure Thy sayings, sweeter than the taste
Of honey in my mouth. Let me not waste
My thoughts on human teachings, which afford
No lasting happiness, but rather, Lord,
Create in me the will, Thy truth to learn,
And give me understanding to discern
The priceless gems with which Thy Word is stored.

O, let me seek Thee, then, with my whole heart!
Teach me Thy way, that I may lean on Thee,
And from Thy counsels nevermore depart,
For in Thy Word my greatest joy shall be.
Yes, Father, it shall be my chief delight
To meditate upon it day and night.

John H. Essex

ISRAEL'S FIRST TWO KINGS

THE books of Samuel are largely concerned with Israel's first two kings, and a comparative study of details recorded about them is full of instruction.

Saul is introduced by a genealogy which leads back to Aphiah, who is designated as "a master of valor" (1 Sam.9:1). Then Saul himself is described as ". . . a choice youth and good looking; there was no man of the sons of Israel better looking than he; from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people" (9:2). Saul was a natural choice for a position of leadership. His family was known for military prowess, and Israel needed deliverance from her enemies, particularly the Philistines. Saul had the appearance of a leader. His name means *asked* or *demand*, and he was the leader Israel was demanding. He represented what Israel desired.

Saul's name is also nearly the same in Hebrew as *sheol*, which may have acquired its name from its insatiable *demand* for humanity (Prov.30:15,16). Saul's reign was a constant struggle: "The war against the Philistines was unyielding all the days of Saul" (1 Sam.14:52). Saul died in battle, sorely frustrated, giving up his life in defeat (1 Sam.31). Such a thought brings to mind the cry of Paul when he spoke of trying to serve God in the strength of the flesh, "A wretched man am I. What will rescue me out of this body of death?" (Rom.7:24).

On the other hand, the introduction to David seems somewhat backward by human standards. God sent Samuel to Bethlehem, telling him *He had chosen* a king for

Himself from among the sons of Jesse (16:1). No longer was it Israel's choice; no longer was it the desire of the flesh that would be set in the place of rule. Instead, there was David whose name means *beloved*. He was not the desire of the nation. His only claim was that he was *beloved*. He was the object of Another's love.

This is faith's only claim. We had nothing. We did nothing. But God loves us—we are beloved. It is the realization of this fact that places the reins of life in the hands of faith.

The 16th chapter of 1 Samuel records David's anointing. In the first verse God sent Samuel, saying He had chosen a king from among Jesse's sons. But David's name is not even mentioned until the 13th verse. God required Samuel to follow instructions without disclosing what the end result would be. The king who would rule in faith would even be anointed as an obedient act of faith.

Jesse and all seven of his elder sons were assembled at the feast. But David was still in the field with the sheep. No one had thought it necessary to send for David—he was overlooked. No one saw in David what God saw in David. David was like the greater Beloved One (Matt.3:17; Col. 1:13) Who was to come many years later. He would be the Stone the builders would reject. But like David, He, the rejected Stone, would become the Head of the corner (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet.2:7). "He has no shapeliness nor honor that we should observe Him, and no such appearance that we should covet Him" (Isa.53:2).

Even Jesse himself did not recognize in David what God saw. Perhaps David was too idealistic, or too musical, or too straight-forward, or too artless, too naive or too uncompromising. For whatever reason, David, like the child Samuel at the feet of Eli, was too young and insignificant to merit attention. But when all *seven*—the number of completion— of Jesse's sons had passed by, it was time for the *eighth*. Like the eighth day for circum-

cision (*cf* Luke 1:59; Col.2:11) this *eighth* speaks of a new beginning with the passing away of the flesh, even with its most desirable aspects. As in the case of Noah (2 Pet.2:5), the *eighth* brings us through judgment to a new world and a new creation.

Saul alone is mentioned as a son of Kish. Evidently Saul was the firstborn, and perhaps the only son of Kish. Saul's precedence to David in the kingship is like the precedence of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15:45, "But not first the spiritual, but the soulish, thereupon the spiritual."

THE HAND OF GOD

From Saul's genealogy the narrative leads directly to Saul's search for his father's jennies. The loss of the jennies, even the minute details in the life of Kish that brought about his ownership of the jennies, even Saul's fruitless wanderings in search of the jennies, were all part of the workings of God. God said to Samuel, "About this time tomorrow, *I shall send a man to you* from the area of Benjamin, and you must anoint him as governor over My people Israel" (1 Sam.9:16). The emphasis of the context on God's disposal of this course of events should draw out the question *Why?* Why was Saul searching for the lost donkeys? Why was he not searching for lost sheep or goats or cattle or horses?

Saul was *not* searching for sheep because his leadership could not be characterized as shepherding. In fact, Saul is here being contrasted with the shepherd David. Saul was searching for donkeys because they are characterized by stubbornness. The scenario is remarkably like that of Israel. Israel was stubbornly wandering away from God, wanting to be like the nations, and serving the flesh. Saul would recover neither the donkeys of Kish nor those of his heavenly Father.

THE STUBBORNESS OF THE FLESH

The donkey is the epitome of stubbornness, and in this respect is ideally suited to represent humanity in its tenacious clinging to the works of the flesh. We speak not so much in this context of the works of the flesh which are universally considered sinful, but we speak of those works in which the flesh strives to please God and simultaneously to perform something in which it can boast.

In Exodus 13:13 Moses parallels humans and donkeys regarding the redemption of the firstborn. In his parleying with Job, Zophar said, "The hollow man shall become wise of heart whenever the colt of an onager [a wild ass] is born a human" (Job 11:12). In other words, the fool is stubbornly and hopelessly lost in his folly, and only God's grace can remove that folly from him. Paul also speaks of human stubbornness, saying, "For even as you once were stubborn toward God, yet now were you shown mercy at their stubbornness, thus these also are now stubborn to this mercy of yours, that now they also may be shown mercy. For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all" (Rom.11:30-32; see also Eph.2:1-2).

First, notice the stubbornness in Saul. Saul's impatience in offering the sacrifice before Samuel's arrival at Gilgal is a prime example (1 Sam.13:8-14):

[Saul] waited seven days, the appointed time that Samuel had set; yet Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the force was scattering from him. So Saul said, Bring close to me the ascent approach and the peace offerings; and he offered up the ascent approach. Now it came to be, as soon as he finished offering up the ascent approach, behold, Samuel was coming. And Saul went forth to meet him and bless him. But Samuel said, What have you done? Saul replied, When I saw that the force scattered from me, and you,

you did not come within the appointed days, and the Philistines were being gathered at Michmash, then I thought, Now the Philistines shall come down against me to Gilgal, and I have not yet beseeched the face of Yahweh. So I felt compelled to offer up the ascent approach.

Samuel replied to Saul, You acted unwisely! O that you had observed the instruction of Yahweh your Elohim that He enjoined on you! Then Yahweh would now have established your dynasty over Israel for the eon. Yet now your dynasty shall not be confirmed. Yahweh has sought out for Himself a man in accord with His own heart; and Yahweh shall commission him as governor over His people, for you have not observed what Yahweh enjoined on you.

Samuel's remonstrance of Saul shows that God's delight is in the obedience that comes from listening to God rather than the beckonings of the world, and in the devoted attention that weighs actions against the revealed will of God rather than the frantic displays of the flesh (*cf* 15:10-23). Samuel described Saul's actions as *rebellion, insubordination and rejection of Yahweh's command*. These three are a good summation of the stubbornness of the flesh.

Even the place of Saul's stubborn disobedience is significant. It was at Gilgal, which means *rolling away*. Israel, wandering in the wilderness, was an example of the flesh trying to serve God. Failure and grumbling menaced every step. It was Israel's fear and stubborn reliance upon the flesh and its appraisal of circumstances which kept them from entering the promised land earlier. At Gilgal the new generation was circumcised—the flesh was cut off. "Then Yahweh said to Joshua, 'Today I have *rolled the reproach* of Egypt away from you.' So they call the name of that place Gilgal until this day" (Josh.5:9). In the cross, which is the circumcision of Christ, our body of flesh is stripped off (Col.2:11). In His resurrection our reproach is rolled away. The rolling away of the stone from His tomb speaks

of the rolling away of our reproach. And this has its place in the believer's life too, for "those of Christ Jesus crucify the flesh together with its passions and lusts" (Gal.5:24).

Israel's stubbornness in the days of Saul was little different than in the days of Christ. Stephen, before the Jews, said, "*Stiff-necked and uncircumcised in your hearts and ears, you are ever clashing with the holy spirit!*" (Acts 7:51). And the nations are no better. Paul to the Galatians wrote: "O foolish Galatians! . . . did you get the spirit by works of law or by the hearing of faith? So foolish are you? Undertaking in spirit, are you now being completed in flesh?" (Gal.3:1-3). "For the flesh is lusting against the spirit, yet the spirit against the flesh. Now these are opposing one another, lest you should be doing whatever you may want" (Gal.5:17). This is all stubbornness to the complete and perfect work of God in Christ Jesus.

Saul never found the jennies. This is typical of our inability ever to reform the flesh. And, in contrast with Saul's failure is the record of David's behavior as a shepherd. When Jesse sent David to check on the welfare of his brothers in Saul's service, it is recorded that David left the sheep in the care of a keeper (17:20). This brings to mind that Christ did not leave His disciples alone, but sent the spirit of truth to console and guide them (John 16). Furthermore, in David's conversation with Saul, he told how he had protected the sheep, even rescuing them from the mouths of lions and bears (17:34-36).

Christ entered Jerusalem riding the colt of a donkey which never before had been ridden (Mark 11:1-11). This shows that His completed work is sufficient to vanquish the stubborn flesh and all its works and transform us into children of God. This is true not only of individuals, but also of Israel nationally, as the future will witness, and eventually of all humanity.

J. Philip Scranton

1 Samuel 9

9 +There ^{lb}was a man from ~Gibeah of~ Benjamin; + his name was Kish son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, the son of a Benjamite man, a master of valor. ²+ He ^bcame to ^ghave a son, and his name was Saul, a choice youth and good looking; + there was no man ^fof the sons of Israel better looking ^fthan he; from his ^{bk}shoulders + upward he was taller ^fthan any of the people.

³+When the jennies ^gof Saul's father Kish got ^llost, + Kish ^lsaid to his son Saul, Take ^{pr}now ^wwith you ^oone ^fof the lads; + get up, go and seek ^wthe jennies. ⁴+So ⁷they^c ^lpassed ⁱthrough the hill country of Ephraim, and ⁷they^s ^lpassed ⁱthrough the area of Shalisha, +but they did not find them. + They ^lpassed ⁱthrough the area of Shaalim, +yet they were not there. +When ⁷they^{cs} ^lpassed ⁱthrough the Benjamite area, they ^lstill did not find them. ⁵They^l had come into the area of Zuph +when Saul said to his lad who was with him, Do ^gcome, + let us ^rreturn, lest my father ^lstop worrying ^fabout the jennies and become anxious ^gabout us. ⁶+Yet ⁷the lad^o ^lsaid to him, Behold ^{pr}now, a man of Elohim is in ^wthis city, and the man is highly respected^l; everything ^wthat he ^lspeaks ^lcomes, yea comes^r true. Now let us ^ggo there; perhaps he shall tell ^gus ^oour way on which we should go. ⁷+ Saul ^{lso}replied to his lad, +But ^{bd}if we ^ggo, + what shall we bring ^gthe man? For the bread ^fin our ^{all}bags is used up, and there is no token of regard ⁷with us^o to bring to the man of Elohim. What do ^wwe have? ⁸+ The lad ^ganswered^r ^wSaul ^lagain, + ^lsaying, Behold, I find I have a quarter of a shekel of silver in my hand. + ⁷We^c may give it to the man of Elohim, and he will tell ^gus ^wabout our way.

⁹ Beforetime in Israel, ⁱwhen ^wa man went^r to inquire of Elohim, he would ^{sa}speak thus, ^gCome and let us ^ggo ^{fr}to the seer^l; for beforetime ^gthe prophet of today was

^lcalled ^wa seer^l.—¹⁰ +So Saul ^lsaid to his lad, Good is your word; do ^gcome, let us ^ggo. +So they ^lwent to the city where the man of Elohim was.

¹¹ As they were going up ⁱthe ascent to the city, + they^l found maidens coming forth to bail water; and they ^{lso}asked ^gthem, Is there the seer^l in this place? ¹²+ They ^lanswered ^wthem, + ^lsaying, He is there; behold before you! Make haste now, ^lbecause today he has come to the city; for there is a sacrifice today for the people ⁱon the high-place. ¹³ As soon as you enter^r the city, you shall ^{so}surely find ^whim ⁱere he goes ^lup to^d the high-place to eat. ⁱThe people shall not eat until he comes^r; for he^l must ^lbless the sacrifice, ⁷and^{cs} afterward those ^wwho are invited^l shall eat. + Now go up, for you shall find ^whim right away. ¹⁴+So they went ^lup to the city. When they came^l into the midst of the ^wgate^r, behold +there was Samuel coming forth to meet them ^gon his ^{on}way^r up to the high-place.

¹⁵ +Now one day before Saul came^r, Yahweh Himself had revealed ^wto the ear of Samuel, ^gsaying^r, ¹⁶ ^{as}About this time tomorrow, I shall send a man to you from the area of Benjamin, and you must anoint him ^gas governor over My people Israel. + He will save ^wMy people from the hand of the Philistines, for I have seen ⁷the humiliation of^w My people, ⁱand their outcry has come to Me.

¹⁷ +When Samuel saw ^wSaul, + Yahweh Himself responded to him: ^{bd}Here is the man of whom I ^{sa}spoke to you; this one shall steer the course ⁱof My people. ¹⁸ +Then Saul came ^lclose ^wto Samuel in the midst of the gate and ^lsaid to him, Do tell ^gme, ^{pr}please, just where is the house of the seer^l? ¹⁹ + Samuel ^lanswered ^wSaul, + ^lsaying, I am the seer^l. Go up before me to the high-place, +for ^ryou must eat with me today. + In the morning I will send you off, and I shall tell ^gyou everything ^wthat is in your heart. ²⁰ +As for your jennies ^wthat got lost^l three days ago today, you must not ^{lp}set ^wyour heart ^gon them, for they have been

found. ^aNow to ^awhom does all that is desirable in Israel belong if not to you and to all the house of your father? ²¹ + Saul ^aanswered, ^asaying, Am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest of the tribes of Israel? ^aMy family is the most insignificant ^fof all the families of the ⁷tribes^c of Benjamin. ^aSo why do you speak to me ^{as}in ^athis manner?

²² + Then Samuel ^atook ^aSaul and ^ahis lad and ^abrought them into^d the room and ^agave ^athem ^aplace ⁱat the head of those ^awho had been invited; ^athey were ^{as}about thirty men. ²³ + Samuel ^asaid to the ^{sl}cook, Do ^abring ^athe assigned share ^wthat I gave to you, of which I said to you, ^{pl}Set ^ait aside ^{wi}by you. ²⁴ + So the ^{sl}cook ^araised up ^athe leg and the ^{~fat tail~} and ^aplaced them before Saul. And ⁷Samuel^o ^asaid ⁷to Saul^o, Behold, ^{~What was kept^l reserved[~] is ^{pl}set[~] before you. Eat; for to this appointed time has it been kept^l for you, when I ^ahad said[~], I have invited the people. ^aSo Saul ^aate with Samuel ⁱon ^athat day. ²⁵ + Then they ^adescended from the high-place to the city; and he ^aspoke with Saul on the roof-level.}

²⁶ + They ^aarose ^aearly; ^ait came to ^abe as the dawn ascended[~], ^athat Samuel ^acalled to Saul ^{7on^o} the roof-level, ^asaying[~], Do get up ^athat I may send you off. ^aSaul ^agot up, and the two of them, he and Samuel, went ^aforth, ^aoutside^d. ²⁷ As they were going down ⁱto the end of the city, ^aSamuel said to Saul, ^{sa}Tell ^athe lad ^athat he should pass on before us,—and he ^apassed on—^aas for you, stand still ^{as}for awhile, and I shall announce to you ^athe word of Elohim.



1 Samuel 16

16 + Yahweh ^asaid to Samuel, How ^{fr}long will you mourn for Saul, ^asince I have rejected him from being king[~] over

Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go! I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have ^{see}selected ⁱamong his sons a king for Myself. ² + Samuel ^{lsa}replied, How can I ^ago? ^aIf Saul hears of it, ^ahe will kill me. ^aYahweh ^{lsa}answered, ⁷Take^{~O^c} a heifer of the herd in your hand and ^asay, I have come to sacrifice to Yahweh. ³ + You must invite ^aJesse ^{7to^c} the sacrifice, and then I ^ashall ^amake known to you ^wwhat you should do. ^aYou must anoint for Me ^athe one whom I shall ^{sa}designate to you.

⁴ + Samuel ^adid ^was Yahweh had ^{sp}instructed him. ^aWhen he ^acame to Bethlehem, ^athe elders of the city ^atrembled ^aas they met[~] him. ⁷They^{~cs} ^{lsa}asked, Are you coming[~] in peace, ^{7O} seer^{IQ?} ⁵ + He ^{lsa}replied, I have come in peace to sacrifice to Yahweh. Hallow yourselves and ⁷rejoice today[~] ^wwith me. ^aHe himself ^ahallowed ^aJesse and ^ahis sons and ^ainvited ^athem to the sacrifice.

⁶ + It ^{lb}came about ⁱwhen they entered[~] and he ^{lsee}looked ^aat Eliab, ^athat he ^{lsa}thought, ⁹Surely, in front of Yahweh is His anointed. ⁷ + But Yahweh ^asaid to Samuel, You must not look ^aat his appearance and ^aat the loftiness of his stature, for I have rejected him. For not ^was ^ahuman ^asees, ⁷does the One, Elohim, ^asee^o. ^t A human ^asees ^athe visible appearance, ^ayet Yahweh ^asees into the heart, ⁸ + Then Jesse ^acalled ^aAbinadab and ^amade him ^apass before Samuel; ^abut he ^asaid, Yahweh has not chosen ⁱthis one ^{mr}either. ⁹ + When Jesse ^amade Shammah ^apass by, he ^aagain ^asaid, Yahweh has not chosen ⁱthis one ^{mr}either. ¹⁰ + Thus Jesse ^amade seven of his sons ^apass before Samuel, and Samuel ^asaid to Jesse, Yahweh has not chosen any ⁱof these.

¹¹ + Then Samuel ^{lsa}asked ^aJesse, Are the lads finished? ^aHe ^{lsa}replied, There remains ^{fr}yet the youngest. ^aYet behold, he is shepherding ⁱthe flock. ^aSamuel ^asaid to Jesse, Do send and procure him, for we shall not gather around until he comes[~] here. ¹² + So he ^asent and ^ahad

him 'come; + he was ruddy, with lovely eyes and of good appearance. And Yahweh 'said, Rise and anoint him, for this is he. ¹³ + So Samuel 'took `the horn of oil and 'anointed `him in the ^{nr}midst of his brothers; and the spirit of Yahweh 'prospered `on David from `that `day + onward. + Then Samuel 'rose and 'went to^d `Ramah.

¹⁴ + As for the spirit of Yahweh, it had withdrawn from ^{wi}Saul, and an evil spirit from `Yahweh frightened him. ¹⁵ + Saul's courtiers 'said to him, Behold ^{pr}now, an evil spirit from Elohim is frightening you. ¹⁶ Let our lord ^{pr}now ^{sa}order your courtiers, who are before you, that they should seek a man who knows^l how to playⁱ the harp. + Whenever it ^boccurs ⁱthat an evil spirit from Elohim ^bcomes⁻ over you, + then he will play ⁱwith his hand, and it will be well [>]with you ⁷and ^egive you rest^o. ¹⁷ + So Saul 'said to his courtiers, ^{see}Select ^{pr}now for me a man who [>]can play⁻ well, and ⁻bring him to me. ¹⁸ + One ^fof the young attendants 'answered, + 'saying, Behold, I have ^{see}observed a son ^{'of} Jesse the Bethlehemite who knows^l how to play. + He is a master of valor, + a man of war, + proficient^l in speech, + a handsome man, and Yahweh is with him. ¹⁹ + So Saul 'sent messengers to Jesse, + 'saying, Do send to me `David, your son who is ⁱwith ⁷your^o flock.

²⁰ + Jesse 'took a donkey ⁷and ^{lp}loaded on it an omer^o of bread, + a skin-bottle of wine, and one kid of the goats, and 'sent it to Saul ⁱby the hand of his son David. ²¹ + So David 'came to Saul and 'stood before him. + Saul 'liked him very much, and later David 'became a ^{all}gear-bearer^l for him. ²² + Saul 'sent word to Jesse, [>]saying⁻, Let David ^{pr}now stay before me, for he has found favor in my eyes. ²³ + Whenever it ^boccurred ⁱthat an ⁷evil^o spirit from Elohim ^bcame⁻ [>]over Saul, + then David took `the harp and played ⁱwith his hand. + It inspired [>]Saul, and it was well [>]with him. + Then the evil spirit would withdraw from ^{on} him.

THE THUNDER OF GOD'S MASTERFUL DEEDS

WHAT Job's associates say is not absolutely wrong, but it is often wrong in implication and application. Truth concerning God is not used by them to bring strength and assurance to the suffering Job, but rather just the opposite. And there is no real interest in glorifying God for His power and wisdom and righteousness, but rather in defending their own concepts of His glory, thus in effect deflecting glory to themselves.

DIVINE DOMINION AND HUMAN DEPRAVITY

Bildad's final, and very brief, address repeats thoughts that were previously brought forward by others (*cf* Job 4:17-19; 15:14-16) concerning God's power and human insignificance. God has dominion and awesome might (25:2), and man is a maggot and worm before Him (v.6).

The facts are so; the significance given to the facts is "not rightly so" (*cf* Job 42:8). The One with awesome might and numberless troops does establish peace, but if this has application to Job in his present affliction it is not a simple use of divine force in retribution against little creatures for whom God has no very deep interest, as Bildad suggests. It is true, as Job himself has testified, that a mortal (in himself) cannot be justified before El (*cf* 9:26), but Bildad repeats this truism in order to distance God from human humiliation and woe. And this offers nothing to Job except hopelessness and multiplied despair. It is well that the three associates are now silenced.

ONE WITHOUT VIGOR

Job's response is sarcasm in 26:2-4 followed by a magnificent poem concerning ancient operations of what Bildad called God's "dominion and awesome might."

How Bildad has helped Job! He has spoken of God's power to one who is without vigor, and of the counsels of God to one who is without wisdom. But what he has said offers no hope to Job for strength or understanding.

As he has all along, Job turns his attention from his associates and their insinuations, and he endeavors to direct his thoughts to God and His operations. Since Yahweh has not yet spoken to Job, he can dwell only on previous revelations of God as passed down from generation to generation. The superb poem of Job 26:5-14 concerns a "little buzz" of the thunder of God's masterful deeds (26:14) in past times, most particularly as recorded in Genesis 1:2,3.

Job has referred to this passage before, and the reason for his great interest in it is not difficult to see. The chaos (*cf* Job 26:7) and darkness (*cf* 26:10) of Genesis 1:2 parallel that in Job's present existence, and the operation of God's spirit and word in bringing seemliness out of the chaos (Job 26:12,13) suggests a possible parallel to Job's own deliverance. The waters and thick clouds covering the earth and blocking out the full moon (26:8,9) reflect the account of Genesis concerning the abyss covered by darkness. And here also Job sees God acting on the surface of the waters, using again, as he did in 24:18, almost exactly the same phrase used at the end of the second verse of the Scriptures. Whatever God's action is, whether delineating the horizon or circling a limit,¹ over the surface of the waters, He is seen here as bringing order out of chaos. And that is where Job's expectation lies.

1. These two phrases are alternative translations for the opening words of Job 26:10.

Concordant Version of the Book of Job

JOB 25,26

25 ⁺Then Bildad the Shuhite [']answered, ⁺ [']saying:

² **Dominion** and awesome might are with Him,
Who is ^destablishing peace in His heights.

³ Is it possible to **number** [›] His troops,
And on ^awhom does His light not [']rise?

⁴ ^{wt}How ⁺then can a mortal be [']justified ^{wi}before El,
And ^{wt}how can one **born** [']of woman be [']spotless?

⁵ ^{bd}If ^{fr}even the moon ⁺ does not [']irradiate,
And the stars, they are not **spotless** in His eyes,

⁶ **How much less** ['] a mortal, that maggot,
And a son of humanity, that worm?

26 ⁺So Job [']answered, ⁺ [']saying:

² ^{wt}How you have helped one without vigor
And saved an arm ^{not}without strength!

³ ^{wt}How you have counseled one [›] without wisdom,
And the reality of things

you have ^{› mm}abundantly ^cmade known!

⁴ [']For ^awhom have you told these declarations,
And ^awhose breath has come forth from you?

⁵ The **Rephaim**, they [']travailed,
^f Those **beneath** the waters and tabernacling in them.

⁶ The **unseen** was **naked** in front of Him,
And there was **no covering** for Abaddon.

⁷ He **stretched** [']out the north over the chaos,
Hanging the earth upon nothingness.

⁸ He **bundled** [']up the waters in His thick clouds,
And the cloud was not **rent** beneath them.

The opening passages of Genesis say nothing about Rephaim² (Job 26:5) or Abaddon (v.6; cf Job 28:22; 31:12; Psa.88:11; Rev.9:11) or Rahab (v.12; cf Job 9:13; Psa.87:4; 89:10; Isa.30:7; 51:9), though these are used elsewhere in Scripture often in contexts concerning ancient upheavals. As Yahweh Himself will do later, Job draws attention to great and fearful creations of God, human and animal and non-terrestrial, and God's inscrutable judgments (cf Rom.11:33) and dealings with them.

In 26:7 Job speaks of the earth in chaos, having been hung upon nothingness; it is seen covered by God's thick clouds which kept back the light of the full moon (v.8). But then in verse 10, using the language of Genesis 1:2, Job sees God marking out a horizon in all the murkiness of water and cloud and diffused and dimmed light, so that light and darkness were separated as in Genesis 1:4 and the waters were divided as in Genesis 1:6. The invisible power of God is at work here so that the "columns" supporting all this cover of liquids and gases were made to collapse (v.11) and the sea is lulled, and "Rahab" (which means "Audacious" and is often used in reference to Egypt, and perhaps refers here to rushing channels of water) is transfixed and brought under control.

Job 26:13 speaks of two pivotal events of enormous significance. By God's spirit the heavens were made seemly, so that clarity and beauty filled the skies. And by His hand He travailed in the creation of the fugitive serpent. Genesis informs us only that God made every creature, and consequently we assume this includes the Adversary who appears as a serpent in Genesis chapter 3. But here in Job we learn not only that God made the Adversary, but that He did so with struggle and pain like the travailing of a woman in childbirth. God is responsible for all these

2. cf *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.22, p.255.

- ⁹ He **held** back the **face** of the **~full moon~**,
Spreading over it **His cloud**.
¹⁰ **~He delineated** the **horizon** over the surface of the waters,
Unto the *all* **boundary of light with darkness**.
¹¹ The **columns** of the **heavens** were made to **collapse**
And were ^lstunned ^fat **His rebuke**.
¹² **By His vigor** He lulled the sea,
And ⁱby **His understanding** He transfixed **Rahab**.
¹³ **By His spirit** the **heavens** were made seemly;
His hand travailed with the **fugitive serpent**.
¹⁴ **Behold**, these are but the **fringes** of **His ways**,
And what a little **buzz** of a word is heard ⁱof **Him!**
⁺**Yet** the **thunder** of **His masterful** deeds,
"who shall understand it?"

26:9 --- full moon: MT throne.

26:10 --- He delineated the horizon: MT He circled a statutory limit.



epoch-shaping events, both positive and negative. And this is vital to Job's whole struggle and to our own appreciation of God and this portion of His Word.

THE FUGITIVE SERPENT

God brings travail to the Rephaim, exposes the dark and hiddenness of Sheol, and lulls and transfixes the waters. He is greater than all of these, and His triumphs over them are but minor actions in comparison with the immensity of His masterful deeds.

But of all the comparisons in power presented here, that made in Job 26:13 is most remarkable. *By God's spirit the heavens were made seemly; His hand travailed with the fugitive serpent*. A. E. Knoch commented on this passage many years ago:³

3. *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.15, pp.206-208.

“Note the contrast between the garnishing of the heavens by His *spirit*, and the painful production of the serpent by His *hand*. The spirit is used of intimate and vital association; the hand holds its work at a distance, and suggests power and skill, rather than communion.

“. . . Not only is the term *serpent* the same as the name of Eve’s tempter in Eden’s garden, but Isaiah describes it in precisely the same terms, the *fugitive serpent* (Isa.27:1). ‘In that day, Yahweh shall visit with His sword, hard, great and steadfast, upon leviathan, the fugitive serpent, even upon leviathan, the tortuous serpent, and He will kill the monster which is in the sea.’ [The] connection with the twelfth chapter of Revelation is too close to deny. If Satan is that ‘ancient serpent’ (Rev.20:2), how can we help but identify him with Isaiah and Job and Genesis?”

For all their vast proportions, these operations of God in creation and disruption and making seemly are only “fringes of His ways,” (Job 26:14). What they say about God’s dominion and awesome might (25:2) constitute only “a little buzz of a word.” The full “thunder of His masterful deeds” is beyond human grasp.

Having expanded the greatness of God and the power of His deeds far beyond the feeble attempt of Bildad in chapter 25, Job has shown himself as even more insignificant a maggot and worm than Bildad had thought. But the greatness of God and the littleness of the human does not remove us out of the sphere of divine purpose and concern. The buzz of God’s deeds as surely and as truly involves the boils and sorrows that engulf Job as the lulling of the raging waters of the inundated earth and the making seemly of the tempestuous heavens of the disruption of Genesis 1:2. Job’s afflictions are somehow bound together with God’s own travail in forming the Adversary, and the thunder of God’s masterful deeds will resound effectively and victoriously over it all.

D.H.H.