

Division, the Result of Idolatry

—C. B. Beekhuizen

"Take thee ten pieces; for thus saith Jehovah the God of Israel: Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee... because they have forsaken Me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon" (1 Ki. 11:31,33).

Attack on the Oneness in Christ

It is very humbling when believers are confronted with a party spirit. Nearly always this leads to discord and division, bringing separation within families and fellowships. The unity of which Christ spoke in His prayer to the Father then becomes invisible to the world, even though believers have the special charge to keep it in the uniting bond of peace, "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." When Christians confess that their heavenly position is in Christ Jesus and that they have been "baptized into one body" in the power of the Holy Spirit, people in the world should be able to notice this unity because they do not have such a unity (Jn. 17:21; Eph. 4:3; 1 Cor. 12:13). The enemy of our souls, men's "murderer from the beginning," is therefore extremely interested in attacking and beclouding this unity in Christ, often by establishing a *unity organized by men*.

Because of these dangerous attacks it is of utmost importance that the newly converted learn "*the good fight of faith... to know whether they would obey the commandments of Jehovah, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses*" (Judg. 3:1-4). During a time of failure and confusion, good and humble pastoral guidance of our young ones is basic to their life of faith. They need older people, spiritual "foster parents and caretakers," who know the battle and who, without a spirit of bitterness, criticism, or jealousy, are humble enough to acknowledge their own failures and point out to these young ones in the faith the snares and traps (Gal. 4:1-7; Num. 8:25-26; 1 Chr. 23:27-28). This is "priestly service in the sanctuary," in which no "generation gap" is known (Mal. 4:6). Thereby the newly converted learn from the life experiences of more mature believers so they can begin to understand how Satan attempts to becloud true unity in Christ, and can thus become armed against his wiles by the armour of faith (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11-18).

Natural Wisdom Without Meekness Produces a Party Spirit!

King Solomon typifies believers who in difficult circumstances become aware that they need wisdom from above to discern God's mind (1 Ki. 3:9). When believers request this wisdom from God regarding matters of government within the assembly, God certainly grants it (Jam. 1:5). But having received wisdom does not mean that believers have automatically received a spirit of *meekness*! Only when believers humble themselves before the Lord Jesus can He teach them what *meek wisdom* is (Mt. 11:29). The result will be *rest*, not *confusion*! Wisdom without humility does *not* show a meek walk, but appears as heartless, legalistic, lacking love. This natural wisdom knows the zeal of Jehu, but does not know an "enlightened understanding." It is even possible, that a "gift of government" may be mixed with *bitter emulation and strife* (1 Cor. 12:8, 28; Jas. 3:13-14; see also Solomon in 1 Ki. 11:40)!

Evidence of Being Sealed by God's Spirit

Naturally, such a mixture of godly and human philosophical ideas and influences has a reason. When a soul, through repentance and confession of sins, has recognized the need for a Saviour, and has subsequently received the Lord Jesus as personal Redeemer, a process has begun that according to the Bible finds its source in the new birth (1 Pet. 1:23). The Bible, when referring to its result, speaks of those who "*have been born... of God*" (Jn. 1:13).

As soon as this "having been born of God" is confirmed by the Holy Spirit, both to the individual's own conscience and to the consciences of the so-called "foster parents and caretakers," there will be a mutual, open, and joyful acknowledgement of it, for "*the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God*" (Rom 8:16). *Without such confirming testimony of the Spirit it is not possible to testify with a good conscience that an individual is a child of God* (Rom. 8:9). When this, through wrong teaching or an unbroken spirit, is nevertheless done, the human spirit will never be set free from a legal yoke and it will give others cause to doubt the new birth or the sealing of the Spirit (Acts 19:2; 8:13, 18-24; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 3:10; 4:20).

The Spirit of Wisdom in Conflict with the Spirit of Balaam

It is possible that someone may receive a certain degree of wisdom in answer to prayer. Solomon received this "spirit of wisdom" (Isa. 11:2; 1 Ki. 3:12). It is to be expected that this "spirit of wisdom and understanding" will be recognized by others and often appreciated but... also envied! Yet, Scripture and practice teach us that believers can at times be influenced by the "spirit of Balaam," *causing them to "leave the straight way" "go astray" and "follow in the path of Balaam"* (2 Pet. 2:15). Often this results when one becomes conscious of human honour and prosperity which, after all, accompany the possession of this wisdom. Because of this, leaders blessed with charisma especially need vigilance and prayer (2 Pet. 2:15; Rev. 2:14; 2 Chr. 26:16). When this "path of Balaam" has been entered upon, only heavy trials can bring such a "shining star" back (Job 34:36; 36:8-9; 42:5-6; Dan. 11:35; 12:3).

Causes of Darkness Regarding God

Solomon was very much aware of his lofty position and calling, but also of his inadequacy (1 Ki. 3:7-9). But such awareness does not automatically assure that this sense of inadequacy is permanent. Success and recognition can be dangerous elements that draw the human spirit away from God. With Solomon we see this happening from the moment the princes of the surrounding nations begin to honour him for his outstanding wisdom and knowledge. The result was not long in coming. After he had taken care that, with the means entrusted to him, God's house was built according to the plans prepared by David, Solomon's spirit was free to seek for projects of a more secular nature. It is at such a time that the spirit of Balaam attacks! Solomon could have recognized the danger if he had occupied himself more intensively with the history of the people of Israel in the wilderness. But his special intellect had opened up to the "wisdom of this world," of which James says: *"This is not the wisdom which comes down from above, but earthly, natural, devilish"* (Jas. 3:15). At this point in Solomon's life darkness toward God begins. The result is *emulation and strife, disorder, and every evil thing* (Jas. 3:16).

The Fruit of Godly Wisdom

Solomon had a special audience with God twice. The first time it took place when Solomon, aware of his own inadequacy and dependency, had the opportunity to make his request(s) known to God (1 Ki. 3:5; Phil. 4:6). The king was well aware of his special governmental task of reigning over and leading a great nation. Having been publicly recognized by priests, princes, and people as leader, he had received authority (Dt. 31:7; 34:9; Num. 27:18-23). Yet, he needed *more* than these outward marks! If Solomon *really* wanted to influence the hearts of his people, he not only needed *recognition*, but he needed to receive *"wisdom from above,"* wisdom from God! As soon as he had received this, Solomon could work with blessing and see fruit appear upon his labours, the *fruit of God's Spirit!*

Idolatry and the Results of Disobedience

But, as mentioned, there came a moment in Solomon's life at which his mind changed. The Bible speaks of *"the renewing of your mind"* and shows that this *"bastion of our understanding"* must (sometimes) be razed. We see this clearly in Solomon's life. For there came a time when Solomon *"became conformed to this world"* and thereby became darkened in his understanding (Rom. 12:2; 1:21). In actual fact, that moment began already when he chose Pharaoh's daughter as wife. This choice cannot be compared with the marriage of the tested Joseph, who was in fact a prisoner who had no other choice (Gen. 41:45). In this, Joseph was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, who received a bride out of this world, now known as the "Assembly of the living God." With Solomon the case was clearly different! He had a free yet also restricted choice, the choice that God had put before him: to be as king an example to priests, princes, and people (Dt. 17:16-17). Perhaps for this reason Solomon needed a *new* audience with God after the completion of God's house, but this time to *warn* him! He had to take David's obedience of faith and faithfulness as an example and especially had to observe the consecration of a perfect heart directed to God's will (1 Ki. 9:2,4). During this special audience God begins to speak about the results of disobedience and idolatry, something against which Solomon obviously had to watch. We know the outcome of his history! The flattering words of foreign princesses and princes did not fail to have a negative influence upon his intelligent and receptive spirit, just as such words had upon Hezekiah years later (2 Chr. 32:25; Isa. 39:1-2). The demons behind the gods of the Egyptians, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites began to distort his thinking and divert it from God's thoughts. Mixing of principles was the result, something whereby also the Assembly of Jesus Christ became confronted with *the war of the Lord and the sword of His mouth* (Rev. 2:16). Solomon, too, experienced what it means that *"judgment begins at the house of God"* (1 Pet. 4:17)!

The Spirits Behind Modern Idolatry

When the apostle Paul points the proud Corinthians, who were desirous of outward display, to their weak spiritual condition, he linked his teaching and correction to the power of demonic infiltration. Like Samson, the Corinthians were not aware that they were losing their inner strength through pride, emulation, sectarian ideas, impurity, idolatry, and false doctrine. Like Solomon, who was confronted with enemies who undermined his authority from both within and without, so were the Corinthians. It had begun with a strong sense of security based on faith and a sound and hopeful expectation for the future reign of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:4-9). But it was precisely this strong consciousness of hope and salvation in Christ that was negatively influenced by the idolization of gifted and called leaders. This allowed a "spirit of error" to penetrate their thoughts (1 Tim. 4:1). The direct result was division and the formation of parties around certain favorite leaders who quarreled with each other (1 Cor. 1:12).

The second spiritual influence that can penetrate through the demons hidden behind this idolatry is that of *human reason*; this affected the believers at Colosse as well (1 Cor. 1:17-31; Col. 2:8,18). The result is that the Person of Christ is no longer the centre, but certain portions of the truth which are then mixed with human philosophy and intellectual ingenuity. This often results from an undue stress on spiritual gifts and spiritual oneness, which in turn comes at the cost of the charge "*to keep the truth in love.*" Through this, many believers stagnate in their spiritual growth; and not only does a party spirit grow, but also loveless behaviour — *biting, devouring, and consuming one another* (Gal. 5:15).

The Influence of Spiritual Powers and Authorities

The moment that Solomon transgressed the command against polygamy (Dt. 17:17), he lost his godly discernment, received a "*spirit of error,*" and was caught in the "*snare of the devil*" (2 Th. 2:11; 2 Thu. 2: 26). King Saul, also, knew this phenomenon in which he not only became depressive and suspicious, but also had a persecution complex and began to think differently about extrasensory perceptions. This culminated in communication with (evil) spirits from the realm of the dead, who present themselves as "angels of light," in his case the late prophet Samuel. This also explains his contradictory actions and changed views. A characteristic of people who are under the influence of such powers is a contentious and warlike spirit. This aggressive, warring spirit hid itself behind the god *Kamos*, which Solomon worshipped with his Moabitish wife. In this the once-wise king differed from his father David, who dealt entirely differently with his opponents than did his gifted son (1 Ki. 11:40; 2 Sam. 16:11). Apparently Solomon also began to think more tolerantly about sexuality and perverse behaviour. This was due to his Ammonitish spouse, who worshipped the god *Milcom*, or Moloch. According to scholars, the spirit behind this god would bring the worshippers into a condition of hypnotic sleepiness in which they could be easily manipulated by a strong personality. The results were visible during the lives of Rehoboam and Abijam who, without meting out discipline, allowed sodomites to ply their trade and permitted the worship of idols (1 Ki. 15:12). We recognize this unclean spirit in certain organizations for sexual reform, modern education, and sensitivity training groups, in which one begins to give more attention to group thinking than to the opinion of the individual. Sad to say, this spirit has also entered in among the thoughts of believers! It is a spirit which, when attention has been drawn to it, works within so-called "group and conversation circles," in which the group can manipulate, steer, and lead entire fellowships. The individual only notices the result after the decisions have been made!

Hiding behind the gods worshipped during Solomon's reign, there were, however, even more spirits who had infiltrated among God's people. There was the spirit behind the god *Ishtar*, or the "queen of heaven" causing believers to adhere to the so-called "universal faith" and to consult horoscopes. We see this kind of thinking coming back in the various New Age movements, but also in movements that promote the joining of Catholic, Reformed, and Evangelical churches, striving for a new form of spiritual unity. They find each other under one intellectual head that has the charismatic ability to bring the various basics of faith under one denominator, even giving it political clout. We recognize this spirit behind the efforts for unity during the reigns of King Asa and King Jehoshaphat (2 Ki. 16, 20).

The spirit behind the god *Apis* from Egypt we recognize by the many pictures and symbols found today around the neck, in the ears, and sometimes even in the nose and navel. The religious aspect of this form of idolatry is recognizable during the reign of King Hezekiah in the image of the brazen serpent, the so-called *Nehushtan* (2 Ki. 18:4). This religious rite is also today richly represented in the church, not only visibly in the various symbols that stem from early Christianity, but also in the idol service of the god *Aesculapius*, the god of healing and magical herbal extracts (2 Chr. 16:12-14).

Finally we recognize in the gods *Meni* and *Gad* another spirit floating around within the Christian church, a spirit that represents lotteries and chance, of which Paul says that its worshippers "*believe that piety is gain.*" It is all the result of a lack of watchfulness and love for the truth. It is *a different doctrine, one that does not agree with the "sound words, those*

of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to piety" which has penetrated into the Christian church (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Let us wake up and become watchful, humble ourselves, repent, and again hold fast the truth in love and faith. We have, after all, received God's love and eternal life. Therefore we may, after repentance, begin anew, for Scripture says: "*But in their trouble they turned to Jehovah the God of Israel, and sought Him, and He was found of them.*" When we return to our first love, and, like King Asa, *put away the abominations... and renew the altar of Jehovah, that is before the house of Jehovah,* God will let Himself be found and give us rest (2 Chr. 15:4, 8, 19). Let us therefore *keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted... be sober in all things, bear evils, do the work of an evangelist... fill up the full measure of our ministry... while building ourselves up on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, so that we are kept in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life* (2 Tim. 1:14; 4:5; Jude 20-21).

The Prophecy of Zephaniah (3)

—H. L. Rossier

Chapter 1 (Continued)

Indifference

Another characteristic of the evil mind-set of the people who oppose God is *indifference*. To such people God is an "unimportant entity." Such people are entirely taken up with worldly desires, seeking to satisfy their hearts' needs by its allurements. Because they cannot live without these supposed needs, they search out evil things, while failing to take into account that thereby eternal darkness will be their portion. Such people do not search for God. They are interested only in someone whose name, courage, or deeds appeal to them. They want to know the smallest events in his life, everything that is connected with him, his environment, his house, his family. They show great interest in his opinion, the addresses given by him are thoroughly studied. But when *God's* name is mentioned, they don't show the least bit of interest. Truly, indifference is worse than hatred!

The Day of the Lord Is Near

"Be silent at the presence of the Lord Jehovah; for the day of Jehovah is at hand; for Jehovah hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath hallowed His guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's sons, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. And in that day will I punish all those that leap over the threshold, who fill their master's house with violence and deceit" (vv. 7-9).

In verses 2-6 the Lord announced that He would wipe away all offences among the nations and in Israel, together with the people who committed these abominations. In particular He pointed to the increase in Israel's idolatry which dared to combine the service for God with that of the false gods. In verses 7-9 the execution of this judgment is announced. First of all it would fall on Jerusalem, for guilt is measured according to the privileges one has. "Be silent at the presence of the Lord Jehovah"! Who among us has not experienced the impressive silence that precedes heavy weather? Suddenly the lightning bolt struck, thunder burst forth, and an all-destroying wild storm arose. It was the stillness as a prelude before the hurricane, which, once set loose, cannot be restrained by anything. So it is here also. Excuses could no longer be made, no hasty conversion was possible, and there was no more time for sending up pleading prayers! The long-delayed judgment would suddenly be executed. Amos, who spoke of the same conditions, also said: "Silence!" (Ch. 6:10).

But then the judgment had already been executed, and *no one* had been left behind. In Zephaniah the judgment is at the point of being executed. When the day of the Lord begins it is too late to escape the judgment.

Habakkuk 2:20 also contains the word "Silence." It has the sense of the Lord sitting "in His holy temple"; after the execution of the judgment, He has established His sovereignty and once again dwells in His temple. Then the whole world will acknowledge that the judgment was righteous and necessary, so that *God* might be *glorified* therein. This fearful day of the Lord — in the New Testament the day of the coming of the Son of man — is everywhere in Scripture the day of judgment. In Zephaniah we find a certain ascend in the expression "the day of Jehovah is at hand." In chapter 1:7 it concerns the judgment over Jerusalem by Babel which has been executed in the *past*. In verse 14 these words extend to the *future* final judgment. "The day of Jehovah's anger" (ch. 2:2) includes the one as well as the other, and refers therefore

both to the judgment over Jerusalem and over all the nations. Seen as the *prophetic* judgment, that day is "the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the whole habitable world" (Rev. 3:10), or the day of the Great Tribulation.

"For Jehovah has prepared a sacrifice." We find the same picture in Ezekiel 39:17-20 regarding the Assyrian; in Isaiah 34:6-7 and Obadiah v. 16 regarding Edom. It is the "great supper" of Revelation 19:17. In Zephaniah 1:7, however, it is connected with the judgment that Babel executes over Jerusalem as a herald of a much more terrible judgment on the last day.

It is instructive that we believers become acquainted with the judgments of God. We know that our judgment fell on Christ on the cross, so that, the door of grace being opened to us, we might be freed from it. Still, it is important to consider God's judgments over the world, so that we might truly be separated from all that will fall under these judgments. Then we, unlike Lot, will keep ourselves from participating in the things of the world, despite the perfect assurance we possess that we have been saved from the coming wrath.

Progressive Judgments

On the other hand, we ought not to forget that the sacrificial judgment meal will become an abundant supper. It will take place on the day of the Lord on Mount Zion. In Jerusalem "Jehovah of hosts [will] make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isa. 25:6).

In this first judgment, the Lord would "punish the princes, and the king's sons, and such as are clothed with foreign apparel" (v. 8). On God's behalf, they were the leaders who were responsible to govern the people. According to the prophecy of Huldah, Josiah himself, as head of the faithful part of the nation, would not fall under the judgment (2 Chr. 34:27-28). Here it concerns his successors. They and their followers clothed themselves in foreign clothing. The adoption of foreign habits, even of the outward ones, meant that they adopted the luxurious life of the nations (Amos 6:3-6), which goes with a lowering of their moral standard.

"And in that day will I punish all those that leap over the threshold, who fill their master's house with violence and deceit" (v. 9).

The second punishment fell on those who, like the nations (Hab. 2:17), added violence and deceit to their superstitious practices (see 1 Sam. 5:5).

The evil practices of the Babylonians, to whom Jerusalem would soon fall victim, were indicative of their morals and habits. In verses 10 and 11 the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans is announced. The enemy would come rushing in from all sides, destroying the trade and all riches of the Jewish nation, the nation of traders, because its morals and habits were the same as those of the nations of Canaan or the majority of the foreign traders.

"And in that day, saith Jehovah, there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate, and a howling from the second quarter, and a great crashing from the hills. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh; for all the people of Canaan are cut down, all they that are laden with silver are cut off. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with lamps" (vv. 10-12a).

Every single corner of the capital would be thoroughly searched through, and no one would escape God's judgment. Its men would be eradicated, and all that Jerusalem contained would be given over to looting.

"[I will] punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, Jehovah will not do good, neither will He do evil" (v. 12b).

The third punishment came over those who were accustomed to leading a respectable, quiet life, not disturbed by anything. They had not been "emptied from vessel to vessel" (Jer. 48:11), and thought themselves to be safe from all disasters. This long-time peace should have resulted in great thankfulness toward the Lord. Instead they said, "Jehovah will not do good, neither will He do evil"! From their prosperity they concluded that God was indifferent to evil or good. That was a terrible opinion. Unbelievers in the last days will have the same idea: "Where is the promise of His coming? For from the time the fathers fell asleep all things remain thus from the beginning of [the] creation" (2 Pet. 3:4).

These indifferent persons, who trust in their material possessions, deny that God involves Himself with the course of world events, and that retribution from Him is to be feared.

Their prosperity will end and make room for despondency; their goods, gathered with patience and endurance, will become loot for others; their riches and comfortable existence, for which they exerted themselves so much, will only serve to enrich their enemies (Amos 5:11).

The Judgment of the Living

These verses refer to the terrors of the great day of the Lord which is now at the door. Yet, though it will begin at Jerusalem, its waves will overflow its banks on all sides. It will be *the judgment over the inhabitants* of the earth, called the judgment of the living. When, in that day, the Lord causes His voice to be heard, the most courageous among men will tremble with anxiety and utter bitter wailings.

This day will have the following characteristics: In the first place it will be a day of *indignation*. The wrath of God will be poured out over the earth and over the people who live upon it. Next it will be "*a day of trouble and distress, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and gross darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fenced cities and against the high battlements*" (vv. 15-16).

Its name will be "*tribulation*." As we have before observed, the term "tribulation" in the books of the prophets always refers to the last days, to the second half of the last year-week of Daniel, in which the judgments will burst forth over the Jewish nation. It will be the day of "Jacob's trouble." But that day shall also come over all the nations of the earth. For them, too, it will be the day of general trial and of the "Great Tribulation." Then men will "walk like blind men" (v. 17). God will send them a spirit of error which will cause them to believe a lie (2 Th. 2:11).

There will be no means of deliverance (v. 18), for, as Zephaniah puts it: "they have sinned against Jehovah." They have loved the lie, despised God, done unrighteousness, remained indifferent to His grace, and have neglected the salvation of the Lord. They have served the idols and defiled themselves with all kinds of abominations. Drawn away by their own lusts, they have not once considered that God has observed their behaviour; they have thought Him to be indifferent, even when the vengeance of the Lord hung threateningly over their heads. They have acted as fools, saying in their heart: "there is no God" (Ps. 14:1). Note well: "*In their heart*," not with their mouth, for without faith in God one can still follow certain religious rituals; but these have thought and acted as if God did not exist. Through grace it is different for those who think and act *by faith*. Of such, the Word says: "For he that draws near to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who seek Him out" (Heb. 11:6).

Summary

Zephaniah speaks of the kind of testimony Israel gave of God among the nations. As a whole it did not bear fruit, because Israel, instead of being a nation separated for the Lord in the midst of a corrupt generation, made common cause *against God* together with those who denied Him or even *hated Him*. Israel "sinned against the Lord" as badly as the nations, and its sins destroyed its testimony. As a result, this nation will be judged first of all. God will execute the judgment over Israel by means of the nations (vv. 7-1), but over the nations He will execute His judgment directly from heaven.

The day of the Lord is of great importance for us who believe. Can we retain anything of the things that will soon perish? On the one hand it is true that we do not await *the day of the Lord or the Son of man*. On the other hand, we look for *the day of Christ*. This is the day on which all who have testified of Christ will be rewarded or suffer loss to the degree that they have been more or less faithful in their walk.

To be cont'd

Salvation

—J. van Dijk

Introduction

Since we have become aware that there is a lack of understanding among Christians of what the word "salvation" in Scripture stands for, we would like to consider the use of this word in some detail. It seems to be the general belief that salvation is more or less equivalent to "new birth" or eternal life. After all, many reason, when one is saved, one has eternal life, and one who is born again is saved and therefore enjoys salvation. We would not dispute these remarks,

because we know what those who speak this way mean, and in essence they are correct. Yet such remarks fail to note the distinction between these closely related ideas. We therefore want to take a look at all verses in the Epistles and Revelation that contain the word "salvation."

Three Categories

In the first category we mention Philippians 1:19, since this verse does not speak of spiritual salvation, but of Paul's physical salvation from the hands of the authorities.

In the second category we list 15 verses that do not have a clearly recognizable reference to the time at which the believer receives salvation: Romans 1:16; 11:11; 2 Corinthians 1:6-7; Ephesians 1:13; 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15; Titus 2:11; Hebrews 2:3,10; 6:9; 1 Peter 1:10; 2 Peter 3:15; and Jude :3.

Although it is a bit of work, we suggest you read these verses and verify that indeed we have listed them correctly. In the third category we list the two that appear to speak of salvation as a present possession: 2 Corinthians 6:2; Philippians 2:12.

A Fourth Category: Salvation—New Birth

In this section we look at 16 verses that show salvation as distinct from new birth. Among these, a good number even speak of salvation as being a future thing. Six that are not as clear, we merely list for you to look up: Philippians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 2:2; Revelation 7:10; 19:1. The other 10 in this category we quote in full:

Romans 10:10 — For with [the] heart is believed to righteousness; and with [the] mouth confession made to salvation.

Romans 13:11 — This also, knowing the time, that it is already time that we should be aroused out of sleep; for now [is] our salvation nearer than when we believed.

2 Corinthians 7:10 — For grief according to God works repentance to salvation, never to be regretted; but the grief of the world works death.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 — because God has not set us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Timothy 2:10 — For this cause I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which [is] in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Hebrews 1:14 — Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out for service on account of those who shall inherit salvation?

Hebrews 9:28 — thus the Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear to those that look for Him the second time without sin for salvation.

1 Peter 1:5 — who are kept guarded by [the] power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in [the] last time.

1 Peter 1:9 — receiving the end of your faith, [the] salvation of [your] souls.

Revelation 12:10 — And I heard a great voice in the heaven saying, Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren has been cast out, who accused them before our God day and night.

Before we look at these verses in detail, we draw your attention to the fact that those verses that show a distinction between new birth and salvation (our last category) outnumber by far those that speak of salvation as a present possession.

The details

Romans 10:10 tells us that God-given righteousness flows from the faith that has sprung up in one's heart. Then audible confession of that faith brings him salvation. This does not mean that one who as yet has not spoken of his faith will be lost if a stroke of lightning hits him before he speaks about his faith. His righteousness, which flows from new birth, fits him for heaven. Yet the oral confession of his faith is needed for salvation. This shows that the word salvation is used somewhat differently in this verse than many so often use it. It clearly shows that there is a distinction between new birth and salvation, and therefore also a distinction between the way the Bible uses the word salvation in this verse and the common use of it.

Now we look at *Romans 13:11*. It is clear here that also Paul uses the word salvation in a different way than we so often do. We say, When you believe, you are saved and therefore have salvation. Yet in this verse salvation is something that is

still in the future. Paul writes to born again persons, yet he says that their salvation is now nearer than when they first believed. This again warns us that we need to fine tune our thinking of what the word really means.

When we now look at *2 Corinthians 7:10*, we again see a remarkable thing. Here a person is seen as grieving about his sins, not like Esau, but grieving in a godly manner. This grief causes him to repent, and the result of this repentance is salvation. Is it not clear that one who is not born again cannot grieve in such a way? The natural man, like Esau, cannot grieve according to God. His grief would be the grief of the world. No, this grief is worked by the Holy Spirit and is the first sign of new born life. Just as the first sign of a fresh sprout will inevitably lead to a full-grown plant, so will this sprout of new life develop. It always leads to repentance and repentance to salvation. Perhaps some may say that we just assumed that the grief came out of a new born heart, but those who raise this objection have to explain how an unregenerated soul can produce anything acceptable to God, even grief. Only a good plant can produce good things, our Lord taught us, and to produce, the plant must be alive.

Turning now to *1 Thessalonians 5:9* we see how salvation is placed over against wrath. Here wrath is presented as a future thing, though we know that elsewhere it is also spoken of as being present: "The wrath of God abides upon him" (Jn. 3:36). Similarly the word salvation has both a present and a future aspect. This, however, cannot be said of new birth, which is always a present possession of all believers. This again shows that there is a distinction between new birth and salvation. Yet, no one who has new birth will miss out on salvation, and no one will enjoy salvation without new birth.

If we now look at *2 Timothy 2:10*, we see that Paul endures all things for the sake of the elect. Not for those who are not yet born again, but for those who are already known under the heading "the elect." He does endure with the specific purpose that *they* also may obtain the salvation which [is] in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It clearly shows once more that new birth and salvation are distinct and that new birth precedes salvation.

We see this distinction also in *Hebrews 1:14*. The angels are ministering spirits, sent out for service on account of those who shall inherit salvation. Once more the future aspect of salvation is very evident. Yet, here too, the ones who benefit from the service of angels are clearly persons who are already born again.

In *Hebrews 9:28* the coming of Christ is presented as bringing us salvation. There is no disputing that salvation is here presented as a future thing.

The same is very clear in *1 Peter 1:5*, where we see salvation as something to be revealed in the last time, and in *1 Peter 1:9* where it is presented as the final outcome of our walk of faith here below. Remarkably, it is here even called the salvation of your souls, which if we would follow the popular way of speaking about salvation, we would have said that this is certainly our present possession. Yet God's Word presents it differently.

The reference in *Revelation 12:10* may well serve as a description of what God's Word calls salvation. In that verse we see it as the absence of any influence of the great deceiver.

Conclusion

From what we have studied so far, we see that in its fulness salvation is the actual enjoyment of the absence of every form of evil and the possession of peace with God and the peace of God; it is personified in Christ. The three aspects of salvation are:

1. Salvation is the secure future possession of each born again person, assured in *the forgiveness of sins* to each repentant person.
2. Salvation is the actual enjoyment which is the part of all who, *believing the whole gospel* of Christ, know themselves to be sons of God by adoption. And
3. Salvation is ultimately realized in all its fulness upon our entering into *the presence of Christ* in glory.

Thus, there is a sense in which salvation is the part of one as soon as one is born again. There is a sense in which salvation is the part of those who have come to believe God when He says that they have been adopted in Christ. There is a sense in which salvation will only be ours once we have been freed from this present evil world and brought into Christ's presence.

Consequences

Now that we have considered all this carefully, it is not hard to see that there is a need to think a little more carefully about our use of the word salvation. It is not that by the way it is generally used anyone teaches error, but many fail to distinguish the things that differ. A sad thing is that because of the common, restricted use of the word salvation, some, who have used it quite properly in its more expanded sense, have been said to teach wrong doctrine. This is most regrettable, because it is not a matter of a difference in the basic doctrine of Scripture, but merely a lack of understanding of each other flowing from a poor grasp of a word used in Scripture.

For example: we can see from the foregoing study that the response to the question: "Is to be born again the same as to be saved?" is quite properly: "No, to be born again is not salvation but is a step to salvation." Due to a lack a proper understanding of what Scripture means by the word *salvation*, this will indeed sound to some as error, yet it is a response that is clearly based on the scriptures we reviewed. If the popular definition of the word salvation would be correct, the response would indeed be error. However, once we understand the full sense in which Scripture uses the word, the answer, as has been shown, will be seen as very precise, correct.

Yet, some verses speak indeed of salvation as a present possession. This of course is true, in that all that we possess in Christ is our present possession from the moment one is born again. Still, we all realize that the full impact of this is not now with us, first due to a (n initially unavoidable) lack of knowledge of the person who is just born again, then due to a failure of many to fully rest in what Christ has secured for the believer.

If we may use a parable: it is like a trust fund that has been put in the bank for a recently born baby to which it can have access when it reaches adulthood. It absolutely belongs to the child. When he is very young, he does not even know about it, though it is his. Later he may fail to realize the full impact of what he possesses. Later still, he understands the benefit of his treasure, but as yet he cannot fully enjoy what he possesses. Finally, when he is an adult he comes into the full enjoyment of it. At each early stage in life, he does in a sense not possess what in another sense is truly his. We would not fault anyone who spoke of his possessing it only in adulthood. Similarly it would be wrong, and infinitely more sad, if we faulted any who spoke of salvation in its scriptural, futuristic sense.

May the Lord grant us to know His Word well so that we do not consider those to hold error who speak in a manner that — though it is not based on popular notions — is consistent with the distinctive meaning given to a word in the Word of God.

A Purged Conscience, a Worshipping Heart, and a Contented Mind

—S. Tomkins

A Purged Conscience

Happy, truly happy, is the man whose conscience has been purged by the precious blood of Christ. Scripture speaks of many kinds of consciences good and evil, pure and defiled, weak consciences, and others — "seared as with a hot iron," convicted consciences, and others again, "void of offence toward God and man." Yet, a "purged conscience" belongs only to the one who has come into real, personal, touch with God Himself. Such a one — awakened from its carnal ease by God's "Where art thou?" — has discovered its guilt, danger and sin, in the light of the cross on which Jesus died. There also has it learnt the complete ruin and hopeless impotency of all that belongs to the old man, and with the sad discovery of its utter vileness in God's sight has found out that the terrible distance sin has made between the creature and the Creator can only be bridged by faith in the redeeming blood which has fully atoned for sins and put out of God' sight every offence to His holiness.

Such a one has personally proved the power and sweetness of the words, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The spotless Saviour, having become, for the sinner that believes, his divine Substitute, has made Himself responsible, God-ward, for all that he was, as well as for all that he has done. Sin's guilt and judgment have thus been fully borne, and exhausted, by the One "who knew no sin," and the believer's conscience is now purged through faith in that precious blood. What the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer could never accomplish, the blood of Jesus does; and every one who, in truth of heart, rests on the finished work of a dead and risen Christ is entitled to know and enjoy settled peace with God. Brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the shadows of a dead Judaism into the presence of the living God, the believer now rejoices in the Lord; and in quiet rest of soul is privileged to sing:

"Clean every whit," Thou saidst it, Lord!

Shall one suspicion lurk?
Thine, surely, is a faithful word,
And Thine a finished work.

A Worshipping Heart

All the types and shadows of the past were only figures of the true, but "the Holy Ghost signified that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." Every claim of truth and justice having, however, been fully satisfied, there remaineth no more offering for sin; the veil is rent, a risen Christ sits at God's right hand, and an indwelling Spirit is the abiding power for the purged worshipper to draw near and worship the Father in spirit and truth, "for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." The new and living way is open into heaven itself, and the worshipper is now privileged to enter with a true heart and in full assurance of faith into the very presence of God. Apart from all the rites and ordinances of a bygone dispensation, and standing in the unsullied light of the glory of God that shines from the face of a risen and glorified Saviour, the purged worshipper's heart is free to delight itself in all the peerless worth of Him at whose blessed feet all the heavenly hosts prostrate themselves in ceaseless praise and adoration.

As the countless glories of Him who sits upon the throne pass in spirit before the happy worshipper, the Spirit strikes the chord of praise to God's beloved Son, and the heavenly anthem rings out through heaven's courts from the whole of the redeemed family, "Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Worship must needs flow without an effort from the heart that is really satisfied with Jesus, and that has found its true rest in sweet communion with the Father and the Son, by the power of the indwelling Spirit. Just in proportion as self is forgotten, and the never-ending glories of Christ ravish and captivate the heart, so is God magnified in His saints, and His heart refreshed and gladdened. The fragrance of that precious name that is above all others is as ointment poured forth, and its sweet savour ever abides before God in the heavenly sanctuary. This is but a foretaste, however, of that bright eternal day when,

Heav'n's vault with praise shall ring
Louder and yet more loud;
Millions of saints His worth shall sing,
Each heart in worship bowed.

The tide shall still roll on,
That tide of endless praise,
Till every creature to Thy throne
Its voice in blessing raise.

A Contented Mind

Scripture declares that "godliness with contentment is great gain," but in passing through a world of constant unrest and ever-increasing excitement, where God is forgotten and pleasure and carnal ease everywhere abound, how rare a thing is it to discover a contented mind. Yet, truth to tell, neither prison bars nor Nero's chains could rob the beloved apostle of the Gentiles of his own abiding joy in the Lord. Nor could prison fare or his being cut off from active service for his Master produce in him a discontented mind. With Christ as his life, his pattern, his object, and his strength, he bursts forth into song, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." Paul's preaching and his practice were in unison. The manner of his life, as well as the language of his lips, alike testified that he had learned, in whatever state he was, to be content. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

No change of circumstances moved his steadfast mind, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding kept both heart and mind through Christ Jesus. He who had been beaten with rods, and stoned, who had thrice suffered shipwreck, a night and a day had been in the deep, who had passed through all kinds of perils, yea, had suffered weariness and painfulness; in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold, and nakedness, with, besides other things, the care of all the churches, was manifestly no ordinary traveller in "the path of sorrow and that path alone" which "leads to the land where sorrow is unknown." Yet, he had learnt through grace, in whatever state he was, to be content. With a mind fixed on heavenly things, nothing moved him, and hence he could send that sweet message to the Hebrew saints, "Be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear, what shall man do unto me?"

The gold, seven times purified in the furnace of affliction, only shone all the brighter to the praise of God's glory, and he who had fought the good fight, who had finished his course, and kept the faith, could look forward with a contented mind to the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, should give him in the coming day. The storm may roar, the billows rage, but the divine anchor that steadies the ship is a living Christ in glory. The child of faith can surely sing, "My Father knows," and whatever may cross, our path, it is but the hand of love drawing us nearer and closer to Himself.

Come storm or come sunshine, prosperity or adversity, all, all is well with the believer. Soon will the Morning Star arise, the day break, and earth's shadows flee away; and how it will gladden the coming Bridegroom if we can meet Him with not only a purged conscience and a worshipping heart, but with a contented mind! In the "little while" that lies between, the pilgrim's song should surely be:

The heart within us leapeth,
And cannot down be cast,
Since with our God it keepeth
Its never-ending feast.
The sun, which smiling, lights us,
Is Jesus Christ alone,
And what to song incites us
Is heaven on earth begun.