

divine supremacy calling upon men in general to act, as a matter of duty, according to the light they possess—as we must distinguish between this call and the call of saving grace, so we must distinguish between the sense in which man *is* helpless, and the sense in which man *is not* helpless. In salvation matters man is entirely helpless. He is in the kingdom of darkness, held by the powers of darkness, led captive by the devil at his will, and his will is to keep them ignorant of their real state as sinners, and blind their eyes, lest the light of the glorious gospel of God should shine into their hearts. They can come out of this kingdom and out of the hands of this enemy only by the transforming power of God. He alone who is stronger than the old dragon can deliver them, and beat Satan down under their feet. Their state, as fallen creatures in Adam, is as unalterable by anything they can do as is the skin of the Ethiopian, and as are the spots of the leopard. Not only in providence is it not in man to direct his steps, but also in grace; for “the Lord hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.” A natural man is a natural man still, and he can be nothing else until God is pleased to make him something else. Nothing but being born from above can constitute a man anything more than a natural man; and thus, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” These saving mercies stand above, are independent of, and are

not regulated, in whole nor in part, by anything *in* or done by the creature ; “He hath mercy on whom he will.”

Yet notwithstanding this divine sovereignty and human helplessness, there is room left for the moral government of God in which men are responsible to him for the use of those natural powers with which they are endued. Here we come to the state in which man is not helpless, for he is endued with natural powers ; but possesses not a particle above that which is natural. Therefore we might as well expect to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles, as to find any real *spiritual* fruit brought forth by the powers of nature. All *spiritual*, real gospel fruits, are the fruits of the Spirit of God. Christ is the root which the Holy Spirit brings into the heart ; and from this root, and not from the creature, the fruit comes. “From me,” saith the Lord, “is thy fruit found.” No good treasure is found in them until the Holy Spirit puts it there ; then, and not till then, the man can bring out of the good treasure of his heart good things.

Men, by the natural powers they possess, are capable of knowing God as God, as their Creator and Preserver ; and it is their duty to glorify him *as God* ; not glorify him as their God and Father in Christ, for in this sense they cannot know him without regeneration ; not glorify Christ as their Redeemer, for the song of redemption

can be learned by none but the redeemed themselves; not glorify the Holy Spirit as the testifier of Jesus to their souls, for they are natural, having not the Spirit; but speak and act according to the natural light which they have, and thus use their powers to the acknowledgment of their Maker. It is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Now there is a sense in which a man, while in a state of nature, is capable of doing all things written in the book of the law; and there is a sense in which he cannot do one thing written in the book of the law. Now, first, as to the sense in which a natural man is capable of continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Just look at the ten commandments, and observe, that under the Jewish dispensation, any one who practically violated any one of these commandments was punished. Therefore they were punished not for omitting what was not possible for them to do; they were called upon to walk in the commandments of the Lord; not beyond their strength, but with all the strength of their natural powers; they were to serve him with all their strength. And this is the mere moral and natural sense of the word; and this, their service, was to be accepted, *not* as a *condition* of salvation; no; nor yet as an *evidence* of interest in salvation; but accepted merely as a duty they owe to God. For this natural

righteousness, and true gospel righteousness are essentially different; the one is by the power of nature, the other is by the power of God. Just contrast the 18th of Ezekiel with the 5th of Romans. In the 18th of Ezekiel we have that mere natural creature righteousness of which the creature is capable; in the 5th of Romans we have that righteousness which alone can justify us before God; one particle of which man, by nature, does not possess, nor can by any works of his own obtain. Man, then, is capable of continuing in all things written in the book of the law to them, in the mere natural, moral sense, as far as human duty is concerned; and in proportion as they go on in the personal practical violation of the law, so in proportion will they be punished; every man shall be rewarded according to his works.

Now let us look at the *sense* in which an unregenerate man *cannot* do one thing written in the book of the law. Now, be it remembered that the law of God can admit nothing into the paradise above but that which is perfectly holy and righteous; nothing can enter there that defileth or maketh a lie; therefore, in order for us to enter heaven, we must be holy, just, and good, even as the law is holy, just, and good. Now, as heaven is a place and state surpassing the earthly paradise which we lost, so we must be constituted accordingly; we must have qualities superior to those in which Adam was created.

This the law demands in order to our entering heaven. The law does not demand of men, as their natural and moral duty, anything beyond their natural powers, but its demands, in order to our coming out of our fallen, lost state in Adam—in order to our entering heaven—its demands to this end are very different, and no one can enter heaven contrary to the law, for not one of the jots or tittles of its import can fail. Now, then, what one thing can the natural man do towards *so* fulfilling the law as to be holy, righteous, and good enough to enter into the immediate presence of God? So far from man being able to obey in this sense and to this end, his mind in this matter is enmity against God; it is not in this sense subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be, because it possesses nothing in this sense wherewith to come before God. His natural and moral duties brought before God as conditions of salvation, would be an awful insult to God, because it would be a practical contempt of the finished work of Christ, of that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure, and, in short, it would be practically pouring contempt upon the whole truth of God. Yet this is the position in which the majority of professors stand. The word of God having had at the first a laudable moral influence upon their minds, the wicked one, and their own treacherous hearts, have hurried them on until they have become practical and bitter enemies to the truth of

God, and have turned out to be the greatest persecutors of the real children of God. Had they stopped in their own province of moral right and wrong they would have done well, as far as natural well-doing goes; but their wilful and practical opposition to truths which they do not understand—this, their rushing in “where angels fear to tread,” is the greatest of all their sins. Unto such we say, Forbear thee meddling with God!

We again ask, What one thing can the creature do towards *so* conforming himself to and obeying the law, as to enter the realms of bliss? Where, how, and in what way can a fallen creature obtain holiness, righteousness, and goodness superhuman? Here it is, that “there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” All have sinned, all are sinful, all are unprofitable and abominable. The Lord brings his people to feel this, and to know that no holiness, righteousness, or goodness, but that of the Mediator of the new covenant, can bring salvation—that none but the Holy Spirit can bring these things into the soul. This is the only religion that brings that conformity to the law of God which maketh meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thus, then, we see the sense in which man's natural powers are suited to the demands of the law, and the sense in which he cannot do anything—the sense in which man has no power;

“And so while we were without strength Christ died for us.” Salvation is a matter entirely of grace ; therefore in this matter whatsoever is not of faith is sin ; for in spiritual things it is impossible, without the faith of God’s elect, to please God.

Having shown what *is* and what is *not* the duty of man ; having shown up the principle upon which the call of divine supremacy is founded ; having shown that substituting natural for spiritual religion is fatally delusive ; I here conclude my remarks upon the moral government of God. But I cannot lay down my pen without indulging in a few words concerning the blessedness of that people whose God is the Lord ; the people whom *he hath chosen* for his own inheritance. These are embraced in his everlasting love, chosen in his dear Son, redeemed by his blood, accepted in his righteousness, assimilated to his likeness, dealt with after the order of the covenant of salvation, apprehended, kept, and supplied as objects of sovereign mercy and eternal choice. God the Father introduced for them the finished work of Christ, and he will never, in any of his dealings with them, deviate from this great principle, the finished work of his dear Son. The Saviour pursued his work through all the reproaches of men and devils, through all the privations of life, under the sin of the church and the wrath of God. Not all the conflicting

powers of sin, death, and hell could, for one moment, divert his attention from the great object for which he came into the world. He travelled in the greatness of his strength. All worlds, beings, and things, past, present, and to come, lay open unto him. All the depths of hell and heights of heaven, all the thoughts of angels and of men, he saw. He knew he had atoned for, yea, annihilated all the sins of his people; that he had borne and terminated the wrath of God; that he had swallowed up death in victory; yea, that all things relative to his satisfaction, to the glory of God, and to the final peace and prosperity of his brethren, were accomplished. Then, and not till then, would the mighty Saviour say, "It is finished ! the warfare is accomplished !"

The Holy Spirit bears testimony of the perfection of this great work. He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The Holy Spirit goes on with his vital operations according to the will of God and work of Christ. The Holy Spirit looks to the will of the Father, and brings in for the saints the work of Christ, and by and with this he opposes all their sins and sorrows, their enemies and adversities. In this way he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. It is the Holy Spirit who alone can make intercession for the saints *in their souls*. He it is that brings into the heart the love of God, and brings home the word with power, by which par-



doning mercy and justifying righteousness are enjoyed. Without him there is no true, no real life in prayer; no true affection in exercise; no heavenly endearments realized; no communion, no fellowship with God; no effectual tidings from on high. Natural powers may do natural things, and perform the duties of a natural religion, but the blessings which are in Christ, the Holy Spirit alone can reach. Not one particle of life, faith, repentance, or anything that accompanies salvation, without him. The creature, in these matters, of himself, can possess nothing, can know nothing, can do nothing; the whole is of God. Christ is God the Father's Alpha; he *began* to bestow mercy by him; and Christ is God the Father's Omega; for as he began by him, so he finished by him. He does not begin, nor go on, nor finish, with anything belonging to the creature. Christ is also the Holy Spirit's Alpha and Omega; and he is the first Saviour we ever found, and the last we shall ever need. We found nothing that could, in salvation, be of any use until we found him, and when his fulness is exhausted we may look elsewhere for supply. When his enemies can, with truth, say of him, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish;" when they can say of him, "that he went to war, but instead of conquering was obliged to submit to the degrading conditions of an ignoble peace;" then, indeed, the top-stone of the building will not reach its destiny; the last enemy, namely, Death, will hold us fast. But, verily, the Lord

of life and glory liveth, and reigneth, and knoweth them that are his, and he will have them that are his; for this is the desire of his heart, and the request of his lips, "That those that are his should be with him, and behold his glory."

His people will not be accepted, dealt with, and received to glory as *children of men*, but as *children of God*. By *nature* they are children of men, but by *grace* they are children of God. Judgment passed upon them as children of men in the first Adam, and they were "*by nature* the children of wrath, even as others;" therefore in the flesh they were judged as children of men. Their relation to the first Adam was twofold, natural and federal; now, by their union to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, their union with the first Adam is dissolved; so that the Lord does not look upon them in their likeness to the first Adam, but in their likeness to Christ. They have borne the image of the earthly, but this likeness is passing away, and they are to appear in the image of the heavenly; they were predestinated to be conformed to the image of the heavenly. This their likeness to Christ can never pass away or be tarnished; it is "incorruptible, undefiled, and passeth not away."

As their natural union to Adam is by their union to Christ dissolved, so is their federal union to the first Adam dissolved. By their natural union to Adam they are depraved in nature, and by their federal union to him they are in

a state of eternal destitution; but they have a covenant union to Christ, by which their covenant union to the first Adam is dissolved, and, instead of being in a state of eternal destitution, they shall possess abundance, and everlasting joy shall be unto them; sorrow and sighing shall flee away, but their joy remaineth.

Again, as children of men they have sinned *personally*, and if left to be judged by their works in this sense of the word, nothing could be their portion but condemnation; but by the personal work of Christ they have not condemnation, but justification; by him they are justified from all things. It is in this their union to him that God is their father, and the Holy Spirit their teacher. They are thus held, received, and dealt with as children of God. In the first Adam they have a depraved nature; in Christ they are pure, even as he is pure; he is their sanctification. In the first Adam they are desolate; in the second Adam they have all, and abound. By their personal works they deserve condemnation; but by the work of Christ they are entitled to eternal glory. In the first Adam God sees nothing in them for which to bless them; in the second Adam God sees nothing in them for which to curse them. They pass out from the first Adam into fellowship with, and assimilation to, the second Adam, and thus there shall be no more curse; they will, at the last day, be judged as children of God. This it is that will enable them to stand in judgment. The account

they will have to give will be a good account. The account they will give will be of what God bestowed *upon* them, of what Christ wrought *for* them, and of what the Holy Spirit wrought *in* them. "Thou, O Lord, wilt ordain peace *for* us, for thou hast wrought all our works *in* us." Those who possess this religion shall suffer persecution and tribulation in the world, because they are not of the world; they are chosen out of the world. One particle of glory will outweigh all the adversities of time. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And unto them that love his appearing he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The fashion of the world is, to bestow its good wine first, and then that which is worse. Here is a youth fired with a love of the world and its treasures and pleasures, or attached to some delusive system of religion. He passes from youth to manhood; his good wine is passing away. He begins to enter the shades of old age; he begins to think more soberly, but his thoughts are vain. He goes on in years; his outward senses become dull; those things which have charmed heretofore have now lost their power, while he is exclaiming with Barzillai, "I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? can I taste what I eat, or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women?"

(2 Sam. xix. 35.) Even the best wine of this world turns out to be vanity and vexation of spirit, when thus brought to taste the infirmities of age. He is near to another cup worse still, which cup is death. This is a draught he dreads. He has nothing but false hopes with which to sweeten it; yet this cup cannot pass from him. His good wine is gone; he has now nothing but the dregs. But this is not all. There is for him a cup still more bitter, which he must take into his hand at the judgment day, and of which he must drink to eternity. This is the wine of the wrath of the Almighty. This is the portion of all who die in their sins. All their good things they had in this life have passed away—their best wine is departed from them. “What then shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” Thus, the world sets forth its best wine first, then that which is *worse*. But not so in the kingdom of God. Here the worst is set forth first. Here is a man brought into soul trouble. He feels the *bitterness* of sin, the nauseousness of the world, the rottenness of all creature doings. Here he is in a pit of horror, and in the miry clay, forlorn and helpless; and here he remains and must remain, until he finds a ransom. He hears of Jesus; and when brought to taste that he is gracious, he, in comparing this wine of the kingdom with the pleasures of this world, readily acknowledges that the Lord of life and glory hath kept the best wine

until *now*; and although he may drink deeply of the cup of bitters, yet he shall go from taste to taste of the goodness and mercy of the Lord, still saying, "Thou hast kept the best wine until now;" not but that he will at times exclaim, "O that it were with me as in months that are past!" &c.; yet there is abundance of good wine in reserve. The bitters are passing away. Sins and sorrows, old age and death, hell and the grave, are swallowed up by the atonement of an incarnate God. Jesus hath drank the cup of bitters. His people are indeed guilty, but he hath taken the cup of trembling out of their hands. Life, not death, is their portion; sweet, not bitter; not wrath to come, but joy to come; and when they meet at last, will they not then, to the glory of the Lord their God, say, "Thou hast indeed kept the best wine until now!" Then shall they enjoy all the fruits of the promised land.

May we be favoured to partake increasingly of the fruits of this kingdom while on this side Jordan. This will take our thoughts and affections thither, where our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.

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