
Shield of Faith

A Primitive Baptist Publication

April 2006

Two Fires of Coals

And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. (John 18:18)

As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. (John 21:9)

John's gospel records two instances of a *fire of coals*. The words that describe the fires is the same, but there was a vast difference in those fires. In the first instance the fire was kindled by the enemies of Christ, the very men who would put Him to death. It was a fire of denial where Peter would disown his Lord.

The second fire was a fire kindled by the Saviour. It was a fire of dedication beside which Peter would be restored to a place in the Master's service.

The Holy Spirit informs us that the first fire was built "for it was cold: and they warmed themselves." It is quite amazing to think of that night as being cold when we consider another occurrence of that night. Luke 22:44 records the prayer of Jesus on that cold night. "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." So intense was His agony and so earnest was His prayer that He sweat in spite of the coldness of the night. His sweat "was as it were great drops of blood." The drops were so heavy that they kept "falling down to the ground."

Jesus' prayer was "... Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). The word *cup* is frequently used in the Bible to point out sorrow, anguish, terror, death. Jesus, as a man, dreaded the rejection of men, the ridicule, the suffering and death, He doubtless dreaded the sin that He would take upon Himself and sin's result when

He was forsaken of the Father. Yet, more than the dread of the suffering, Jesus Christ had a dread of offending His heavenly Father, so He immediately prayed, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus' cry from the cross, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46), is answered by the promise of Hebrews 13:5, "for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He endured that forsaking of the Father so that those for whom He died would never be forsaken.

Peter and the other disciples had made the boast that they would never forsake Jesus, a claim immediately challenged by Jesus. "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples" (Matthew 26:33-35).

Peter's ultimate failure and the reason for failure, was foreshadowed in the Garden of Agony. "And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40-41). Peter's boast was made on the basis of his trust in his own ability, the flesh; that was the very source of his weakness and failure.

As Jesus was taken by His enemies, the Scripture records, "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. *Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.* (Matthew 26:56 emphasis added).

Matthew 26:58 is very telling of Peter's spiritual condition at this time: "But Peter followed him afar off unto

the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end." His fear kept him "afar off" and his lack of faith led him to expect "to see the end." Peter, along with James and John, seems to have been closer to Jesus than the others and often walked with Him beyond the others. Peter was, nonetheless, weak and we can follow his steps downward until he denies the Lord.

To Peter's credit, he and John seem to be the only disciples that now followed Jesus, even if it was "afar off." At the palace of the High Priest, Peter was challenged by a damsel. "Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not" (John 18:17). After that, Peter moved toward the fire to warm himself. Perhaps that first denial sent a chill through Peter's body. If so, the fire would do little good. The fire would easily warm the body, but could not warm the inner chill.

John's narrative turns from Peter to Jesus before the High Priest and how Christ was struck by one of the officers. Then John's account turns back to Peter, still warming by the fire. "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not" (John 18:25). Soon he would deny the third time. Luke's account of the events is very touching. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Luke 22:61). The cock crowing and the look brought swiftly back to Peter's mind the prophecy of Jesus and his sad denials. The mystery is how he had forgotten that warning. What effect that look must have had on the heart and on the countenance of Peter. Not only did the look of Christ bring to his mind Jesus' warning, but in

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all probability Peter remembered his own boast of faithfulness. Peter must have realized the coldness of his own heart. No fire kindled by man could ever warm him. "And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:62).

Following the resurrection of Christ, "a young man" spoke to the women coming to the tomb. "But go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. (Mark 16:7 emphasis added). It is remarkable that Peter is singled out for special notice. The meaning is, "Tell his disciples, *and especially Peter*," sending to him a particular message. It was proof of the kindness and mercy of the Lord Jesus. Peter had brought dishonor on his profession of attachment to him. He had been brought to see the crime, and to weep bitterly. It would have been right if the Lord Jesus had from that moment cast him off, and noticed him no more. But he loved him still. Having loved him once, he loved unto the end, John 13:1. As a proof that he forgave him, and still loved him, he sent him this special message---the assurance that though he had denied him, and had done much to aggravate his sufferings, yet he had risen, and was still his Lord and Redeemer.

Peter was to receive an even greater assurance of the Master's love and acceptance directly from the Lord Himself.

Most are familiar with the account of John 21. The chapter as a whole gives vital teaching on Christian *service*. Peter said, "I go a fishing," perhaps indicating an intention to return to his former occupation. The other disciples answered, "We also go with thee." "...And that night they caught nothing." We see, then, men serving in the energy of the flesh. Peter said, "I go a fishing." He had received no call from God to do so. His action illustrates self-will, and the response of the other six men acting under human leadership.

Second, we are shown the barrenness of such efforts. They toiled all night, but caught nothing, and when the Lord asked if they had any meat, they had to answer, "No."

Third, the Lord now directs their energies, telling them where to work: the result was that the net was filled with fishes.

Fourth, we learn of the Lord's gracious

provision for His servants: He had provided for them, and invites them to eat.

Fifth, we are taught what is the only acceptable motive for service — love to Christ.

Finally, the Lord concludes by leaving with them the prospect of His return; for *Himself* they should patiently watch for and expect.

In obeying the master, their catch in the net was so great that they "were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (verse 6). While all they in the boat could not draw the net, at the Lord's command Peter alone "went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes" (v. 11). How great is the difference when service is directed by Christ rather than the human mind!

While all the disciples who were there that morning were greatly blessed, Peter was singled out for special instruction. In John 21:9 we learn that the first thing which confronted the Apostle when he joined the Lord on the shore was "a *fire of coals*." "As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread" (John 21:9). Peter had stood by "a *fire of coals*" in the priest's palace, with Christ's enemies "warming himself." It was *there* that he had denied his Master. Now this "fire of coals" by the sea of Tiberias would doubtless prick his conscience. Christ did not point to it, nor say anything about it; that was unnecessary.

Next we read of the seven disciples partaking of the food which the Savior had provided, showing that the Lord's attitude toward Peter had not changed.

The meal being over, He now turned and addressed Simon. It was there by the side of this "fire of coals" that the Lord entered into this dialogue with him, to bring the Apostle to *judge* himself.

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs" (John 21:15). This was a kind of reproach to Peter: he had professed a more attachment to Christ than the rest; he had been more forward in making professions of friendship and love than any of the others. He had before cast the very unkind reflection on his brethren, "Though all be offended because of thee, yet will I never be

offended" (Matthew 26:33). But he had now learned, by dreadful experience, that he could not trust his own heart, and that any man's sufficiency for good is in the Lord alone. As he had before boasted that his attachment to his Master was more than that of the rest, our Lord now puts the question to him, "Lovest thou me more than these?"

"Thou knowest that I love thee." Peter now made no pretensions to love superior to his brethren. His sad denial had convinced him of the folly of that claim; but still he could appeal to the Searcher of the heart, and say that he knew that he loved him. Here is the expression of a humbled soul--a soul made sensible of its weakness and need of strength, yet with evidence of true attachment to the Saviour.

It is remarkable that in these three questions our Lord uses the verb *agapao*, which signifies to love affectionately, ardently, supremely, perfectly; and that Peter always replies, using the verb *phileo*, which signifies to love, to like, to regard, to feel friendship for another. As if our Lord had said, "Peter, do you love me ardently and supremely?" To which he answers, "Lord, I feel an affection for you — I do esteem you — but I dare not, at present, say more."

Three times had Peter *denied* his Master; three times, the Lord *challenged* his love. But in thus challenging Peter, the Lord gave him the opportunity of now thrice *confessing* Him. In His first question the Lord challenged the *superiority* of Peter's love. In His second question the Lord challenged whether Peter had *any love* at all. Here, in His third question the Lord now challenges even his *affection!* But it had the desired effect. The Lord wounds only that He may heal.

"Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?" (John 21:17). Here we are shown once more the power of *the Word*. That Peter was "grieved" does not mean that he was offended at the Lord because He repeated His question, but it signifies that he was touched to the quick, was deeply sorrowful, as he recalled his *threefold denial*. It is parallel with his "weeping *bitterly*" in Luke 22:62. This being "grieved" evidenced his perfect *contrition!* But if it was grievous for the disciple to be thus

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Bible Quiz

Darkness is often associated with unpleasant things. Answer each of the following questions about darkness.

1. When was Egypt in darkness for three days (Ex. 10:22)?
2. When was darkness "upon the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2)?
3. Who saw a vision in which "an horror of great darkness fell upon him" (Gen. 15:12)?
4. When did a cloud produce darkness to one group and light to another (Ex. 14:20)?
5. When was the whole earth covered with darkness from the sixth hour to the ninth hour (Luke 23:44)?
6. When did God speak to Moses out of a thick darkness (Deut. 5:22)?
7. When will the sun be turned to darkness (Acts 2:20)?
8. When did "a mist and darkness" fall upon a man (Acts 13:8-11)?
9. Who told the spies' pursuer that the spies had left in the darkness (Josh. 2:3-5)?
10. Why did Nehemiah command the gates to be shut when darkness came (Neh. 13:19)?
11. Who came to the tomb of Jesus in the darkness of the early morning (John 20:1)?

Answers on page 4.

River Chapel Primitive Baptist Church

Greetings from River Chapel Primitive Baptist Church! Our spring meeting will be held May 3, 4, and 5. Services will begin Wednesday evening and continue Thursday morning and evening and conclude on Friday after the morning services. Morning services will begin at 11:00 A. M. and evening services at 7:30 P. M. Elder Otis McGee, pastor of Ocilla Church and former pastor of River Chapel, will be our guest minister. Supper will be served on Thursday evening at 6:00 P. M. in the Fellowship Hall.

Grace Primitive Baptist Church

We will be holding our Annual Spring Meeting at Grace Church in Loudon, Tennessee on May 19th-21st and Elder Larry Wolfe will preach our meeting. Services will begin at 7:00 p.m. on Friday p.m. and refreshments will be served following the Friday p.m. service. A covered dish lunch will be served following our Sunday a.m. worship at 10:45 a.m., May 21st.

Grace Chapel Primitive Baptist Church

Grace Chapel Primitive Baptist Church in Meridianville, Alabama will be conducting our Spring Meeting May 9-11 2006, beginning each evening at 7:00 p.m. CST. Elder Bill Taylor from Grace Primitive Baptist Church will be our guest Minister. We invite each of you to join us in praise and worship of our Lord and Savior. If you are unable to attend, please remember us in your prayers.

THE LORD REIGNS

"THE LORD REIGNS," not only in heaven, but on earth; not only over His people, but over all His creatures. He works all things after the counsel of His own will, and for the promotion of His own glory and the good of His children. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him, and the very hairs of our head are numbered. He puts down one, and sets up another. All real power in heaven and earth is His. All the events of time are but the manifestation of His eternal purpose, and will finally redound to His glory and the welfare of His people. Even the wicked are His hand and sword, and He can and does bend and use them to the accomplishment of His wise and holy purposes. He makes the wrath of men praise Him, and restrains the remainder of their wrath. He has never, for a moment, in the slightest respect, abdicated His throne, and He never will.

He reigns in nature, in providence, in grace, in life, in death, in time, and in eternity; He reigns in righteousness and sovereignty and power and wisdom and mercy; He reigns over the whole universe absolutely, perfectly, and indisputably, forevermore. Amid all the trials of earth, natural and spiritual, personal and national, this great eternal truth should be a supreme consolation and encouragement to all the people of God, who should not fear even though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; for the Lord of hosts is with them, the God of Jacob is their refuge and strength, a very present and all-sufficient help to them-1 in every trouble (Psalm xlvii.); and He keeps in perfect peace that humble and trusting child whose mind is stayed on Him (Isa. xxvi. 3).

from Sylester Hassell, "The Lord Reigneth,"
The Gospel Messenger vol. 18 no. 8 (Aug. 1896).

Fairview Primitive Baptist Church

Fairview Primitive Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee, invites you to worship with us during our annual meeting to be held April 26-30, 2006. Services will be held each evening at 7:30 PM, EDT, the Lord willing.

Refreshments will be served following the Friday evening service. Lunch will be served following the Sunday morning service.

Elder Bill Taylor, pastor of Grace Primitive Baptist Church of Loudon, Tennessee, will be the guest speaker.

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probed and have called to remembrance his sad fall, how much more grievous must it have been to the Master Himself to be denied?

Beautiful is it to behold here the transforming effects of Divine grace. Beside the "fire of coals" kindled by the Saviour, the very heart is warmed. "His self-judgment is complete. Searched out under the Divine eye, he is found and owns himself, not better but worse than others; so self-emptied that he cannot claim *quality* for his love at all. The needed point is reached: the strong man converted to weakness is now fit to strengthen his brethren; and, as Peter descends step by step the ladder of humiliation, step by step the Lord follows him with assurance of the work for which he is destined" (Numerical Bible).

Exhortation to Ministers

God Sovereign

Advocate & Messenger--- March, 1933

‘In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. (Titus 2:7-8)

PAUL AS A father in the ministry was writing Titus his own son in the common faith. Paul loved young preachers and knowing the weakness of the flesh most tenderly exhorted Titus how he should live for his good and the good of His Master's cause. It is useless to tell others how to live, if he does not keep under his own body, mortify the deeds of the flesh, and so live as to be a pattern in his ministerial life to the ones whom he teaches. The servant of God should be blameless, not self-willed. This will injure a minister to be self-willed-thinks he knows it all and will not listen to reason or the advice of others. He must not so act as to carry out his own designs, right or wrong when he knows it will divide the church. He had better be humble and not be too hasty in his actions, but weigh matters well, and most prayerfully to. Don't get in a hurry. Many have to retrace their steps by acting hastily. Jesus gave us a good pattern. There was a devil in the church and Jesus knew it, but just waited and Judas went out and *hanged himself*. The preacher must not be seen angry. A mad preacher is dangerous-his reason is dethroned. He wants to justify himself in all he does. If there is trouble in the church, the first thing for all to do is to get in a good humor, then the matter can be adjusted. The preacher should be a pattern of good works-works that God has ordained and such as are authorized by the Scriptures. He should live and teach all Scriptural works, but no more.

... In *doctrine*, he should speak such things which *become sound doctrine*. Be sure to contend earnestly for the faith (doctrine) once delivered to the saints. We should not neglect the sound, fundamental principles of grace, -- Predestination, Election, Special Redemption, Effectual Calling, Final Glorification in Heaven of all the redeemed. The Primitive Baptists are all the people that will *contend* for those principles, and I trust they will con-

tinue to teach *Bible doctrine*---free from extremes, prefixes or suffixes. If all of our preachers will preach the truth in love, we will have peace and unity in the church.

The preacher should possess gravity. He should reverence his profession-not be engaged in light, filthy conversation. He has the highest calling of any one on earth. Much is expected of him. He should be sincere in what he says or does, remembering that he is amenable to God for all of his acts. In preaching the doctrine or practice his teaching should be sound and in harmony with the Bible. And he must not decide that God has made him a regulator and he has to remodel the old church and correct the mistakes of the fathers even if it tears the church into atoms. This is a bad spirit. Beware of the spirit of Diotrefes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, and *receiveth us not*. (III John 9). He was an ambitious man, wanting to govern everything according to his will. He is ready to but up bars against good brethren, if they do not say and do everything according to his dictates. He will soon run his course. None should feel that they are standards for the household of faith. Preachers should not sow seeds of discord. If they have trouble let it stay there. Don't preach or talk about it. Let each section of the country manage their own discipline. Beware of jealousy. It is as cruel as the grave. There is room in the church for all of God's humble servants. We need all. Don't neglect your faithful old ministers who have hazarded their lives for the cause. Let us pray without ceasing. Let brotherly love continue.

Elder Lee Hanks

Answers to Bible Quiz

1-During the plague of darkness. 2-Before God created light, 3-Abraham, 4-When the Israelites were fleeing from the Egyptians, 5-At Jesus' crucifixion, 6-At the giving of the Ten Commandments, 7-In the last days, 8-When Elymas tried to turn a man away from the faith, 9-Rahab, 10-So no one could bring in merchandise on the Sabbath, 11-Mary Magdalene

God IS A SOVEREIGN. Not such a one as seizes the reigns of power, and in the language of a late President, "Runs the machine" as he finds it: but one who has planned and established the whole system of the universe, and works all things after the counsel of his own will. His government embraces every event that ever did, or ever will transpire; and this according to his own eternal purpose: that is, whatever God does, is what he eternally intended to do. Our poor finite minds, incapable of measuring the unfathomable sea of his eternal counsels, are often confounded and bewildered, in attempting to reconcile what seems to be discordant attributes in his nature, and inconsistent displays of his power. But faith comes to our aid, and assures us that all things are working together in delightful harmony, and for the good of them that love him.

Though justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, yet righteousness and peace shall go before his face. Though truth is inflexible and cannot yield, yet mercy and truth are met together. He sent his Son into the world upon an errand of love and mercy, and raised up wicked men to kill him, the consequence of which will be known and felt to earth's remotest limit, and fill all heaven with rapturous songs. He raised up, qualified and sent forth Stephen to preach his everlasting gospel; and raised up wicked men to stone him to death. How strange! And how seemingly inconsistent! Yet Stephen never preached so effectively as at the rime of his death. Millions then unborn have caught the sound; and while there is a Bible to be read, or a gospel preacher to preach, the echo shall swell and reverberate to the latest generation. Thus from such recorded facts, we are left to gaze upon and admire the beautiful symmetry that pervades the whole of his government, though profoundly mysterious to us.

- from the 1868 Circular Letter of the Corresponding Association (Virginia).

Devotions:

Daily Devotion

By Elder Bill Taylor

Rejoicing and Salvation

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly."
Psalm 118:15

The 118th Psalm is a song of joy for victory that God has granted. David experienced God's grace in delivering him from the hands of his enemies. He found himself in what today sometimes is called a "tight spot," and cried out for deliverance. In verse 5, David shows the mighty power of God to deliver His people, when he tells us, "I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place." Being "surrounded" by his enemies, and closed in with no room to move, David called upon the Lord. This may have been a natural enemy, or it may have been an awful circumstance in which David found himself; but, whether he was in a time of literal distress or of great spiritual need, David rejoiced that the Lord had delivered him out of his distress.

The Hebrew word for rejoice literally means to shout for joy, to cry out in gladness. How thankful David was for God's deliverance! He knew that if it were not for God's grace, he would not have been delivered. He knew that his deliverance was because of the everlasting mercy of the Lord, and this caused him to encourage Israel, her priests, and all that loved the God of Israel to praise God, "for his mercy endureth forever." David called upon the Lord because it was his habit to call upon the Lord in all times of his life. In times of sorrow or in times of joy, David called upon the Lord, Who is worthy to be praised. He was in the habit, so to speak, of calling on the Lord; so, it was "natural" for him to call upon him in the present distress. In fact, David tells us in this psalm's 9th and 10th verses that it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man or in princes (earthly powers).

What should we expect to hear from the tents (tabernacles, or dwelling places) of the righteous? David tells us we will hear the voice of rejoicing and salvation. The source of our deliverance, whether from natural or spiritual distress, is the Lord. His "right hand," the agent of God's power and authority, will always get the victory; in fact, as this speaks of Jesus Christ, He has already secured the eternal victory for us. He has delivered us from death unto life, and caused us to dwell in a "large place," the place of His eternal love. How we ought to rejoice - to shout for joy - because of His salvation! How we ought to be in the habit of calling upon Him to praise Him for His grace in salvation.

May God help us today to call upon the Lord, Who is worthy to be praised, and to rejoice in His salvation.

Elder Bill Taylor

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Hymns and Hymn Writers

The Solid Rock

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11 KJV)

Edward Mote was born into poverty on January 21, 1797, in London. His parents, innkeepers, wouldn't allow a Bible in their house, but somehow Edward heard the gospel as a teenager and came to Christ. He eventually became a skilled carpenter and the owner of his own cabinet shop.

"One morning," he recalled, "It came into my mind as I went to labor to write a hymn on the 'Gracious Experience of a Christian.' As I went up to Holborn I had the chorus: *On Christ the solid Rock I stand / All other ground is sinking sand.* In the day I had four verses complete, and wrote them off.

"On the Sabbath following, I met brother King . . . who informed me that his wife was very ill, and asked me to call and see her. I had an early tea and called afterwards. He said that it was his usual custom to sing a hymn, read a portion, and engage in prayer before he went to meeting. He looked for his hymnbook but could find it nowhere. I said, 'I have some verses in my pocket; if he liked, we would sing them.' We did, and his wife enjoyed them so much that after service he asked me, as a favor, to leave a copy of them for his wife.

"I went home, and by the fireside composed the last two verses, wrote the whole off, and took them to sister King . . . As these verses so met the dying woman's case, my attention to them was the more arrested, and I had a thousand printed for distribution."

In 1852, Edward, 55, gave up his carpentry to pastor the Baptist Church in Horsham, Sussex, where he ministered 21 years. He resigned in 1873, in falling health, saying, "I think I am going to heaven; yes, I am nearing port. The truths I have been preaching, I am now living upon and they'll do very well to die upon. Ah! The precious blood." He passed away at age 77.

Here's an interesting verse from Mote's original that is omitted from most hymnals today:

*I trust His righteous character;
His council, promise, and His power;
His honor and His Name's at stake
To save me from the burning lake;
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.*

The Sovereignty of God

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

(Proverbs 21:1)

Paul said in 2 Tim. i. 8,9. "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." God says, "I have purposed it, I will also do it." Therefore we consider that whatever God eternally purposed to do is sure to be carried out, and all the hosts of earth and hell cannot prevent it. This brings us to consider King Nebuchadnezzar, who tried his strength against the power of God.

He issued his decree, that at the sound of the trumpet every one under his domain should fall down and worship his golden image; and should any refuse they were to be cast into a furnace heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be; and at the sound of the trumpet all fell down to his shrine, except three little insignificant Hebrews, who refused. He had them brought forth and cast into the furnace, and he standing off, looking in, said, "I see the fourth one, like unto the Son of God." The old king burst forth in language like this: "God doeth his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou Jehovah?" This shows conclusively that the being who has control of all these things is God.

We have a very striking illustration of these things in the case of King Pharaoh when God had determined to deliver His national people from under the yoke of Egyptian bondage. Pharaoh determined to thwart the divine arrangement of heaven and keep the Israelites in servitude to him; but God showed His sovereign power through the wickedness of this old king, and delivered His down-trodden people, and let Pharaoh know "that for this

same purpose he had raised him up that he might show forth his power in him," and make His power known.

And again in the case of Balaam and king Balak; when they undertook to curse Israel, they built their altars and tried with all the power they possessed to bring a curse upon God's people, and every effort they made was overturned by the sovereign hand of God to blessings upon Israel, until Balaam was forced to say, "I can but speak the things which God puts into my mouth."

The circumstances referred to above show that the text at the head of this chapter is true. "The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."

Whatever God does He does sovereignly; He does it because it is His will, pleasure or purpose to do it. Hence Paul, in speaking of the sovereign choice of His people, and the rejection of the rest, could say, "Nay but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory. Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" --Rom. ix. 20-24. All of this God did for them sovereignly, that they might be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. Who would dare come up in this day, and say that God has not done right? We should ever remember that God is a sovereign and above all law, therefore cannot do wrong. "Whatsoever the Lord doeth is right, and this he doeth that men may fear before him."

If God thus deals with kings and rulers, is it any great matter for us to conclude that he does likewise with poor peasants in the valley? Why should we

think that God, the divine and absolute Sovereign, was trying to do something for a poor sinner and could not accomplish it because the poor sinner would not let him? Paul says; "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." If God wants the sinner willing to receive his blessings, He is a divine sovereign; He can make him willing. He says, "I will have a willing people in the day of my power." Paul says, "It is God's pleasure;" and surely working in a sinner a will to serve the Lord must be good work. Paul says, "I am persuaded that he that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Therefore the idea some have that God is around over the country trying to get sinners to be saved, is a hallucination of the brain, and is foreign from Bible truth. God is not going around begging and pleading with sinners to be saved, but what He does is done sovereignly, like a God; and if there was not a text in the Bible to prove the contrary of such doctrine, the experience of Christians of itself is sufficient; for well do I know that God never came to me courting and trying to get me to yield to Him. But to the reverse of that, He showed me the corruption of my poor heart and I melted under the load of guilt and acknowledged my just condemnation, and I felt that I was in the hands of a sovereign God who had a right to dispose of me as He pleased; therefore I could adopt the words of the poet: "And if my soul were sent to hell, Thy righteous law approves it well."

And again I could fully realize the force of these lines:

*Chained to his throne a volume lies
With all the fates of men,
With every angel's form and size,
Drawn by the eternal pen.*

I could but fall before Him and acknowledge my guilt and plead for mercy at His hands; and all at once, to my great astonishment, Jesus was presented before me as having paid my debt on the cross over 1900 years ago, and I was made to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I then felt

(Continued on page 9)

THE SOVERIGN DOMINION OF GOD

To Ministers

This very high sounding title, THE SOVERIGN DOMINION OF GOD, which is so positively descriptive of the wonderful nature and characteristics of the MOST HIGH, in His divine authority, ruling dispensations and distinguishing appointments, as related to all created things, should be most carefully studied in the light of the Scriptures. For most surely the Bible is needed for a compass, together with heavenly light and wisdom, for the investigation of this weighty and sublime subject that error may be avoided. Human opinions, conceptions and presumptions must all be cast aside, for we dare not form our views and draw our conclusions from such a fallible source. I am sure that this very important article of the Christian religion is far too generally neglected, and lightly considered even by many who assume to be expounders of the deep things of God.

"The Sovereignty of God is His power and right of dominion over His creatures, to dispose and determine them as seemeth Him good. This attribute is evidently demonstrated in the systems of creation, providence, and grace; and may be considered as absolute, universal, and everlasting." -Buck, page 753.

This very wonderful dominion of God's kingly authority over all creation, embracing the full, absolute and unlimited right to place, order and dispose of all things as seemeth good in His sight, both for time and eternity, is indeed an ocean of such vastness that it seems to have neither shores nor bottom. Yet I take my pen to write on this momentous subject without the least fear of successful contradiction, or worry from the denials and criticisms of the learned and worldly wise.

"Of all the presumptuous sins that fallen man is guilty of, we think that of railing, against God's sovereignty and presuming upon God's obligations to men, is none of the least. Such presumption, we know, is not of the Spirit of God; but is earthly, sensual and devilish." -Rowe, page 63. "if men find fault with that which God has evidently done, let then., answer to Him. He deigns not to apologize for His own conduct." -Scott, 1-19.

Sovereignty is a very comprehensive term, for it denotes supremacy, inde-

pendence, optional power and authority.

And the infinitely great God possesses all these characteristics to a most wonderful degree "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." --Is. lv. 9. Therefore, we should not "judge the Lord by feeble sense," but ever remember that He does nothing through compulsion from earthly sources, or from obligation to any creature; but what He does is most freely and willingly of His own accord and wholly from His own motives, which are always righteous and holy. Fatalism and chance does not govern the world.

"God's Sovereignty stands just where it did from everlasting, after all that has been said and written against it. God is not accountable to His creatures for His conduct. He cannot do wrong, for He is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works.-Ps. cxlv. 17. His sovereignty is one of His distinguishing characteristics, and is founded in perfect rectitude, let the pride and arrogance of men or devils cavil at it. It is one among the many precious signs of grace in the heart, when the mind and affections are brought over to the conviction, not only that this sovereignty distinguishes God's character, but that in the full exercise thereof, all is just and right. So a child of God seeing anything which appears to him mysterious in His government or appointment, should conclude that it is his own defect, and not the Lord's. It is a most blessed frame of mind that bends to the Lord's appointments with faith and satisfaction. The great mass of men reject the sovereignty of God, even with the Bible in their hands."-Condensed from Hawker, 8-313.

I feel sure that God's own glory, praise and honor was the very first important design or consideration with Him in His creation, appointment and government of all things; since this certainly would be the very highest purpose for His actions. The salvation of the elect is plainly "to the glory of His grace."--Eph. i. 6. "His Sovereignty is the rule of all His actions, and His will and pleasure the invariable standard of good." Hawker, 8-314.

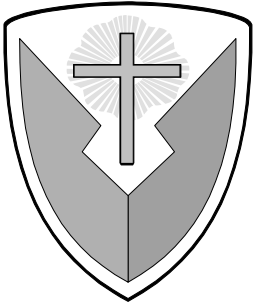
Elder W. S. Craig

When Nations are to perish in their sins,
'Tis in the Church the leprosy begins:
The priest, whose office is, with zeal sincere,
To watch the foundation and preserve it clear,
Carelessly nods and sleeps upon the brink,
While others poison what "the flock" must drink;
Or, waking at the call of lust alone,
Infuses lies and errors of his own:
His unsuspecting sheep believe it pure, And,
tainted by the very means of cure, Catch
from each other a contagious spot, The foul
forerunner of a general rot.
Then Truth is hushed, that Heresy may
preach,
And all is trash that Reason cannot reach;
Then God's own image on the soul im-
pressed
Becomes a mockery and a standing jest;
And Faith, the root whence only can arise
The graces of a life that wins the skies,
Loses at once all value and esteem,
Pronounced by greybeards a pernicious
dream;
Then Ceremony leads her bigots forth, Pre-
pared to fight for shadows of no worth;
While Truths, on which Eternal Things de-
pend,
Find not, or hardly find, a single friend:
As soldiers watch the signal of command,
They learn to bow, to kneel, to sit, to stand;
Happy to fill religion's vacant place
With hollow form, and gesture, and grimace.
-William Cowper

Sovereignty

(Continued from page 6)

truly to be in the hands of the Lord, as the King's heart, and He turned it whithersoever He would. And thus we realize the truth of the Saviour's saying: "No man can come to me except my Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up again at the last day." And again, "No man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father." Hence when the Lord draws one he makes him willing and never stops short of bringing him off "more than conqueror" through Him that loved him and gave Himself for him; therefore we praise His sovereign name.



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And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, Hebrews 10:24

THE EXALTED CHRIST

We have seen how God the Father put God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to death. We must keep in mind that this was not an enforced death. You and I have to die because of sin. The Lord Jesus Christ died because He loved to do the Father's will. The wages of sin was death and God had the Lord Jesus Christ die in our stead that we might have everlasting life. He did not die as a martyr for a lost cause; willingly He came to earth to die. Thus we read in the Word of God concerning Him: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:5-7).

But the Lord Jesus Christ knew that the cross was not the end of the road. He knew that after the cross there would be the crown. He knew that though the Father would put Him to death, the Father would cause Him to rise again. All through His life the crown was ever before Him. This was His joy - to do the Father's will even though it meant the cross. He said: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17,18). And we might well note that He emphasizes the fact that this power over life and death was given to Him by the Father. Coming to the close of His ministry, on that night when He prayed alone in the garden, the Lord Jesus petitioned the

Father: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:4,5). And as the Son was faithful to the Father even unto death, the Father was faithful even to raising Him from the dead. Thus exalted by God the Father, He is given a new position, He is given a new name, and He is made pre-eminent above all things. Paul, in endeavoring to describe the power of God to the Ephesian believers, does so in terms of the resurrection of Christ. He writes: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:18-21).

Here we see the mighty strength of the power of God. It is a power which can conquer death; it is a power which can raise Christ to God's own right hand; it is a power which makes Him superior over every might and dominion in this world and in the world to come. It is that power which alone is sufficient to take the divine Son back from an earthly grave to a heavenly throne.

Donald Grey Barnhouse

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