

The Remnant

*“Even so then at this
present time also there
is a remnant according to
the election of grace.”
Romans 11.5*

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JEREMIAH 19.5 IS GOD UNMINDFUL?

They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind (Jeremiah 19.5).

A large portion of Limited Predestinarian Primi-tive Baptists appear to believe they have been predestinated to bring up Jeremiah 19.5 and kindred texts to prove God does not predestinate all things. “See the text?” say they. “Here is a clear cut case where an awful evil took place. So foul and so wicked was it that never had it entered God’s mind.” In their apparent zeal to deny the predestination of all events they are compelled to deny the universal knowledge of God. “Just what are you going to do with that text?” On and on they will go, pleading ignorance for God, as though that is the only way He may be extricated from the appearance of culpability in these deeds.

God needs no defense from guilt. He stands in no need of the pleas of His creatures to absolve Him of wrong doing or abetting the same by simply not acting.

My response to the above argument is always, Whoa! Hold on a minute. Let us examine the text and its context and see what is there.

Jeremiah 19 is just as much a part of the Bible as John 3.16 or Romans 8.28 so we shall review it accordingly. Verse three tells us to whom the Lord

sent Jeremiah, His prophet. He was sent to the kings of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Jehovah had, *at that particular time*, no complaint with the heathen nations around about Israel. The complaint in Jeremiah 19 was with *Judah* in particular. (It is interesting, however, that He calls Himself the God of Israel, as though there had never been a division among the tribes.) God’s message to Judah was attended with certain unusual effects; whoever heard the message would experience having their ears tingle. The injunction God laid against Judah pertained to their exceeding wickedness; wickedness such as was hitherto unknown among the fathers (verse four). Their trespasses were alarmingly insidious; so much so, God demanded their attention on the matter. You may be sure He got it. Their sins were enumerated as follows:

- They forsook God.
- They estranged the place, apparently meaning the valley of the son of Hinnom, which was by the East gate (Verse 2).
- They burned incense unto other gods.
- They filled the place with the blood of innocents.
- They built the high places of Baal.
- They burnt their sons with fire.

None dare deny the enormity of the crimes catalogued against the kings of Judah and Jerusalem. They were clearly odious. By any standards they were exceeding wicked. To burn your offspring with a consuming fire as a sacrifice to idols bespeaks wanton abandonment of all compassion and devotion. Further, it denotes full apostasy by the perpe-

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trators. None but those with depraved minds could entertain such practices.

Jehovah made three pronouncements concerning Himself and His relation to the events following His description of Judah's sin:

1. "Which I commanded not." Thus, Judah had no command to hide behind.
2. "Nor spake it." Judah had no word from God to plead.
3. "Neither came it into my mind." Finally, it would be inconsistent with the nature of God to even think of granting them such sordid privileges.

Items 1 and 2 should give no one any problem. It was clear God had never given any commandments that could possibly be construed as *allowing* the sins

of these transgressors. They might search the laws and ordinances of Israel till the sun ceased to shine and never find anything remotely resembling a commandment allowing for, or directing, this conduct. Neither had God ever verbalized anything to them they could take as concurrence, indifference, or neutrality. There was absolutely nothing they could lay a hand on to claim as sanction or consent.

Item 3, however, seems to turn even the most placid religionists into near infidels and God-limiters of the first sort. Their beliefs (or disbeliefs) on this range anywhere from one extreme to another but always have as their aim a denial God knew about this particular sin. More particularly, since God did not know the events, they deny God predestinated or decreed any of these acts, either directly or permissively. (The denial of absolute predestination is the heart of all Conditionalist reasoning.)

Just what are the possibilities we may draw from the pronouncements God made, and how then may we best sort out the truth from error? There appears to be only two major possibilities. The first is, God was truly unaware or unmindful of their conduct and thus, "Neither came it into my mind" meant God never knew about this sin, at least until it was committed. This would mean that God was deficient or lacking in the knowledge of all things. His omniscience was less than real omniscience; God did not know all at all times. Such a god is no god at all. He is only a being somewhat superior to other beings but, nevertheless subject to limitations as all other beings.

The second plausible possibility is this: it never entered God's mind to command or speak to these sinners relative to these matters, no; not even to suffer such to be done. Simply put, in the language of man, God said He never, ever, thought of commanding them to practice this wickedness. Had God commanded them so, the command would correspond to His commands to them involving matters of sacrifices; that which was allowable and that which was not. No such command was ever given. They were without excuse.

If one accepts the latter possibility, he avoids becoming embroiled with additional and more complex questions regarding God's omniscience. For instance, how can an omniscient, or all-knowing, God not know something; in this case the horrible

sins of the citizens of Judah and Jerusalem? If there is a basic premise regarding God which practically all sane persons accept, it is that God is all-knowing. Nothing escapes His wisdom, prescience, observation, knowledge or understanding. All things are naked and open before Him; past, present, and future. God knows all, God sees all. Is a god of lesser capacity worthy of the name, God? Preposterous! Let the Arminian worship this frail god. Those embraced in the election of grace adore the God of *all* knowledge.

The Bible teaches us in clear terms that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He changes not. That being so, how could it be possible for God to have known, or learned of, the terrible events of Judah and Jerusalem, after the fact, without it involving His unchangeableness? To be precise, if by the expression, “neither came it into my mind” means God did not know about the events from some period prior to their actual transpiring, then was God less wise before He learned of them? Conversely, was He more wise, then, after He learned about the events? Could such a thing be possible?

Is God a learner of events as we creatures are? Does He build upon His base of wisdom as events take place like mortals do? Is it possible to say that God did not know of these atrocities until they were committed without at the same time saying God increased in His omniscience with the passing events? What else can we conclude from the noxious idea that God was growing in learning when He said “neither came it into my mind”?

The Word of God says “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15.18).” Can this event, where God comes to these sinners and condemns them for this awful abomination, be excluded from His works? How could God know of this action of His from before the foundation of the world and yet He not know what the action would involve? Is it possible that He just knew that something unknown but wicked was going to transpire but that He would have to wait until the event developed to know the details of what He eternally knew of only generally? That may not be blasphemy but it is a second cousin to it.

An additional consideration is involved if one denies that God knew about these terrible actions. How could God address these sinners about their

crimes if these same crimes had never entered His mind? Can God speak about what He knows nothing about? Did God know about the sins or not? If He did know about them, then just when did He *learn* of them? Was God, who is omnipresent, on the scene when the action took place to become a learning spectator, as all other beings? Did He know about them before or after they transpired? Or as they transpired? Can any of these questions be answered according to the Arminian approach without consigning God to a status of learner? Make no mistake about it. God would have to have known less before these events and known more after the same if “It never came into my mind” means He was unaware until the fact. And so, He could not have been telling us the actual fact of His person when He avowed He never changes.

Let those that deny our conclusions answer our questions.

The Psalmist wrote, “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119.89).” Would the word of the Lord to Judah in Jeremiah 19.5 be excluded from this citation? If, as is averred by the Arminian, God did not know of the events under consideration from all eternity, how then could His word on the subject be forever settled? Could it be possible that God did not know of what He was to speak until sometime after creation? May God deliver us from such confusion. It is a serious imputation of deficiency in God’s wisdom to say that Jeremiah 19.5 means God was unaware of what Judah did. Our God, Who is all wise, knew this matter perfectly from the foundations of the world. The simple meaning of the text is that it never entered God’s mind *to command them* to build altars or desecrate their offsprings in the fire.

Is God unmindful? “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4.12, 13).” God discerns. Dare any say He discerns imperfectly? God discerns the intents of the heart. Those miscreants in Jeremiah 19 certainly intended in their hearts to do what they did, thus God discerned

or knew before the time that which was to transpire. If He knew before, even for one second, the nonsensical argument of the Arminians fall to the dust before the feet of our Omniscient God.

Furthermore, the text says all things are naked and opened unto His eyes. Notice that it does not say they are simply open; they are opened. Opened by His power, His wisdom, His holiness, His will, His knowledge. Is God unmindful? Only in the perception of infidels.

—Elder James F Poole

THE STOOL OF DO-NOTHING?

And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. (2 Kings 4.8-10)

Those with no hope other than the finished work of Jesus Christ are repeatedly accused of *sitting on the stool of do-nothing*. Few of those who parrot this lame and ignorant complaint realize that this ugly smear originated among the work-mongers who cannot tolerate the idea of salvation by grace. The “stool of do-nothing” lament gained great ascendancy in the years surrounding the Black Rock Address in 1832. Those who were obsessed with “missionary zeal,” grasping for something ill to say against the Old School saints who rested in salvation by grace alone, could find no scriptural charge to lay at the saints’ doorstep, so they concocted a non-scriptural charge. They said the Old School Baptists, because of their anti-means opposition to mission boards, tract and temperance societies, Sunday schools, and other manmade innovations, merely sit on the stool of do-nothing. To this day, the unwary still occasionally use the term as though there was some validity in it, thereby unwittingly proving they

are “desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm (1 Timothy 1.7).”

ELISHA AND THE CITY OF SHUNEM

Elisha was an itinerant preacher who could hardly be accused of sitting around and doing nothing. He made his monthly rounds throughout the land of Israel in his day much as many an Old Baptist preacher does even now, keeping his appointments at set times in specified places. He, as Paul, could say, “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Corinthians 15.10).”

Elisha’s appointments called for his passing regularly through the city of Shunem. The very name of the city, in God’s all-encompassing predestination and providence, bears out the truth of His all-pervading providence, as will be shortly seen. *Shunem* means *double resting place* or *two resting places*. Shunem’s two resting places and what they mean are most precious to the children of Jehovah.

The great woman of Shunem mentioned in our text was “given to hospitality (Romans 12.13, 1 Timothy 3.2).” During Elisha’s monthly rounds, this unnamed saint was made aware of the traveler’s plight. She knew that he was a prophet, that he was regularly on the road through their city, and that he had no local place to stay.

The Shunammite woman’s solution was to prepare a guest room for the prophet of God. “Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall...” *On the wall* indicates on the city wall. Homes were built into, against, or even on the thick city walls, as Rahab’s home was in her day: “...Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall (Joshua 2.15).” It was probably from a window of such a house in the wall of Damascus from which “...the disciples took him [Saul of Tarsus, or Paul] by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket (Acts 9.25).”

Walls around these ancient cities were built for the protection and the safety of the cities’ inhabitants. They were as high and as thick as they could be built with available manpower and material. With no

threat from the air other than arrows, rocks, and other missiles which might be thrown or shot over the wall, the walls were a solid defense against invading foot-soldiers. "Walls of the thickness of 20 to 30 feet were not unusual (*Bible Dictionary*, Davis)." The walls of Jericho were over 30 feet high with houses across the top; Nineveh's walls were 100 feet high and "broad enough at the top to hold 4 chariots driven abreast," and Babylon's walls were 300 feet high and 80 feet thick (Halley's *Bible Handbook*!).

These ancient city walls, then, furnished a near-perfect picture of the salvation God has provided for protecting His people. "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; *salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks* (Isaiah 26.1)." Well might the poet, John Newton, drawing from this scripture, write:

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for His own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.

THE FURNISHINGS

This lady of Shunem further proposed to furnish their guest room with four articles of furniture for Elisha's convenience: a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. Each of these items are likewise of spiritual significance. We wish to briefly examine what they have to tell us.

First, consider the candlestick. Candlesticks are a figure of the church: "...the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches (Revelation 1.20)." Candlesticks have no light of their own. With only a candlestick, one would be in total darkness. A candlestick is designed for one purpose only, and that is to hold up a light. It is the candle which illumines an otherwise dark room. The candle represents Jesus Christ as the Light of the world, dispelling darkness, lighting all around it, including the candlestick itself.

Next, the table, which is thought of primarily as a place to eat; a breakfast table, a dinner table, a supper table. This reminds us that Jesus is the food

of His people, their bread of life, their manna, their sustenance. But a table is useful for many other things, as well: it also provided a desk-like surface for holding the candlestick, for Elisha's writing, for his reading, and for conveniently holding whatever else Elijah might have placed upon it.

THE TWO RESTING PLACES

Our chief points of interest, for the present, are **the two resting places** provided for the man of God: the stool and the bed. How beautiful it is that this little bed-chamber with its conveniences was supplied not at Jerusalem, not at Bethel, not at Shiloh, but at *Shunem—two resting places*, first in name, and now, providentially, in fact.

The bed was a place of rest for the night, where the weary preacher might get a sound night's sleep. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep (Psalm 127.2)." Sleep is a necessary, God-given ingredient of life, without which we would perish. A bed was therefore provided.

"Shall I be carried through the skies on flowery beds of ease?" the hymn asks. Certainly not, in the sense of the poet who penned those words in contemplation of the tragic persecutions the saints of all ages have endured. But yes, they shall be carried through the skies on flowery beds of ease in the sense of their salvation. They are bid to rest, rest only in Christ's finished work, until the time comes that they, like the poor beggar Lazarus, are "**carried** by the angels into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16.22)."

But in addition to the bed, there was also a place for rest during the day. No one wants to stay on his feet all the time, especially after long, weary journeys such as Elisha continually made. A stool was therefore provided so that he might rest or sit at the table to eat his meals.

"**Stand still**, and see the salvation of the Lord (Exodus 19.13)" is often quoted, reminding us that we have been brought to a standstill, an end of our own efforts toward salvation. The Israelites, to whom Moses said these words, could not go forward because of the Red Sea and could not go back because of Pharaoh's army. To go to the left or right was futile because of the Egyptians' fast pursuit. Standing still is always a valid thing for His people to do until their God opens the way for them to go forward.

But sometimes God's people were bid to **sit still** and see the salvation of Jehovah. While the mighty Boaz undertook the part of the near kinsman redeemer for his beloved Ruth, her mother in law Naomi advised her: "**Sit still**, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: *for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day* (Ruth 3.18)." Magnificent! In all the scriptures there is perhaps no more beautiful picture of the saints' resting in Christ as He, their near kinsman, accomplishes all things necessary in order to bring them to Himself.

Centuries after the Exodus, Jerusalem was under the threat of destruction by the Assyrian army from the north. Some Jewish strategists advocated hiring the mercenary Egyptian army, now a possible ally, to help Judah fight off Sargon, commander of the Assyrians, who had already captured Israel's northern ten tribes and was now besieging Zion. It was then that Isaiah said, "For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, *Their strength is to sit still* (Isaiah 30.7)." The significance here was exactly the same as that of their standing still at the Red Sea: Zion was helpless and must wait passively for the salvation which could only come from their sovereign God in His own good time and way—a fitting picture of the spiritual situation of the beleaguered child of God today and in every age.

Jesus told His weary, heavy-laden followers, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11.28)." The work-mongers of the world's religions love to sing, "Work for the night is coming," and they glory in what they are "doing for God." The Lord's children have had their fill of that, having been brought by their Savior to an end of their labors. When the night comes, they have a bed provided. Until then, they have a stool to rest upon.

Sometimes the rest they need is purely physical. "For, when we were come into Macedonia, **our flesh had no rest**, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears (2 Corinthians 7.5)." But more than that, they need and desire rest from the burdens of the soul. They need spiritual rest, soul rest, and God has provided it for them. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest

unto your souls (Matthew 11.29)." Mark tells us, "And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat (Mark 6.31)." Christ provides rest for His own. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep (Psalm 127.2)." "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep (Psalm 121.4)." He watches protectively over His children while they take their rest.

Although it would be pleasant and perhaps worthwhile to linger with Elisha, his friends the Shunemite family, and the provisions they made for him, we regretfully cannot dwell longer on these things. For our remaining time together, meditating on the spiritual significance of Elisha's two resting places as they might apply to God's children, we would now turn to the book of Hebrews.

REST IN CHRIST

Paul, writing to the Hebrew saints, has much to say about the spiritual rest Christ has provided for His people. It is not my intention to comment at length on each of the following verses in Hebrews, which, drawn from the Old Testament economy, comment extensively on Israel under the law covenant ("which my covenant they brake," God said). Rather, I would that the reader will note that, from this lengthy passage drawn from Hebrews chapters 3 and 4, Paul is setting up an extended argument, namely this: There was no rest under the legalistic old covenant; there **is** rest provided by Christ under the new covenant, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they [the Old Testament saints] without us should not be made perfect (Hebrews 11.40)." Notice how Paul returns again and again to the theme of rest:

"...So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my **rest** (Hebrews 3.11)." "And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his **rest**, but to them that believed not (3.18)?" "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his **rest**, any of you should seem to come short of it (4.1)." "For we which have believed do enter into **rest**, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my **rest**: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world (4.3)." "For he spake in

a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did **rest** the seventh day from all his works (4.4).” “And in this place again, If they shall enter into my **rest**. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief (4.5f).” “For if Jesus had given them **rest**, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day (4.8).” “There remaineth therefore a **rest** to the people of God (4.9).” “For he that is entered into his **rest**, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his (4.10).” “Let us labour therefore to enter into that **rest**, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (4.11).”

Between Hebrews 3.11 and 4.11, rest is mentioned eleven times. Sometimes it is from a negative standpoint, showing that the Israelites had no rest under the law. God swore that they would not enter into His rest (3.18), even as He swore that those who were embraced in the new covenant would, yea, *must* enter therein.

In passing, we happily note that 4.1 does not say that anyone to whom God has promised this gospel rest will ever come short of receiving it. He said, “...lest...any of you should *seem* to come short of it.” Verse 3 tells us all believers do enter into this rest, and the works were finished from the foundation of the world. This can only be predestination, and that of the finished work of Christ as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1.20; Revelation 13.8). Predestination also ensures that God’s children will likewise be found producing the good works in which God has before ordained that they should, or would, walk (Ephesians 2.10).

In verse 4, God’s rest on the seventh day from *all* His works here implies not only the creative works of Genesis 1 but also the predestination embraced in these verses. This predestination is developed in verse 6, “it remaineth that some **must** enter therein,” the *therein* referring to God’s rest, the rest which God has provided. **Must** is predestination. It is the doctrine of necessity. There are some who are predestined to enter into this rest, and they shall enter into it, because they *must*.

The *Jesus* of verse 8 is Joshua, as is pointed out in most Bibles with alternate marginal readings. In the Hebrew language, Jesus’ name would have been Joshua; hence Joshua is rendered as *Jesus* here (and

in Acts 7.45). The point being made here is, if Joshua had given Israel rest in his day, then there would have been no need to prophesy of “another day” when true rest would have been ushered in by the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. The saint, resting in Christ’s finished work, ceases from his own works, even as God ceased from His works and rested. **Christ Jesus, not Sunday, is the “Christian Sabbath.”**

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest sounds like a contradiction in terms, but it is not. Labor to enter into rest? Labor to **not** labor? It is worded in this way because, to the bitter end, the flesh will always have that vile tendency to offer its works unto God. An ongoing part of the saints’ spiritual warfare is for their spiritual part (a) negatively, to struggle (“labour”) against the flesh’s attempts to impress our God with its own efforts and (b) positively, “to enter into that rest” found only in Christ’s finished work.

THE SAINTS’ TWO RESTING PLACES

Then what are the two resting places God has provided in Christ Jesus for His children? Paul tells us in Hebrews, the sixth chapter: “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his *counsel*, confirmed it by an *oath*: that by *two immutable things*, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 6.17ff).”

The two resting places of God’s children are (1) **His counsel** and (2) **His oath**, both of which are as immutable or unchangeable as the unchangeable God Himself. “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed (Malachi 3.6).” The implication here is that, if God were changeable, then the sons of Jacob would certainly be consumed; He is unchangeable; therefore, they will never be consumed.

The saints are already the heirs of promise (verse 17). “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the

children of promise (Galatians 4.28).” Even as Isaac was supernaturally born to Sarah after it was naturally and physically impossible for her to bear children, so God’s children are supernaturally, spiritually born from above in a birth that is neither natural nor physical. Being His children, they are the heirs of promise in at least a twofold way:

1. In that they were eternally promised to Christ as His heritage or inheritance. “For the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance (Deuteronomy 32.9).” “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward (Psalm 127.3).” “...He shall see **His seed**, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand (Isaiah 53.10).” When Christ presents His redeemed ones before His Father in that glorious eternal day, His words will be, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me (Hebrews 2.13).” And,

2. They themselves have inherited promises made to them by God the Father, purchased for them by God the Son, and effectually applied by the Holy Spirit: “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Peter 1.4).” “In whom [i.e., in Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance...(Ephesians 1.11).” “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us (2 Corinthians 1.20).”

GOD’S COUNSEL

God defines His counsel as, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46.10).” If any event does not come to pass as God declared it, the infinite God would be neither omniscient nor omnipotent. Instead, He would be found to be a false witness; for what is bearing false witness other than declaring an untruth?

God’s counsel is immutable, as are His perfect nature, His attributes, and all His acts. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Ephesians 1.11).” God’s predestination is here unabashedly linked to, and rooted in, the counsel of His own will.

If God’s counsel were ever to change, it clearly must change for the better or for the worse. If it changed for the better, it would mean His counsel was imperfect before the change (and may still be); but if it changed for the worse, His counsel would surely be imperfect after the change (and may have been before). Since by definition it is impossible for God to be imperfect and still be God, it follows that He has not changed, and He will not change; or else there is no God. There is no room between belief in an immutable God and atheism. It is one or the other.

The saints’ inheritance is such “That we should be to the praise of his glory...(Ephesians 1.12)” in all eternity. His glory and the praise of it is not only why He made them; it is also that to which He predestinated them. “Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5.5).”

Unchangeable, immutable, absolute predestination cannot be separated from God’s counsel, and the immutable counsel of God is one of the two resting places God has provided for His people.

GOD’S OATH

God’s oath is likewise immutable. Even an oath between men is an end of all strife. Men go to court and swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and on their testimony under such an oath some men are imprisoned and put to death, and other men are freed, because, in the fear of God (or at least supposedly so) they swear, “So help me God.” That settles it, even among men. “For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife (Hebrews 6.16).”

How much more is this the case, Paul argues, when the eternal God swore by or on His own honor? “For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself (Hebrews 6.13).” Had there been a Being greater than God, Paul is saying, Jehovah Himself would not have exempted Himself from this principle, but He certainly would have sworn by the greater. You may **rest** assured, then, that there is no greater Being in the created or uncreated universe than our God.

It is impossible for God to lie, because:

1. How *could* He lie, since He is holy, righteous, and manifested Himself as Truth incarnate (John

14.6)? “I AM the way, **the truth**, and the life.” He could no more misrepresent the truth and present an untruth than He could cease to be God. Yea, if one could happen, so could the other, as easily.

2. How *could* He lie, since whenever “He spake...it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast (Psalm 33.9)”? His saying something makes it so. This is why and how He can declare sinners righteous, and they are righteous—not in or of themselves, but by the finished work of the Savior Jesus Christ’s enacting the eternal decree of “God, who quickeneth the dead, and **calleth those things which be not as though they were** (Romans 4.17).”

Do not lose sight of what Paul is arguing here. God’s promise, as He put Himself under oath, was the truth and was no lie. As such, these facts, grounded in His character, His integrity, and His essential nature, all ratified by His oath, provide a second resting place for the burdened sinner.

CONSOLATION

There is strong consolation here for the heirs of promise. The Greek word here translated *consolation* is *paraklesis* (3874, Strong’s Concordance), from *para* (by, near, along side of, from which we get the word *parallel*), and *kaleo* (2564, Strong: *to call, to send for, to summon*). The heirs of grace are called near, sent for, summoned along side of God and His oath. This answers exactly to the words in another of Newton’s hymns:

Thy promise is my only plea,
With this I venture nigh;
Thou callest burdened souls to Thee,
And such, O Lord, am I.

There, they find the rest which is the consolation of their souls. Such have fled not *to* works, but, fleeing *from* works, they have fled to Christ Jesus for refuge (verse 18). There, they lay hold on the hope set before them. And what—or who—is their hope? The “Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope (1 Timothy 1.1).” Their hope is not a deed or an act, the act of *hoping*; it is a Person. Some tombstones bear the inscription, “Rest in peace.” The saint of God does not need to wait for death in order to enter into the rest and peace provided in His finished work. They rest even now in Him.

Christ, the saints’ hope, is as an anchor of the soul. Mariners on a free-floating ship in a stormy sea must work to keep from being tossed about and perhaps being dashed against the rocks and destroyed. However, if the ship is anchored, truly anchored, its crew and passengers have nothing to fear, and they have ceased from their labors. Drop the sails and cut the engines; all is well. Salvation, safety, and rest depend not on the ship, and not on the sailors’ efforts, but upon the anchor. There is nothing for them to do but ride out the storm, resting their confidence in the anchor which holds them. The two resting places for the people of God are His counsel and His oath, and Christ Jesus is the anchor of it all.

Consider these things well, then, before participating in the ill-chosen and shallow accusation that saints who are unimpressed with worldly means, measures, and efforts of the flesh are therefore “sitting on the stool of do-nothing.” “Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is His name: He shall thoroughly plead their cause, that He may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon (Jeremiah 50.34).”

—Elder C. C. Morris

WHAT SHALL WE SAY?

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Romans 9.14-16).

Whenever the sovereignty of God in salvation is discussed, the unbelieving party will soon object that the doctrine of eternal, unconditional election makes God unfair and unrighteous. This is not a new objection. It is not the product of this modern era. It has been the natural objection of the human mind since the fall of our father, Adam. Cain was so moved by his objection to the sovereignty of God that he killed his brother. He probably would rather have killed the God who accepted Abel and rejected him, but, knowing the impossibility of

that, he settled for the next best thing: he did away with God's favorite. Perhaps he thought that God would then be forced to accept him in the absence of His preferred one. Paul anticipated this objection as he set forth the doctrine to the church at Rome. "What shall we say then?" What "we" shall say depends on who "we" are. We, the children of Adam, speaking out of our depraved human nature, are sure to infer and object to an unrighteousness on God's part. Christ said, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (Matthew 12.34)." We should not be surprised to hear the natural man object to the truth of Divine sovereignty.

Shall we, the born again, Spirit-taught children of God speak of "unrighteousness with God?" Paul's answer: "God forbid." God forbid that we should say such a thing! May God seal our lips, numb our tongues, and lock our vocal chords before we utter railing accusations against the One "in whom we live and move and have our being"! "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth (Colossians 3.8)." God forbids this blasphemy and filthy communication from us—not by sealing our lips, but by changing our hearts.

"Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him (Colossians 3.9, 10)." The "old man" says, "There is unrighteousness with God." The "new man" says, "God forbid! 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?'"

If we have been taught by the Spirit of God, we love and rejoice in the truth of the sovereignty of God in salvation and in all things. We love it and rejoice in it because: 1) it shows God to be the Author of salvation, 2) it declares the certainty of salvation to the "children of promise," and 3) it ascribes all glory and praise for salvation to the Eternal God, as it should be.

1. God is the Author of salvation. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy *on whom I will* have mercy, and I will have compassion *on whom I will* have compassion." There are some on whom God

will have mercy. The objects of God's saving grace are those He has chosen before the foundation of the world. He has loved them with an everlasting love, and therefore He draws them to Himself with cords of love. Man does not initiate anything with God. "We love him, because he first loved us (1 John 4.19)." Jesus told His disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain (John 15.16)." When Christ came He came as "the good shepherd" of the "sheep." He laid down His life "for the sheep." He said He "must bring" these sheep to Himself.

Not all men are in the category of His sheep. One does not get to be a sheep by believing on Christ, for He told the Jews, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." One must already be one of His sheep to believe on Him. These sheep were given to Christ by the Father, and eternal life is secure to them. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one (John 10.27-30)."

The Father chose the vessels of mercy and gave them to His Son. The Son redeemed them by His precious blood and secured all spiritual blessings for them. The Spirit gives life to the heirs of glory and teaches them to know their God. The religious world tells us that one becomes a son of God by crying to Him, but this is just the opposite of the order laid down in the scripture. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Galatians 4.6)." Our whole spiritual experience is a good work of God, which He began and shall continue. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1.6)." In every aspect of salvation God is the Author.

2. The salvation of God's elect is a certainty. "For he saith to Moses, *I will have mercy* on whom I will have mercy, and *I will have compassion* on whom I will have compassion." Praise Almighty God! He does not merely "want" to have mercy on some folks, but He WILL have mercy on His chosen.

There is no power in all creation that can stand in the way of the will of the Eternal God. "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Romans 13.1)." If God has determined to have mercy on someone, that mercy will effectually gush forth to them regardless of any objections. Satan can't stop it. The world that "lieth in wickedness" can't stop it. The natural, stony heart of the object of mercy can't stop it.

The grace of God is sovereign grace that reigns unto eternal life. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5.20, 21)." This sovereign grace guarantees that not one soul that God intends to save can ever be lost.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Romans 8.28-30)." Here is an unbreakable chain of reigning grace that reaches from "before the world began" to when "time shall be no more."

The sovereign, gracious purpose of God is so powerful that it makes "all things work together for good to them that love God." Every event and every creature has to join in lock step for the good of the chosen, because God says so. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us (Romans 8.31)?" Who indeed? If salvation must be initiated by man, or if it in any way depends on the efforts of man to sustain it, then we must all miserably fail. God must stare disappointedly across an empty banquet table of would-be mercy. Jesus must be dissatisfied when He sees the lack of result of His "travail." He must be disgraced as He stands at the end, unable to say, "Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me." God forbid! Banish these unthinkable images forever! Jehovah reigns. His grace is supreme. Eternal salvation is absolutely sure to His chosen flock, because He has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy."

3. All glory and praise for salvation goes to the Eternal God. "So then it is *not of him* that willeth, *nor of him* that runneth, *but of God* that sheweth mercy." Our "willing" and "running" are not the causes of our salvation. This is not to say that there is no "willing" or "running" involved, for the scriptures clearly show that there is. The truth is that any "willing" or "running" on our part is a result of the gracious work of God in us. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Philippians 2.13)." Our natural state is one of self-will and disobedience. This will never change as long as we are left to ourselves. If God must wait for us to "take the first step" to be converted, then there would never be one conversion. No, not one.

The Lord Jesus told the scripture-searching Jews who sought to kill Him, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life (John 5.40)." The old man will not come to Christ and he cannot come to Christ. He does not understand Christ's speech because he cannot hear Christ's word. God makes the difference. God brings about the change according to His everlasting promise to the Son: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power (Psalm 110.3)." Jesus Christ has a people. This people shall be willing. This willingness takes place in the day of His power. It takes power to make a believer. We believe "according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead...(Ephesians 1.19, 20)."

The saints are exhorted to "run with patience the race that is set before us." The Christian experience is likened to a race. It is not a 40-yard sprint. It is more like a marathon. The course of this race is "set before us." We don't choose our own course, but we run in the set course. It takes persistence and endurance to continue in this race to the finish. This is the meaning of the word "patience" in the above quote. The "easy-believism" and "free-willism" of the world ignore this. They turn the perseverance of the saints into "once saved always saved." The "legalistic will-worshippers" wrest this doctrine to teach "falling from grace." The truth is that God's people shall persevere to the end in faith, because "he which hath begun a good work" in our hearts "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

We are given a faith that is "not of ourselves." It is "the gift of God." This faith "overcometh the

world.” The salvation of God’s people is based in “the blood of the everlasting covenant,” and it is the responsibility of “the great shepherd of the sheep.” “So then it is *not of him* that willeth, *nor of him* that runneth, *but of God* that sheweth mercy.” It is “of God” that we are in Christ Jesus. It is “of God” that Christ Jesus is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” The reason it is all “of God” is: “That no flesh should glory in his presence...That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1.29-31).”

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AN APPROACH TO STUDYING THE BIBLE

(Installment #3)

Our readers’ response to the comments on Bible reading (*The Remnant*, March-April and May-June issues, 1999) has been most humbling, and one of the most pleasant surprises I have received since I began trying to pen my thoughts about our sovereign God and His book over thirty years ago. Many of our readers have expressed their appreciation that we have opened this subject, and some have asked for more information on how they might get more from their Bible reading. Some also asked for information about Bible dictionaries, concordances, and other good books which provide background material about the history, chronology, and customs of Israel and the other nations mentioned in the Scriptures. Being thus encouraged by our readers, I will try to present some further thoughts on this subject.

From time to time someone says, “You can’t understand the Bible if God doesn’t give it to you.” This is entirely true. We do not deny it for an instant. Rather, we emphasize it; we cannot understand the Scriptures, which are spiritual, unless God’s Spirit

guides us into His truth. It is also equally true that, unless God gives us the understanding, we cannot comprehend a service manual for our car, a training manual at work, books on hobbies, computers, or gardening, or printed instructions on assembling a wheelbarrow, baking a pie, or using a microwave. It is just as true that “You can’t understand a washing-machine instruction booklet unless God gives you to understand it,” yet those who take this approach to Bible reading do not refuse to read printed directions for new appliances. We all read them, knowing there may always be some things about washing-machines we will never understand, but at the same time realizing that when we read them we will probably learn *something*, and we usually end up knowing at least a little more than we did before we read it. How much more is this true of those who are born of God and have been given a hunger and thirst after righteousness, when they read their Bibles and are taught by the Spirit of God?

“But,” the objection continues, “It’s ‘not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life’ (2 Corinthians 3.6).” Again, this is surely most true, and we agree. Examining the entire third chapter of 2 Corinthians, however, will show that Paul was speaking of **the letter of the law** as that which kills, and **not** the reading and searching of the Scriptures, which he commended (1 Timothy 4.13). Even the prophets searched their own writings, Peter tells us, for they knew they had been inspired by the Spirit to write words of divine origin (1 Peter 1.10-12). Since Isaiah and Jeremiah searched what they wrote, shall we not search their writings also?

The following, then, are some observations gleaned from years of personal experience. They are presented in the hope that at least some of them will be of use to those brethren and sisters who are seriously interested in searching out “what the Spirit saith to the churches (Revelation 2.7, *et al*).

SOME SUGGESTED DOS AND DON’TS:

1. Do get a good-quality Study Bible: Get a Bible with as large-sized print as possible. Don’t strain your eyes reading fine print. Preferably, this Bible should be text only with no marginal references. You don’t need the distractions. You can use another Bible which has center-margin references, if you feel you must have such aids.

A good quality Bible, to last you and serve your needs as long as possible, should be leather bound with acid-free India paper. Do not cut costs here to save a couple dollars. This will be the most important book you will ever own. Every year or so, apply a good leather treatment to the cover. With care, a Bible like this should last you a lifetime.

Find a Bible with as wide a margin as possible for making your own personal notes and cross-references. Some, almost superstitiously, will not “mark in a Bible” because, to them, it is the next thing to sacrilege or the desecration of God’s word. This is not the case at all. The citations and word meanings you reverently write in the margins are put there only because you believe the Spirit has given them to you. They are a record of your spiritual journey in the past, a present help to your memory each time you read, and shortcuts and aids to your future explorations in this wonderful, God-given book.

2. Do try to get some idea of the background of the books of the Bible you read: *Who* wrote it? *To whom* did he write? *Where* were they? *When* was it written? A good **Bible dictionary** will answer most of this background information of this kind.

The questions *why* was it written, *what* the author said, and some of the other questions, above, will be answered in the reading of the book itself.

3. For now, DO forget about commentaries and sermon books. Commentaries and books of sermons are no substitute for reading the Bible. They may help with some of the background information mentioned above, but they also often get into telling you the author’s version of *what* the author said and *why* he said it. It is always better to get information from the source—Moses, Matthew, or Paul—than to get it second-hand. See what God said, not what the commentator *said* God said.

4. Do start with books like Genesis (that is where God started, “In the beginning,” is it not?), Psalms, and Isaiah in the Old Testament and Matthew, John, Acts, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians in the New. You can branch out from these. Therefore,

5. Don’t start with “deep” books like Ezekiel or one of the more obscure minor prophets. Ordinarily we would say, **don’t** jump into the middle of the historical books like, say, First or Second Chronicles.

6. Don’t let intruding thoughts interrupt your reading. Keep a pen and paper handy to briefly and quickly jot down the interesting cross-references and thoughts that come to your mind; then get back to your reading. Check these fascinating tidbits later, but not during your reading time.

7. HOW should I read? Do Read—

—**rapidly:** For the time being, don’t stop to “meditate,” to look up words, or to check other verses elsewhere in the Bible; you’ve done this before, or tried to, and it hasn’t helped all that much, has it? You can research later and meditate some other time. When seriously reading the Bible, you are looking for “the big picture.” By God’s grace, the details will fall into place in due time. Read the accounts of the lives of men like Abraham (Genesis 11-25), Jacob (Genesis 25-49), or Joseph (Genesis 37-50) at a single sitting, and then do it over again tomorrow. Don’t bog down wondering where Ur of the Chaldees was, worrying about how to pronounce Chedorlaomer’s name, or wrestling for a half an hour trying to reconcile “God did tempt Abraham (Genesis 22.1)” with “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man (James 1.13).” (This latter problem is a good example of why a person who is serious about their Bible should not be afraid to occasionally look up words in the Hebrew and Greek dictionaries in the back of Strong’s concordance.)

Read at least the first 20 chapters of Exodus together, and don’t spend all your time thinking about a few details, like the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, or wondering what “murrain” is (it’s anthrax).

—**repeatedly:** An important secret of Bible reading and study is to become familiar with your Bible. The secret of becoming familiar with your Bible is to *read* it again and again. There is no substitute for reading the Scriptures.

It is no exaggeration to say that one should read a book of the Bible fifty, one hundred, or more times; not in a single marathon effort, but over a long period of time. Pick a favorite Bible book or one that you feel a need to know more about. Take several months or even a year to read and reread a book like Genesis, Matthew, Acts, or Romans. That is the *only* way you will ever truly become familiar with it. Then, when you have done so, don’t think you have mastered it and now you can forget about it. The Bible is not like any other book. There will always be new, fresh

things revealed to you as you read and reread the same passages down through the years.

—**regularly:** Set aside a daily time to read. If for some reason this is impossible, at least read as regularly as you can, and allow adequate time for it. This should be a top priority, not to be thought of as something you might squeeze in for a few minutes between supper and TV time. Perhaps five- or ten-minute snatches here and there are indeed better than nothing, but they are not enough to seriously call Bible reading. “Be instant in season and out of season.”

Sometimes I read my Bible
And 'tis a sealed book;
Sometimes I find a blessing
Whene'er therein I look....

Ah, but the poet *did* read his Bible! That is what is important. Read it at morning, read it in the night, and read yourself to sleep with it. Read it when you feel like it, and read it when you do not, and read it when your old flesh had rather be doing something else. Read it while you are young, and if it's too late for that, read it while you yet have your mind, your life, and your breath within you. It is the unerring word of your unfailing God. What can be more important to you than that?

—**resolutely:** Do not digress. Suppose you are reading John's gospel through, and you get to chapter 10, the part about Jesus' being the Good Shepherd. Don't stop—for now—to read the 23rd Psalm because the one reminds you of the other. Make a note, if you must, and read Psalm 23 and your other cross-references at another time, after you have finished reading the gospel of John. To read resolutely is how one becomes familiar with what John says and where he says it. To continually interrupt one reading for another and still another is one reason why many become discouraged and never become truly familiar with the Scriptures.

8. Do ignore chapter and verse divisions. Chapters and verses are there for the convenience of referring to an exact passage of Scripture so it can be easily found. They were not put there as starting and stopping places. They do not always mark the beginning or ending of a complete passage or thought.

For example: John 8.1 is a continuation of John 7: “And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.” There should be no chapter break, no, especially not where the KJV puts it, because this beautiful text tells us that not one of the people was hospitable enough to provide a place for Jesus to spend the night, Nicodemus the secret disciple included. We lose sight of this fact when we stop at the end of John 7.53.

Starting at John 8.1-2 is equally obscure: It says, “Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.” This would leave us thinking that Jesus merely took an early morning walk before going to the temple, instead of what actually happened—the night before, He had camped out on Olivet, because “the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”

Another example: Isaiah 53 is a continuation of what precedes. The chapter division, to occur at the division of thought, should be at the end of Isaiah 52.12. Isaiah 53 should begin at 52.13: “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men: So shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed,” etc.

9. DO ignore “page headings.” The page headings and chapter titles are uninspired “helps” placed there by editors. They might help you find a passage quickly, but they are often, or about as often as not, misleading.

For instance, in my Bible (yours may be different), Luke 16 is headed, “The Parable of the rich man.” This is **not** a parable. No *parable* names individuals such as Lazarus and Abraham. In writing or in speaking about this passage of Scripture, to call it “a parable” is a great disservice—first of all to our Lord Jesus Christ and to what He was saying, and also to the readers and hearers. Misrepresenting this literal account of *certain* men, by miscalling it a parable, has given much aid and comfort to those who advocate the no-hell error.

Again, a page heading in my Bible at the tenth chapter of John says "Jesus is Stoned." He was *not* stoned. Verse 31 says the Jews took up stones again to stone Him, but verse 39 tells us He escaped out of their hand.

Notes and headings at the beginnings of chapters or on the top of pages were supplied by man; and when it comes to whatever is supplied by man, do not take anything for granted.

10. While reading, DO try leaving out the italicized words. Be aware that words written in italics in the KJV are words the KJV translators added. They thought these words would help clarify what was being said. Sometimes they do help, but often they do not. At least, when they added to the words of God, the King James men were honest enough to let us know by using italics. Try omitting the italicized words and see if the verse does not make at least as much sense, if not more.

Psalm 22.1 is written in gasps, as if it is being spoken by one in utter agony, too distracted by his pain and exhaustion to finish his sentences. Without the italicized words, we would have: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?...far from helping me...the words of my roaring." How fitting this is to the sufferings of Jesus on the cross, of which Psalm 22 is a prophecy.

Psalm 69.22 says, with the KJV italics, "Let their table become a snare before them: and *that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.*" Leaving out the italicized words, we have: "Let their table become a snare before them: and welfare, a trap." How revealing!

John 18.4-8 (KJV) says (here we again retain the KJV's italics so you can readily see the difference), "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*...."

In each case, Jesus said, **I AM,** taking unto Himself the name of the eternal God. In this Scripture passage He did not once say, "I am **He**." By saying "I AM," He was here proclaiming His deity. The

proof of this was that His enemies could not stand before Him, the one who was the great I AM incarnate. The very claim of His deity knocked them to the ground.

Most of the modern so-called "translations" are doubly dishonest: They omit, add to, or change the inspired words, and then they do not indicate to the reader that they have done so.

11. For the time being, DO forget about having an attitude the Bible is "mysterious." As we said before, we know it is impossible for the carnal mind to receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2.14), but this text was **not** put in the Bible to discourage God's people from reading the Bible! The same text continues and says that those who have a genuine hope in Christ "have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2.16)." If given to do so, beg the Lord for enlightenment, wisdom, and knowledge, as you are enabled, and keep reading, depending only on the Holy Spirit. You and I both know we cannot understand the Bible without His enlightenment; I know you know it; and you know I know you know it, so, go on from there. Seek to understand the meaning of the words even if, at least for the time being, you do not think you understand their spiritual significance. The Lord *will* teach you what He would have you to know. An encouraging truth to remember is, the one who humbly thinks he or she does not understand a text might well be closer to understanding the truth than the ones who are confident that they understand all things clearly.

12. What about center-column or other alternate readings? We recently received a most encouraging letter from a reader asking about alternate readings; that is, where another word is suggested in the margin or center-references to replace a KJV word. Some examples are: replacing the word **world** (in some verses, not in all places) with *eon* or *age*; replacing the words (in Ephesians) **in heavenly places** with "in the heavenlies"; and replacing **Jesus** with "Joshua" in Acts 7.45 and Hebrews 4.8.

There is no easy answer to this question. Sometimes the recommended changes are valid, as are the cases above (*age*, "in the heavenlies," and "Joshua"). Sometimes they are not.

Sometimes an alternate reading is no improvement at all. Consider the old English word, "meet." Is "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man

should be alone; I will make him an help **as before** him,” as my Collins Bible’s margin suggests, really better than “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help **meet** for him (Genesis 2.18)”?

Or, as Collins again suggests, is “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance (Matthew 3.8)” really improved by changing it to read “Bring forth therefore fruits **answerable to amendment of life**”? It is doubtless better that we should simply use the KJV and turn to Webster, who gives the old definition of *meet* as *suitable, proper, fit*. Eve was *suitable* for Adam. John required fruit that was *suitable* [evidence] of, or for, repentance.

Surprisingly, however, Collins strengthens the words “set forth” in Romans 3.25, by substituting “foreordained”: “Whom God hath **foreordained** to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.”

The use of alternate marginal readings, then, seems to come down to which words are best used to convey in English what God originally inspired. We are *not* allowed to change the sentiments or meanings of what was originally expressed in the Hebrew or Greek texts. We are allowed, yea, *required* to express those sentiments and meanings as clearly and accurately as possible. If the marginal rendering helps you understand the text more clearly, then guardedly go ahead and use it. If you are yet in doubt about a suggested change, especially if a changed word affects a cardinal point of the doctrine of Christ Jesus, by all means check it out with whatever tools you have available. Above all else, as much as the Lord will bless you to do so, follow the example of the Bereans, who “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17.11).”

USEFUL BOOKS

A. Dr. James Strong’s *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. This, first and foremost. Get the complete version with the Greek and Hebrew dictionaries in the back. Learn how to use them, but don’t think you are now suddenly an expert in Hebrew and Greek in a week. There are shades of meaning in the Greek and Hebrew words which we cannot possibly discern from the English text only. We look at the original language, as well as we are enabled, whenever we want to see exactly what was originally said in the God-inspired text.

The flyleaf’s description of this great book continues: “Showing every word of the text of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order; together with a comparative concordance of the Authorized and Revised Versions, including the American variations; also brief Dictionaries of the Hebrew and Greek Words of the original, with references to the English words.” And the flyleaf does not exaggerate.

The *Authorized Version* to which the above refers is the *King James Version*, and the authorization was that of King James himself. The *Revised Version* mentioned is the *English Revised Version*, also sometimes referred to simply as *The Revised Version* (RV). It was compiled in the years 1881-1885 by a combined team of 51 English and American scholars who had access to ancient manuscripts the King James translators did not. The “American variations” to which Strong’s flyleaf alludes are the changes the American members of the 1881 committee thought were necessary but the English brethren did not. The American brethren printed their version, with their preferred readings incorporated in it, as *The American Standard Version* (ASV) in 1900-1901. The ASV is evidently out of print now, but conservative Bible authorities often concede it to be the most accurate English translation of the Bible in existence. If you can find a used copy of the 1901 version, if for no other reason than for the purpose of comparison, be sure to get it if possible.

As for Strong’s concordance, then, it is actually a concordance for three English-language Bibles, not just one: The Authorized or King James Version (KJV), the English Revised Version (RV), and the American Standard Version (ASV).

One important note on the subject of these various Bible versions or translations: The preceding references to the *English Revised Version* of 1881-1885 (RV) and the ASV of 1900-01 should not and must not be confused with the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) of 1946-1952, which is actually a cunning *perVersion* of the sacred Scriptures.

A Hebrew and Greek dictionary. These are included in the back of Strong’s Concordance. To use these, you do not have to know one word, not one syllable, or one letter of Hebrew or Greek, because Strong has indexed every word directly by a number.

If you want to know exactly what the Greek word for *righteousness* is in Romans 3.25, look up righteousness in the main concordance. There you will find the number 1343. Look up 1343 in the back of the book. You do not have to be able to read the Greek word δικαιουσνη, but it is there for you to pursue as far and as deeply as you like. The derivation and definition of the word is all there, and it is all easier to use than Webster, because all you do is find Strong's number and read what follows.

There are more extensive dictionaries of the Hebrew and Greek on the market, called *lexicons*, but Strong's dictionaries are sufficient for the most of us.

Finally, and of great value, Strong's dictionaries show all the different ways the Hebrew or Greek word is translated in the King James Version.

B. Webster's Dictionary: This should go without saying, but we say it here nonetheless.

C. A "conservative" Bible Dictionary: By *conservative* is meant those authors and their books that hold to the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, and that the miracles He performed were both supernatural and genuine; His atoning death, burial, and literal bodily resurrection, and generally the supernatural element of the Scriptures. This must be a matter of concern in finding a dictionary one can use with more than a little confidence. There are Bible dictionaries on the market which subtly deny all of these points and more.

The best I have found to date is *A Dictionary of the Bible* by William Smith, L.L.D., as later revised and edited by F.N. Peloubet and M.A. Peloubet. This is generally known as the *Smith-Peloubet Bible Dictionary* for short. Originally written and copyrighted in England in 1884, it is old enough to be illustrated with woodcuts. It lists *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as one of its sources and numbers among its many contributors such respected Greek scholars as Henry Alford, Joseph B. Lightfoot, Samuel P. Tregelles, and Brooke F. Westcott. I have recently seen *Smith-Peloubet* in a paperback edition. Mine was printed in 1948. (Good books, properly cared for, will last a lifetime and are well worth the investment.)

Another commendable dictionary, first published in 1898, is the *Davis Dictionary of the Bible* by John D. Davis. My copy was printed in 1954. In no

uncertain terms, Davis is sound and biblical. And at times there are some pleasant surprises, like the opening words in his article on Cyrus, King of Persia: "A king twice named in the book of Isaiah as anointed of God and predestined to conquer kings...."

You won't find Smith or Davis espousing page after page of Primitive Baptist doctrine, though; but that is not what you would expect in a dictionary. To learn, however, about the Bible's people, places, cities and countries, their histories, customs, religions, plants, animals, and geography, from Aaron to Zuzim, the dictionaries of Smith and Davis are hard to beat.

(To be continued, if the Lord wills)

—CCM

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SALVATION BY THE LAW?

It is startling and strange how people can claim to believe the following two contradictory positions at the same time:

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2. Salvation comes by keeping the law.

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2. Why did He give His law to national Israel only, and not also to all of the Gentiles? Would His giving the law only to Israel not make it plain—if salvation comes by keeping the law—that He wants to save only the Israelites, a relatively small percentage of Adam’s family, and not the whole Adamic race?

Yet, the advocates of such contradictory positions are the same ones who say God’s sovereign election of His people unto salvation by grace is unfair!

—Editor

SELECT WORKS

OF

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We are pleased to announce the publication of this new book. Elder Trott has for too long been neglected and nearly forgotten. His valuable place among the leaders of the Old School movement deserves recognition, not because of any special talents he possessed, which were notable; rather, we bring his writings once again before the family of faith because we feel God blessed Trott with a remarkable insight in the teachings of the Word of God and further blessed him to proclaim them boldly, often in the face of fierce opposition.

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The following is an outline of principles the readers of *The Remnant* may expect to see maintained in this publication. Under no circumstances do the publishers or writers for *The Remnant* seek to delineate herein a standard of doctrine or views to be imposed upon the readers. Rather, we set these principles before the readers that they may know what general principles guide our efforts. All attempts at declaring articles of faith will be marred by prejudices and frailty, and ours are by no means any exception.

We believe these principles are, in the main, harmonious with the articles of faith published by predestinarian associations and churches of the old order of Baptists known as Primitive, Particular, or Old School Baptists the world over.

1—The eternal existence, sovereignty, immutability, omnipotence, and perfections of Jehovah God; He has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these sacred Three are One; Jesus Christ was and is God manifest in the flesh, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

2—The Old and New Testaments in their original languages are the verbally inspired word of God, and they are the complete and only valid guide of faith and practice; the King James Version is the preferred English translation;

3—The will of the eternal God is the first cause of all causes;

4—The absolute predestination of all things;

5—The eternal personal election of the redeemed in Christ, before the world began, and their eternal, vital union with Him; their number is fixed, certain, and sure, and can neither be increased nor diminished; their fall in their federal head Adam into spiritual death, total depravity, and just condemna-

tion; their utter inability to recover themselves from this fallen state;

6—The blood atonement and redemption by Jesus Christ are for the elect only, and are both efficacious and effectual in accomplishing the will and purpose of God to reconcile His people unto Himself;

7—The sovereign, irresistible, effectual work of the Holy Spirit in quickening the elect of God; the new birth is by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit without the use of any means;

8—The final preservation, perseverance, and eternal happiness of all the sons of God, by grace alone;

9—No works are good works other than those which God Himself has so designated; none of the works called good are left up to men to perform or not, at the creature's discretion; nor do the works of the creature, either before or after regeneration, result in merit accruing to his account in God's sight;

10—The peaceable fruits of righteousness are the certain result of God's working in His people both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and His people will be found walking in paths of righteousness for His name's sake;

11—The separation of church and state;

12—The principles outlined in the Black Rock Address of 1832;

13—The bodily resurrection, first of Christ, and also that of all the dead;

14—The final and eternal judgment; and,

15—The bliss of the redeemed and the torment of the wicked are both eternal and everlasting.