Recently, I came across this little verse and, it is fair to say, I had never noticed it before. The Word of God is like that. You can read a passage many times and then, suddenly, it seems as though you are reading it for the very first time. Well might the Spirit remind us that the Lord’s mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:23).

This verse explains a lot about the way God is perceived today. For example, worship seems more designed to please men than God. Services are dumbed down and preaching cut down. Going to church has become more about having a good time than reverently approaching the Holy God. God is offered what pleases the senses of men. Why? Because men think God is, all told, very much like themselves. If it pleases us, it will please Him.

Doctrine, too, is predominantly man-centred. It is all about man’s peace, man’s happiness, man’s satisfaction. Preachers who ought to know better are preaching not to a crowd but for a crowd and designing messages to entice their audience to give them an ear. Grace is offered for what receivers can get from it; a fulfilled life, meaning, purpose, spiritual experiences. There is little heard of going before God in the manner of Isaiah (ch. 6) or Paul (Romans 7).

The Lord’s words, quoted above, were aimed at preachers who handle the scriptures inappropriately (Psalms 50:16) and dilute the doctrines of God’s covenant grace; His law and gospel. It is as though God says, “What are these holy things to do with you? You won’t be taught. You think you know better that I do!” Woe betides the preacher, found by God to be mishandling holy things intended for the sheep, and feeding them to goats.

When sinners see the Triune God as He is revealed in scripture, in His holiness, majesty, sovereignty, and glory, they see, too, their own unworthiness, and the great gaping gulf between. When they hear Jesus Christ preached in the gospel and discern God’s Righteous Servant to be a fit Substitute and able Representative before His Father, it is not because He is like them but because He is precisely not like them. The Lord’s people don’t mistake their Friend for a buddy.

It is true that God sometimes speaks of Himself using human characteristics so we might better understand Him (John 3:12). It is also true that in order to represent His people the Saviour must become one like unto His brethren (Hebrews 2:17). But, let us never interpret these gracious condescensions as bringing God down to our level. Let us never think that the Saviour is altogether like us. Rather, let us see them, and Him, as intended, the means by which the Holy God raises up needy sinners to Himself.

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“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

(1 John 1:9)

What? Will He forgive us all sins? Every sin that we have committed? Is not every lustful desire sin? And is not every proud thought sin? And is not every wicked imagination sin? And is not every unkind suspicion sin? Every act of unbelief sin? And every working of a depraved nature sin? We committed sin when we sucked our mother’s breast! We committed sin as soon as we were able to stammer out a word. And as we grew in body, we grew in sinfulness.


(1 John 1:7)

J. C. Philpot
And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

Mark 14:26-31

Truly, the Lord Jesus Christ shows Himself the great Saviour of great sinners in these six verses of Inspiration. Christ's greatness as Saviour is set before us in three things: the people He saves, the punishment He suffered, the perseverance of His love.

The People He Saves
Our blessed Saviour knew exactly what He was getting when He saved us. That shows His greatness as our Saviour. My sin often astonishes me; but it never astonishes Him. The Lord Jesus knew when He chose me, long before He saved me, what a vile, fickle sinner I would be. He knew before He saved me that I would constantly be in need of His grace and His forgiveness. Just in case you are wondering, He knew the same about you.

We see this clearly exemplified in this passage. Our Lord knew the weaknesses, sins, and infirmities of His disciples. He told them plainly what they were going to do. Their pride was offended when they heard it. None of them really believed they were capable of such evil. He said, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night”. He told Peter, specifically, “Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice”. Yet, our Saviour’s
knowledge of what poor disciples they would be did not prevent Him from choosing these men to be His disciples, even His apostles. And His knowledge of what poor disciples we would be did not prevent Him from choosing us. The Lord Jesus loved us and chose us, though He knew we would never choose Him and would never love Him in return, except He create that love in us and cause us by His grace to choose Him. Our Saviour loved us, though He knew that our love for Him, as long as we live in this world, will be an alloyed love at best. The Son of God chose us, as He did these disciples, to be His intimate friends and companions, though He knew beforehand what great evil we would do.

With such a charitable, gracious, forbearing Saviour, you and I ought to be charitable, forbearing, and gracious with one another. We ought never conclude that a person has no grace, or does not know Christ, because we perceive that he or she has many weaknesses and much corruption. We are all weak, sinful, fallen and falling creatures. Our only hope is grace. Our only salvation is Christ. As such, we ought to pity one another. God the Holy Spirit puts it this way, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” (Ephesians 4:32-5:1). Our Saviour’s greatness is to be seen in the people He saves.

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

The Punishment He Suffered

Next, our Saviour’s greatness is displayed in the punishment He suffered as our Substitute. “And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered” (v. 27). In making that statement the Lord Jesus was quoting Zechariah 13:7. “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones”.

In order to redeem and save us the Son of God assumed our nature, became one of us, bore our sins in His own body on the tree, was made sin for us, and voluntarily suffered all the infinite fulness of God’s holy wrath to the full satisfaction of His justice as our Substitute. Look at this verse line by line.

“Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd”. The Lord Jesus Christ is Jehovah’s Shepherd. These are the words of God the Father concerning His Son as our Mediator. He calls the God-man “My Shepherd”, because He was chosen, appointed, called, and trusted by God the Father as the Shepherd of His sheep in the covenant of grace before the world began. He is the One on whom the Father has laid the iniquity of His sheep. And He is the one responsible and accountable for the sheep.

Those words, “Awake, O sword”, speak of the violent death of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the glittering sword of divine justice, which was drawn out against Him, when He was made sin for us. That sword, once unsheathed in Jehovah’s angry hands of omnipotent wrath, was never sheathed again, until it was sheathed forever in Immanuel’s heart!

The sword of justice is here called to “awake”, because it appeared to sleep, and to have been asleep for a very long time. It had been a long, long time since sin first entered into the world by our father Adam. It had been a very long time since the Son of God, our ever-blessed Christ, stepped forward and became our Surety, pledging Himself in eternity to satisfy the justice of God for us. It had been a long time since the promise was first given that the Son of God would be stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted as our Substitute.

“Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts”. He who is our Redeemer is and must be a man; and this man, who is our Substitute and Saviour, is and must be Jehovah’s fellow God incarnate! “Smite the Shepherd!” The order was given by God Himself to the sword of His justice to smite His darling Son to death. The Lord Jesus Christ was delivered to death and slain by the hand of God, according to the decree of God, at the command of God, for the glory of God.

Next, we hear the God of Glory who slew His Son for us declare, “and the sheep shall
be scattered”. This is the part of Zechariah’s prophecy that our Lord Jesus applied to His disciples, when He said, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night”. “Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad .... But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled” (Matthew 26:31, 56).

“Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered”. I am so thankful that the text does not end there. The Lord God goes on to say something else, something great and glorious! “And I will turn mine hand upon the little ones”. These “little ones” are the sheep who were scattered, the straying, scattered sheep, the disciples of Christ who forsook him. Yet, the text in Zechariah clearly speaks of more than just those sheep. It speaks of the certain salvation of all the Lord’s sheep. Zechariah’s prophecy asserts emphatically that all those sheep for whom the Shepherd was smitten at Calvary shall be saved.

“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered”. I am so thankful that the text does not end there. The Lord God goes on to say something else, something great and glorious! “And I will turn mine hand upon the little ones”. These “little ones” are the sheep who were scattered, the straying, scattered sheep, the disciples of Christ who forsook him. Yet, the text in Zechariah clearly speaks of more than just those sheep. It speaks of the certain salvation of all the Lord’s sheep. Zechariah’s prophecy asserts emphatically that all those sheep for whom the Shepherd was smitten at Calvary shall be saved.

There is a remnant according to the election of grace (here called a third part of the earth), which shall be saved because Christ died for them. The Lord God says, “I will turn mine hand upon the little ones”, not His hand of wrath and justice, but His hand of mercy, grace, and power.

The Perseverance of His Love
We see our Saviour’s greatness in the perseverance of His love, too. Let me remind you of the perseverance of His love, mercy and grace to His erring, fallen, sinful people. What great comfort there is for our souls in this! The Lord Jesus does not cast off or forsake His people because of their faults, failures, and sins. He knows what we are. “He remembereth our frame. He knoweth that we are dust”. Like a loving husband who has taken a wife, takes her forever, and never dreams of putting her away because he later finds fault in her, so Christ took us, knowing our deformity, to be His bride forever.

The Lord Jesus chose us, redeemed us, called us, and took us for His bride, knowing full well what He was getting! He is a merciful and compassionate High Priest. It is the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ to pass over iniquity, transgression, and sin. “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing” (Proverbs 25:2).

Our Lord Jesus knew what we were before He saved us; yet He saved us. He knew what we would be after He saved us; yet He saved us. He cannot be induced for any reason, by anything, or at any time to cast us away now! He says, “I will never leave the nor forsake thee”. He is our unchanging, unchangeable God, “Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, and today, and for ever”!

A Great Thief
What a great thief unbelief is! Our Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples often and plainly about His death and His resurrection. He said, in verse 28, “But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee”. He could not have been clearer. Yet, His words seem to have just passed over their heads altogether. Not one of the disciples laid them up in His heart or remembered them. When He was betrayed, they all forsook him. When He was crucified, they were almost driven to despair. When He was raised from the dead, and they were told about it by credible witnesses, none of them were quick to believe it.

Only in eternity will we know how much we have robbed ourselves by our unbelief. Our unbelief robs God of His glory; and robs us of more peace, joy, and contentment than we can imagine. Like Hagar’s well in the wilderness, we have the truths and promises of our God right before our eyes in His Word; but we do not see them, because of unbelief (Genesis 21:19). What anxiety, what sorrows we might avoid if we simply believed God!

Great Sinners
“But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not...
deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all” (vv. 29-31).

What great and horrible sinners we are! There is in all of us an enormous measure of pride that must be abased, a huge portion of self-confidence that must be destroyed, and a hideous mass of self-righteousness that must be slain. Peter simply could not believe what the Lord Jesus said. He argued in defence of himself. He was highly offended and insulted that the Lord should even think he might forsake Him. He said, “If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee”. But Peter was not alone in his arrogance. The other disciples were of the same high opinion about themselves. “Likewise said they all.”

Peter told the truth. He was truly willing to die with His Lord, and eventually did. But Peter, as well as the others, was unaware of the great evil still in him which had to be exposed and dealt with. In just twelve hours, all these men forsook the Master. Their bold, proud claims were forgotten. Their promises of fidelity were swept away. Their imagined strength withered. Their great faith failed. Yet, even in this, we see the overruling hand of our God in goodness, grace, and providence. Had Peter not trembled before the maid and denied his Lord here, he could never have preached so boldly as he did at Pentecost or confessed Christ so fearlessly as he did in Acts 4. Had Peter and these disciples, our brethren, not forsaken the Lord Jesus, we could never have known the goodness, love, and faithfulness of our great God and Saviour in His immutability toward His fallen saints as it is here revealed.

Though redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, justified, forgiven of all sin, regenerated and kept by the grace of God, we are still such great sinners, that there is no sin into which the most eminent saint will not run, except God hold us by His grace. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). Wisely does Solomon counsel us, “He that trusteth in His own heart is a fool” (Proverbs 28:26).

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:12, 13).

What great reason we have to ever give thanks to our God that salvation is by grace alone, without works!
Though man is ruined, he will not confess it, but with all his might will insist that he can work his way to heaven, and win the favour of God. Poor creature! You are as helpless in this regard as an infant; you can no more get to heaven without a miracle on the part of God, than you could create a world! It is written, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord”, and where will you get your holiness? You are holy enough in your own eyes, and the holiness that God has provided for those who are to be with Him, is so foreign to your nature that you would never seek it, even if you had the power!

Will a man seek what he does not want? Will a man pray for what he does not like? Surely no! If a man then does really pray to God for that which by nature he hates, if he really loves God whom by nature he dislikes, a marvellous change must have come upon him.

Something must have been done in him or for him by a power altogether extrinsic of himself. Now if all men experienced this marvellous change, we should trace it or attribute it to God’s universal grace or love; but as all men do not experience it, we must trace it or attribute it to God’s electing or distinguishing grace or love.

I think this is very clear. Indeed, I cannot see how the inference can be avoided. To talk of all men experiencing this change at some time or other of their lives, and of some improving it and others neglecting it, or as some will have it, “sinning away the day of grace”, is to my mind unmitigated nonsense.

Yes, it is to electing grace we are to trace the change from death to life, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. And I would now prove to you that this is the grand basis upon which God builds His Church, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone.

Election is Biblical Doctrine

Election, from eternity, of a peculiar people to salvation, is the doctrine of the Scriptures. We respect the Church Fathers, we respect the Reformers, we respect the compilers of our Church Confessions, we respect our leaders, but only so far as they are followers of Christ. The texts that I have chosen for the foundation of this discourse clearly establish election. Can unbelieving ingenuity twist and warp the above passage in Ephesians to mean something conditional, uncertain, or contingent? Can men have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, whose salvation depended on their own will to be holy and without blame before God in love? Then who would be holy? Who would or could be without blame before God in love? Can men have been predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, and yet be left to their own choice whether they be children or not? Surely the idea is monstrous! Man is fallen, ruined, by nature at enmity with God, and how could he choose to be a child of the all holy God? And how could his salvation
ever be attained if it were left to his own will? But someone says, But God does not leave it to man’s self to choose; He puts the Holy Spirit in him to give him good thoughts and desires, and this Spirit, working in man, induces him to be holy and without blame before God?

Now we want to be informed, does the Spirit thus work in every man? And if so, why is not every man “induced to be holy”? Is the resisting principle stronger in some men than in others? If so, then it is not true that all men are alike fallen. And if the Spirit does not work in every man, the question of election or predestination is at an end—that which we would maintain is granted.

The text from Romans chapter 8 is clearer still. These words have been called “the Golden Chain of Salvation”, and it was manifestly the doctrine contained in them that caused the apostle to break out in such rapture in the concluding portion of the chapter. He there seems to range through all creation for an antagonist to dispute the point, and is fully persuaded that nothing could ever separate the elect soul and God!

Let us examine this text. Mark the foreknowledge here alluded to. This is the foundation upon which the whole frame of the amazing work of man’s redemption stands.

Two questions present themselves, 1. As God foreknows all things, does the apostle mean here that God merely thus foreknew all men? 2. Could God have foreknown any inherent goodness in any, so as to induce Him to make choice of them?

I answer both questions with a decided negative. For first, the individuals foreknown in the text are glorified, and all are not, or will not be glorified, and second, where all without exception are ruined and at enmity with God, it is impossible that He could have seen good in one and not in another.

The foreknowledge is evidently a foreknowledge of choice, and a foreknowledge of choice of the particular parties to be glorified.

You see also by this scripture, that those whom God thus foreknew, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Now observe, it is not said God foreknew they would be conformed, and so predestinated them; but He predestinated them to be conformed, i.e., such being designed for glory, they are decreed to grace as the way.

It is vain to object, “God predestinated them to be conformed, etc. but after all they may not be”, for it is written, “Whom He did predestinate, them He also called”, i.e., not only with an external call, as the many are called but few chosen, but with an internal and effectual call and again, “Whom He called, them He also justified,” i.e., absolved from all guilt, and owned and loved as friends and favourites — “And whom He justified, them He also GLORIFIED.”

This fact of glorifying all the objects of His choice, to my mind, puts an end to all vain reasoning in this connection. If that link of the chain had been left out, we should have had more trouble with God’s enemies than we have now; but as it is there, we may defy them with this scripture alone.

But what say other scriptures? Time will not permit me to speak at large upon the case of Abraham, who was a stupid idolater when God called him; of Isaac, who was chosen instead of Ishmael; of Jacob, who was chosen instead of Esau; of the Jews, who were chosen instead of the Egyptians or Assyrians; of David, who was chosen to be king, though the most unlikely of all Jesse’s sons; or of Cyrus, or Jeremiah, or Paul, or a host of others, who were manifestly pitched upon by God as favourites, not through mere caprice, but by His sovereign will.

Men, doubtless, will object and say, “This is no proof of election to eternal life, but only to temporal privileges, and for temporal uses.” But I ask, are these cases to be regarded merely as historical facts? Was there no design—no manifestation of sovereign choice in all
this? Granted that these instances display an election to temporal things, will it not follow that there is an election to things of a spiritual and eternal nature? If God is known to have gone out of the ordinary method in things temporal, is it unlikely that He will go out of the ordinary method in things spiritual and eternal?

But the Scriptures afford abundant evidence of personal election to eternal life.

The Lord began His ministry with a broad hint at it, see Luke 4:25, 27; and He closed His ministry with an unmistakable declaration of it, see John 17.

Many objections have been made to the doctrine of election; but this is not surprising. As long as there are fallen men upon earth or devils in hell, the reign of a Sovereign God will find opponents. I will now proceed to notice some of those objections.

Objection — We are elected or predestinated to eternal life, according to God's foreknowledge of our faith, and repentance, and perseverance.

Answer — Such an election would involve us in a covenant of works, and place God's purposes in time instead of eternity. This is not pre-destination, but post-destination, and an inverting of the Scriptures, which place faith and holiness as the consequents, and not as the antecedents of election, Ephesians 1:4; John 15:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

I know it is a question whether God in foresight of belief and perseverance in faith and holiness did choose us to salvation. For my part I am for the negative, and upon these grounds:

1. Because election on faith foreseen makes God go out of Himself, looking to this or that in the creature upon which His will may be determined to elect. Now this is against the all-sufficiency of God's knowledge, as if He should get knowledge from the things we know; and it is against the all-sufficiency of God's will, as if He must be beholding to something in us before the business of our election can be determined.

2. Because election on faith or love foreseen makes God to choose us when we have chosen Him, and to love us when we have loved Him first; but this is contrary to the Scriptures (1 John 4:19; 5:10).

3. Because election on faith foreseen stands not with the freedom of God's will within Himself, but God tells us plainly, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Romans 9:15, 16).

4. Because election on faith foreseen is to say we are ordained to eternal life because we believe, whereas the Scripture speaks contrary, "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

5. Because a prime and eternal cause cannot depend upon the self-same temporal effects which are thereby caused. Now election is the prime and eternal cause whence our faith, repentance and perseverance are derived, and therefore our faith, repentance, and perseverance, cannot be imagined antecedent causes, conditions, or motives unto the divine election.

Objection — The election in the 9th of Romans is merely a national election, and the predestination in the Ephesians chapter 1 is only to outward privileges.

Answer — The allusion to the vessels of wrath, and vessels prepared for glory, in Romans 9:22, 23, answers the first objection; and the fact of the saints at Ephesus having been "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and having redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins," disposes of the second.
Objection — It is an awful doctrine, and calculated to discourage all effort, etc..
Answer — The question is not whether it is awful or otherwise, but is it scriptural? If it is, we are bound to proclaim it, “whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.” Besides, it is not the discouraging doctrine some would make it; for no one knows but the very objectors themselves may be amongst the elect family. We may be certain that wherever the pure gospel is preached, there are some to be gathered in by it.

Objection — These are secret things with God in which we have no business meddling.
Answer — This is a mistake. The objects of election are secret to us; but the doctrine is not. It is plainly revealed.

Objection — If God has predestinated some to eternal life, why damn the man whom He has not predestinated?
Answer — No man will be damned because he is not predestinated, but because of his sins. God may show favour to those to whom it is not due, and withhold it from others without a shadow of injustice. No man has any reason to find fault with God for the denial of a mercy until he can lay some claim to it. God damns no man because He will damn him, but because he has brought the punishment upon himself.

Objection — What use of the judgment then?
Answer — That must necessarily be, for the display and glorification of God’s justice. Nothing will be done in a corner; every mouth must be stopped: the whole world must be convinced that God is true, and that Christ and His people are one. This evidently is the solution of John 17:21 and 23. The world will be made to believe intellectually in the power and designs of God, etc..

Objection — The word “chosen”, which is tantamount with “elected”, is used in reference to Judas (John 6:70), who was lost: then may all the chosen or elected be lost.
Answer — There is a mixing here of things that ought to be kept distinct. There is a choosing to office, and a choosing to eternal life. The apostles were all chosen to the one, but not to the other.

Many words in Scripture are employed in more senses than one; and it no more follows that “chosen” may not have reference to eternal life because it was applied in an official sense to Judas, than it follows that “Israel” does not belong to the redeemed and saved, because many of the Jews who were called by that name were damned.
I would now proceed to point out some of the absurdities that must follow from the opposite scheme; and in conclusion, say a few words upon the whole.

1. If there is nothing fixed or predetermined in the matter, then it follows that the will of God in an affair wherein His own glory is so greatly concerned is dependent upon the will of the creature.
2. Without predestination, God might be wholly disappointed in His saving design, and the precious blood of Christ might have been shed in vain!
3. Without predestination, man’s salvation is impossible. Man’s standing in Eden depended upon his free-will. We all know the consequences. Now if free-will ruined man when he was upright, what will it now do since he is fallen? Blessed be God! He puttheth no trust in his saints! (Job 15:15); but has taken the matter into His own hands!
4. Without predestination, the salvation of every man originates in himself, or is divided between God and the creature. Hence man may boast, and give the lie to Scripture, 1 Corinthians 1:29; Ephesians 2:9; Isaiah 2:17. Hence the saved man is furnished with a ready answer to the question, “Who maketh thee to differ from another?” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

And now to bring this subject to a close. Some may be inclined to ask, Why is this important? Can’t we get to heaven without a knowledge of this doctrine? To which I reply, it augurs badly for the state of the soul to make such objections. I cannot believe that any awakened child of God has ever murmured thus. I cannot believe that any awakened minister of God has ever attempted to keep back the wonderful intelligence revealed through election from the souls entrusted to his care.

But I will tell you what good comes of all this elaboration.

First, it finds out where a man is. This doctrine is a terrible searcher of the heart. The loftiness of that man who kicks against it has never been brought down. His haughtiness has never been laid low.

Secondly, without a knowledge of this doctrine, we cannot have right conceptions of the attributes of God. His sovereignty, goodness, mercy, and love are never so much displayed as in His everlasting purpose to deliver so many of the children of Adam from misery. To deliver some and not all (though this will seem strange to the superficial reader), renders the divine goodness towards the subjects of this deliverance more conspicuous and glorious.

Thirdly, without election we cannot have right conceptions of the covenant of redemption between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The atonement is rendered a vague and uncertain thing. Free-will, which stands in competition with and opposition to the grace of God, can never, without election, be thrown to the ground as it ought to be.

Fourthly, it is the foundation and source of consolation to believers. When once a man gets to know that all things are ordered and sure, and that he is a recipient of grace, his happiness is begun!

“In Christ once, in Christ forever!” is his song day and night; and so far from the belief leading him to negligence and riotous living, it is his chief argument to love, holiness and obedience.

Tobias Crisp says in one of his sermons, “I dare to say it, but if thou dost come to Christ, whosoever thou mayest be, if He does not receive thee, then He is not true to His word, for He says, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’” If thou comest, never mind qualification or preparation. He needeth no qualification of duties or of feelings either. Thou art to come just as thou art, and if thou art the biggest sinner out of hell, thou art as fit to come to Christ as if thou wert the most moral and most excellent of men. There is a bath: who is fit to be washed? A man’s blackness is no reason why he should not be washed, but the clearer reason why he should be. When our City magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said, “I am so poor, therefore I am not fit to have relief.” Your poverty is your preparation, the black is the white here. Strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All He asks is, that you will come empty. If you have nothing of your own, you must leave all before you come. If there be anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ, you must come with nothing in your hand. Take Him as all in all, and that is the only ground upon which a poor soul can be saved — as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner.
Christ knows our need of a King, He knows the hopeless anarchy, not only of a world but of a heart, “without a king”. Is there a more desolate cry than “We have no king”? – none to reverence and love, none to obey, none to guide and protect us and rule over us, none to keep us in that truest freedom of wholehearted loyalty.

Have we not felt that we really want a strong hand over our hearts? That having our own way is not so good as having another’s way, if only that other is one to whom our hearty and entire confidence and allegiance can be and are given? Has there not been an echo in our souls of the old cry, “Give me a king”? – a cry that nothing can still but this Divine promise, “I will be thy King!”

But the promise has been given; and now, if the old desolate wail of a kingless heart comes up in an hour of faithless forgetfulness, His word comes like a royal clarion, “Now, why dost thou cry out aloud? Is there no king in thee?” And then the King’s gracious assurance falls with hushing power, “I will be thy King.”

How glad we are that He Himself is our King! For we are so sure that He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself in this inner kingdom, which we cannot govern at all. We are so glad to take Him at His word, and give up the government into His hands, asking Him to be our King in very deed, and to set up His throne of peace in the long disturbed and divided citadel, praying that He would bring every thought into captivity to His gentle obedience.

We have had enough of revolutions and revolts, of tyrants and traitors, of lawlessness and of self-framed codes. Other lords (and oh, how many!) have had dominion over us. He has permitted us to be their servants, that now, by blessed and restful contrast, we may know His service, Now we only want “another King, one Jesus.” He has made us willing in the day of His power, and that was the first act of His reign, and the token that “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” in our hearts.

Lord, be Thou my King this day! Reign more abundantly in me than ever before. Let the increase of Thy government be continual and mighty in me, so that Thy name may be glorified in me now and for ever.

Hosea 3:4
Hosea 10:3
Isaiah 57:10, 18
Hosea 13:10
Micah 4:9
Philippians 3:21
Micah 7:19
Romans 7:19
2 Corinthians 10:5
Isaiah 26:13
2 Chronicles 12:8
Acts 17:7
Psalm 110:3
Isaiah 9:7
2 Thessalonians 1:12
Christmas is upon us for another year. There is absolutely no point in lamenting its secularisation nor in arguing about whether believers should participate in the festivities. At its best it is a very good excuse for families to get together, for lapsed contacts to be refreshed and to switch on lights to brighten the darkest days of the year (for most of us). At its worst it is a sad distortion of the message of the incarnation, religious sentimentality based more on dubious tradition than historical fact, let alone on Scriptural revelation.

But there are aspects I have to admit to liking. I love four-part harmony singing and gladly participate in our local Community Chorus. It is simply for the enjoyment of the participants and the entertainment of the audience, and it also provides an opportunity to establish contacts with people who we would otherwise never meet. Nevertheless, I had to pass on one aspect of one song which stated that the main message of Jesus’s birth was the need for us all to be unselfish and generous in relieving poverty, but it prompted the message that I preached on Christmas Day morning based on Hebrews 3:8.

Hebrews 8 is about priests, offerings and covenants. Priests are mediators who intercede between sinners and God in His infinite holiness. But they must have some currency with which to mediate. Just as employers and trades unions use arbitration services to mediate in their disputes, each side has something to trade in order to close the gap between them and reach a mutually acceptable agreement. An employer might demand more flexible work patterns from union members and in return have to offer increased pay.

Similarly, the Levitical priests of the Old Testament era had to offer what God required in exactly the way He prescribed to Moses in the giving of the law (Hebrews 8:5). They offered animal sacrifices but, as Hebrews 10:11 makes plain, those sacrifices could never be traded with God to clear the sin-debt of His people. Those sacrifices were mere pictures, symbols and patterns. They were the equivalent of Monopoly money which can never be traded legitimately for goods and services. Those Levitical priests have now gone forever. Their end was prophesied in Daniel 9:27, and foretold again by Christ in Matthew 24:2. In AD70 the Roman Emperor Titus made animal sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem impossible, a situation that has continued to this day.

The Levitical priesthood was a picture of Christ, the true High Priest for the people of God, declared an eternal High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. The one who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings in Genesis 14 is described there as ‘priest of the most high God’ (Genesis 14:18). I would not be dogmatic about who Melchisedec was because the Scriptures do not tell us plainly; however, I struggle to see who else he could be other than the pre-incarnate Christ. The everlasting priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchisedec, is the true priesthood of which the Levitical priesthood was only ever a picture. Christ’s priesthood provides real intercession, real mediation between sinners and God, but for reconciliation between God and sinners to be accomplished ‘it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer’ (Hebrews 8:3). We need to know what the currency was that Christ traded with the justice of God in order to clear the sin-debt of His people. The Levitical priests offered animal sacrifices as pictures which in themselves were ineffectual in paying even one penny of the sin-debt. What effectual currency could be traded?

God Himself, being Spirit, in His essential holiness and dwelling in eternity, had nothing to offer. There are things that God is not able to do; He cannot contradict His word, lie, change in any way, overlook sin, pardon the guilty or punish the innocent. These things God simply cannot do. He administers strict, divine justice which sinners, in themselves, can never satisfy. How could God remain just and yet clear the sin-debt of the people He determined to save from sin? He had to assume a human nature to offer the only currency that could be traded for His people’s sin-debt. The bodies and blood of animal sacrifices cannot pay for sins (Hebrews 10:4); they give God no pleasure (Hebrews 10:6). But the body of the God-Man, prepared for the Son of God to inhabit when He was made a little lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:9) was the perfect currency. A body offered, by which
the Father’s will to save eternally all those He gave to the Son (John 6:39) might be perfectly accomplished. The sinless human body of the Lord Jesus Christ, willingly laid upon the altar of God’s justice and thereby, His people made holy (Hebrews 10:10).

His body and blood is what our great High-Priest after the order of Melchisedec had to offer. His body broken, His life-blood was the acceptable currency. In that body He mysteriously assumed and bore all the sin-debt of His people throughout time. At Calvary the wrath of the Father’s strict justice fell upon His darling Son and all of His people in Him.

God the Son, the Word eternally with God and Himself God, was made flesh (John 1:14) for the suffering of death (Hebrews 2:9) for all the sons He would bring to glory (Hebrews 2:9,10). We read in 1 Chronicles 17:21 of that one nation on earth which is God’s people Israel whom God went out to redeem to be his own people. Of course it was pictured in Old Testament days by the nation of Israel, but it has always been the “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16), the people of His choice. He went out to redeem in a human body, a human nature (Galatians 4:4), the fleshly nature of the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16), not of angels (in order to save demons) nor even of the seed of Adam to save all humankind without exception.

Redemption was accomplished not with corruptible worldly currency but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot (1 Peter 1:18,19). With His own blood as an offering, as a trade bargain, Christ entered as His people’s High-Priest once into the holy place (Hebrews 9:12) and thereby the bargain was done. Christ’s blood was accepted and His people’s sin-debt was cleared completely and eternally.

We must be clear, as the Scriptures make very clear, the body and blood was not offered for any other than God’s elect. Employee unions negotiate a new pay deal with a very particular membership in mind. They are its beneficiaries and not the whole workforce should they choose to accept it (the mere notion of non-specific debt-cancellation is ludicrous). The redemption obtained by Christ by the offering of Himself in His human nature, was for the redemption of those whom the Father gave Him in eternity. It was effectively accomplished in, and from, eternity in the covenant of grace by virtue of the ‘Lamb slain from the foundation of the world’ (Revelation 13:8). It was in graphic reality accomplished in time at the cross.

The Saviour’s human name was ‘Jesus’ because He would ‘save his people from their sins’ (Matthew 1:21). The sufferings of the promised Messiah in Isaiah 53:8 were for the ‘transgression of his people’, for the ‘many’ whose iniquities and sin He would bear (Isaiah 53:11,12). And who are these people who are the elect of God? We know them only by this one distinguishing feature; when they hear the gospel of sovereign grace and particular redemption preached, they repent of their sin and trust in Christ.

To them the gospel is like seed entering good ground; they hear it, they are given a new nature by God’s Spirit, and they believe the truth of it. This is how Paul knew that those to whom He wrote were elect of God, they had believed his gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

The main message of Jesus’s birth is that God went out in a sinless human nature that He might have somewhat to offer as an acceptable currency, to trade as High-Priest in exchange for His people’s sin-debt. Every other nativity-message is very secondary and without a heart knowledge and experience of the truth of the central message, rendered pointless.

“**The labourer is worthy of his hire**”

Some questions about Bible occupations

1. By what job did Joseph support Mary and Jesus?
2. The disciple Andrew worked as a ____?
3. Mary Magdalene thought the risen Lord was a ____?
4. Jesus told a parable of an importunate widow and a ____.
5. Amos, the prophet, was among the ____ of Tekoa?
6. This ____ found “one pearl of great value”.
7. As Philip preached Simon the ____ was converted.
8. Aquila and Pricilla were ____.
9. Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, was known as a ____?
10. The gospel was trouble for Demetrius a ____?
11. Cornelius was amongst the first Gentile converts. What was his job?
12. The Apostle Peter stayed at the home of Simon the ____?


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The scriptures teach eternal punishment and the wrath of God against sin. Yet, many today deny the reality of hell. “Surely”, they say, “in such a sophisticated age as ours, in 2012, we no longer need all this Dark Ages talk of hell.”

We reply, “Has there ever been an age when sin has been so rampant?” Sin must and will be punished. Deep down everyone knows it, too. When we hear of an awful crime, how quick people are to say “may he/she rot in hell” – and yet the truth is, those who say such things are themselves equally sinful before the Lord as transgressors of His law.

This eternal punishment is the “wrath” Paul speaks of in 1 Thessalonians 5:9. Consider The Flood; God judged the whole world, and just eight humans were saved. Next time, the judgment will fall as fire and Revelation tells us that both the present earth and the heavens will be dissolved with fire. We need to stop and consider such a cataclysmic event, it is what all time and space is heading towards and it will certainly come.

Let me be clear; everyone who is not in Christ on the Day of Judgment will spend eternity in hell. The Bible describes it as a terrible lake of fire, everlasting torment. Such souls will cry out for a drop of water on their tongue – but not even this simple mercy will be granted. “Unfair” cries the world. Why is it unfair? Do not our sins well deserve such punishment?

Men and women want justice, but in spiritual terms they do not know what they are asking for. What they need is mercy. The only thing standing between sinners and eternal damnation is God’s mercy in Jesus Christ, and the wonderful thing about the gospel is that some who deserve hell will be spared so as not to suffer the punishment they deserve. Who are these privileged souls? Well, simply, they are the “us” Paul refers to here in verse 9. These are the elect of God, appointed (yes, chosen and predestinated) from all eternity – ages before they were ever born, to be saved by the grace of God. God purposed in His sovereign will that these should be saved.

But does not Ephesians 2:3 speak of the elect describing them as “by nature the children of wrath”, just as all other people? How can this be? How can they be both “children of wrath” yet also “children of God” and justified from eternity? This scripture is no contradiction but rather reminds us that even God’s children have the same sinful “nature” as every other sinner, and are just as deserving of God’s wrath. Like it or not, believe it or not, each of us was born with a sinful nature. This Adamic nature has passed down all the generations since the Fall. But the wonder is this; the true child of grace, awakened by God to see themselves as a sinner deserving of hell, sees too that in the death of Jesus Christ a way of salvation has been secured for them. Unbelievers, who continue as such, do not see themselves as children of wrath, but they are righteous in their own eyes. Try asking people you know if they regard themselves as sinners before a Holy God! They have no concern about eternal wrath. They ignore it when they can, and when they cannot, they joke and mock it. Spiritual blindness is extreme. They are dead men walking into everlasting wrath.

Verse 9 shows us something else, too. The elect obtain salvation “by” the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is utterly by the grace of God alone. Indeed, the only difference between the saved and the lost is God’s salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have already seen that everyone has the same Adamic nature, and had not God purposed to save, and sent Christ to die in our place, then all of us would be justly damned. But thanks be to God for His glorious salvation! If you reader are saved it is purely because of God’s mercy in Christ. You are not appointed to wrath but to salvation and to heaven itself.

This is why Christ is so precious to the child of God. He sees that in spite of himself and his sin, God has saved him. Is Christ precious to you? Is He? Or do you rather say, “Why do these people meet to worship God? Why all this fuss? I see nothing of value in Christ. Such meetings would be tedious and boring to me.” Well, they might be. But for those who love the Lord (we bemoan the coldness of this love often), for those who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, we respond “It is because Christ saved us, and died for our sins, and has appointed us to eternal life.” Nothing else in life compares or ultimately matters in relation to this.

As we venture into a New Year none of us know what will happen in the weeks ahead. Is there an unbelieving reader? Is there one who sincerely seeks forgiveness of sin? Consider your soul. We each stand on the verge of eternity, while “Today is the day of salvation.”

Child of God – weighed down by trials, fears and doubts, consider this above all things “for God hath not appointed you to wrath.” Whatever this year brings, such a truth will surely put all things in your (brief) life very much into their right context.
No prophet, or dreamer of dreams
No master of plausible speech,
To live like an angel who seems,
Or like an apostle to preach;
No tempter, without or within,
No spirit, though ever so bright,
That comes crying out against sin,
And looks like an angel of light,

Though reason, though fitness he urge,
Or plead with the words of a friend,
Or wonders of argument forge,
Or deep revelations pretend;
Should meet with a moment’s regard,
But rather be boldly withstood,
If anything, easy or hard,
He teach, save the Lamb and His blood.

Remember, O Christian, with heed,
When sunk under sentence of death,
How first thou from bondage wast
freed;
Say, was it by works or by faith?
On Christ thy affections then fix’d,
What conjugal truth didst thou vow;
With Him was there anything mix’d?
Then what wouldst thou mix with Him
now?

If close to thy Lord thou wouldst cleave,
Depend on His promise alone;
His righteousness wouldst thou
receive?
Then learn to renounce all thine own;
The faith of a Christian, indeed,
Is more than mere notion or whim;
United to Jesus his Head,
He draws life and virtue from Him.

(Deceived by the father of lies,
Blind guides cry, Lo here! And Lo there!
By these our Redeemer us tries,
And warns us of such to beware,
Poor comfort to mourners they give,
Who set us to labour in vain,
And strive, with a “Do this and live”,
To drive us to Egypt again.

But what says our Shepherd Divine?
For His blessed word we should keep.
“This flock has My Father made Mine;
I lay down My life for My sheep.
’Tis life everlasting I give;
My blood was the price that it cost;
Not one that on Me shall believe,
Shall ever be finally lost.”

This God is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend,
Whose love is as large as His power,
And neither knows measure nor end;
’Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home,
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come.

Deuteronomy 13:1-4
The Hampton Court Conference of 14th January 1604 had a lasting influence on the English Protestant Church and was the means under God of undertaking the still popular 1611 Authorised Version of the Bible. The delegates were all Reformed men, the majority of whom wanted the Church to be ruled by the Church, but the Millenary Petitioners wanted royal control. Allan Clifford seeks to abolish the AV and return to even older versions or ‘non-Latinate’ translations. His reasons are:

1. **The AV is the product of a corrupt church**
For Clifford the AV is the Bible of a corrupt Church of England. He cannot understand why Presbyterians, Strict Baptists, Brethren and Pentecostal Christians love the AV so much, feeling that some even worship it. Using false criteria, Clifford makes wrong conclusions. The AV was not translated by one denomination under an ‘anti-Puritan Archbishop’, as Clifford argues. Archbishop Whitegift was a Puritan who delighted in preaching the power of God unto salvation. His Doctor’s thesis was on ‘The Pope is the Anti-Christ’. Whitegift campaigned against Ultra-Precision rebels such as Thomas Cartwright who had dropped the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith, calling them Rome under a new name. He trained Puritan preachers via Bullinger’s Decades and Nowell’s Catechism. He promoted the highly Calvinistic Lambeth Articles. The AV was translated by the representatives of a united Church seeking further Reform at a time when England was the most Reformed country in Europe. This was, of course, before the Second Babel of denominational disunity which broke the Reformation. The AV was also built on great Reformed English translations such as those of Tyndale and Coverdale, followed by The Great Bible, The Bishops’ Bible and the Geneva Bible. The Hampton Court Conference ended in unanimous agreement. The fact that so many denominations nowadays favour the AV, shows that if they had been around at the time, they would have joined hands with the AV translators. The King James Bible is therefore not the Bible of one denomination only but the Bible of the majority of English-speaking Christians world-wide who are not subject to Clifford’s restrictive bias.

2. **The AV is the product of a corrupt King**
Clifford says he bases his views on William Barlow’s 1604 work *The Summe and Substance of the Conference*. Barlow, who writes, ‘Rede me and be not wroth. For I say no thynge but trothe,’ agrees with Fuller, Strype and most other earlier sources. However, these works disagree radically with Clifford who claims he is following what Barlow ‘seems to suggest’, not what Barlow says. Barlow knows no such deception. He writes objectively, relating accurately how all the members behaved and how impartially James treated all sides. *The Summe and Substance* can be consulted online and reveals Clifford’s travesty of it. Clifford, leaning on supposed ‘FORGOTTEN FACTS’ (Clifford’s capitals) which he has forced between Barlow’s honest lines, claims that James was, intolerant, two-faced, intimidating, humiliating, snivelling, frivolous, inept, unsavoury, cruel and ‘highly enamoured of his own performance’ throughout the conference. He even throws in a piece of obscene tabloid journalese of his own concoction to poison Barlow’s gentlemanly, honest account and then exclaims ‘Can we be happy that such a King is so closely identified with the Word of God?’ Happily, it is obvious from Barlow’s report that even the strongest critics were given a fair hearing and James shared the bulk of their concerns and was praised by all sides.

3. **The AV is a corrupt translation**
Clifford says Puritan Reynold’s criticisms of the old versions were ‘quite tame’ though Clifford still prefers them to the AV. As his own reasons for abandoning the AV are far more ‘tame’, they are scarcely worth mentioning. For instance, Reynolds asked that Psalm 105:28 which had been rendered ‘they were not obedient’, should be altered to the correct ‘they were not disobedient’, so ridding the old translations of a glaring error. Clifford has nothing as fundamental to offer. He believes the AV is corrupt because it does not reflect his
own peculiar view of Church Government and Reformation, claiming only one quarter of the AV translators were Puritans according to his views. Happily, none of them came anywhere near Clifford’s position. Fuller shows the folly of individual definitions of ‘Puritan’ by explaining that ‘Puritan’ in Cromwell’s days meant merely Anti-Episcopalian. Of Samuel Ward, an Episcopalian Dortian Puritan delegate, persecuted under Cromwell’s rule, he said, ‘He was counted a Puritan before these times, and Popish in these times; and yet being always the same was a true Protestant at all times.’ Clifford is so anti-episcopal that he cannot imagine that true Protestant Puritans pre-dated 17th century anti-episcopal thinking by a century. Inconsequently, Clifford sides with the faction that called for James’ interference in Church matters though he castigates the King unmercifully. In criticising such as Reynolds and James, Clifford saws off the true ‘Puritan’ branch on which he says he sits.

What then are Clifford’s linguistic reasons for rejecting the AV? First, Clifford objects to the English word ‘bishop’ derived from the Greek New Testament word ‘episcopos’. Clifford thinks it should be replaced by good old Anglo-Saxon ‘overseer’, which is ‘appropriate contemporary language.’ An ‘overseer’ originally meant a superintendent or bishop and even Archbishop Laud claimed the two words were synonyms, so this is hair-splitting. The term ‘bishop’ is far more common than the word ‘overseer’ today and the AV uses ‘bishop’ in its right place. Today, ‘overseer’, if used at all, depicts an over-boss telling people what to do. This is the Roman view of a Monarchical Bishop! Clifford, however, wants us to go back to Saxon, which is no less foreign to Britain than his hated ‘Latinate’ forms.

Next, Clifford wants to replace the word ‘church’ by ‘congregation’, thus likening the gathered church to the mixed gathering of believers and unbelievers in National Israel. As ‘church’ is derived from Hebrew and Greek words meaning the people of God, I would think it more appropriate than ‘congregation’ which basically means any gathering. Anyway, ‘congregation’ is Latinate.

Clifford wishes to substitute ‘love’ for ‘charity’. ‘Love’ in Anglo-Saxon meant ‘promise’ or ‘praise’ or even ‘worship’, a word Clifford thinks is scandalous when applied to men promising to worship (worthship) their wives. However, ‘charity’ has not lost its meaning of ‘Christian love’ and if Clifford is unaware of this, he can, through correct teaching, learn its true meaning. However ‘love’ has changed its meaning these days, and needs to be supplemented by the more accurate Bible meanings found in ‘charity’.

Clifford wants to erase the name ‘Elias’ from Mark 15:35 because it is Greek and not Hebrew. Would we not expect Greek to be used in the Greek New Testament? If Clifford wants to Hebrew-ise Elias, then he must call Jesus ‘Yeshua’ or ‘Joshua’. ‘Elias’ is the name commonly used for the prophet in other languages including Clifford’s beloved Anglo-Saxon.

Instead of ‘God save the King’ in 1 Sam. 10:24, Clifford says the Hebrew demands ‘May the king live.’ The first, of course, is still colloquial and Clifford’s ‘translation’ is not. Romans 3:4, Clifford maintains, should not read ‘God forbid’ but ‘may it not be’. Clifford’s phrase is no longer idiomatic and not immediately understandable, besides, it is a Greek optative expression, a case non-existent in English. ‘God forbid’, is idiomatic and expresses the original meaning absolutely. Nevertheless, Clifford has a good point when wishing to replace ‘Easter’ by ‘Pentecost’, inspite of his expressed aversion to using Greek and Latin words. However, ‘Pask’ is the Anglo-Saxon rendering of ‘Pentecost’ and closer to the Hebrew and still used in Northern England as in ‘Pask Eggers’ (Easter eggs).

Clifford’s plea for a Saxon Bible abounds with Latinate words showing that both are an integral part of the English language. The very few words Clifford lists as ‘difficult’ can be explained in a few minutes, so why does he want to finance a translation in the language of dumbed-down texters, as he says, when modern versions up to date have not been a match for the AV? They have also been more Latinate. Where, too, are Christian scholars equal to the task?

The big snag in Clifford’s plea for a translation in present-day proletarian parlance is that such jargon is non-Biblical. The Gospel is a new language which has to be taught to be used. The preacher and teacher is there to extend the fallen vocabulary of man to help him learn spiritual truths to which he is a spiritually and linguistically alien. However ‘modern’ a translation is, it is still incomprehensible without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and the hard work of good pastors.
Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:3, these words; 'I fear'. This is the beloved apostle of our Lord, the apostle to the Gentiles. He feared some things. He didn’t fear men, but he feared God. He feared false converts. He said, 'I fear lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, his craftiness, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.' Do you read that word, 'corrupted'? 'I want you to read some of these words now. He says, 'I fear; (I’m afraid) lest by any means as the serpent beguiled our mother Eve through his subtlety, his craftiness, that your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.'

All of these fears are revealed and realized today in what we call religion. Where is the simplicity of Christ and the simplicity that is in Christ? Where is the simplicity of worship, the simplicity of walking with God? Where is it? Where is that faith in Christ, that love for Christ, that worship and exaltation of Christ alone, like Enoch of old, who walked with God and walked right on into glory? Religion today is corrupted; it is corrupted and it is complicated. Do you know that the average person does not even know what is going on in church? He cannot understand the theological terms; he cannot understand all the ordinances, rituals, and liturgies. He does not even know what is going on. It is so complicated and so corrupted. Religion has its popes, its cardinals, its bishops, its priests, its vicars, its reverends, its doctors, its elders, its superintendents, its symbols, its steeples and its uniforms. Religion has all of these things and is complicated. Religion has its temples, it has its cathedrals, and it has its shrines and holy places. Religion has its crosses and statues; it has its pictures and idols. Religion has its Sabbaths and holy days, altars and words like confirmation, catechisms, constitutions, choirs and cantatas and entertainment.

What has happened? Where is the simplicity of Christ? Where is the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ? Where is the simplicity of worship? When do people hear and understand, know and walk in the way of the Lord? It is so complicated. Religion has its denominations; there are hundreds of them. There are all different brands and names springing up every day. Religion has its organizations. I’m talking about high-powered organizations and multi-million dollar organizations. Religion has its conventions; it has its centennials, it has its schools and high-powered orators, organizers and politicians, money raisers, picketers and petition-gatherers. Religion has all these complicated things. Where is the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ? That is what I am asking, and that is what Paul warns us of. He said, 'I’m afraid of you lest Satan the serpent who deceived Eve with his subtlety and craftiness, should corrupt your minds and take you away from simplicity,' the heart worship, heart faith and heart love. I’m afraid of you lest Satan take you away from sitting with the people of God, worshiping the Lord Jesus and praising His name and walking with Him in a child-like faith.

A bowl is a font. You always call them a bowl with water in it. They say that it has to be a font. You just don’t say; ‘We met in the auditorium; you say, ‘We met in the sanctuary.’ A preacher is no longer a preacher; he is a clergyman. He is a member of the cloth. Most people don’t even know what that means. You don’t just say, ‘Pray for us,’ you say; ‘Would you render the invocation or would you pronounce the benediction?’ You see; we have high-sounding words. This is Satanic. This is nothing in the world but mind-cloudiness and brainwashing. This is the work of Satan that takes us away from the simplicity of Jesus Christ and this is what gets us in the mess we are in.

How long has it been since you have worshipped God? I didn’t ask how long it has been since you have been to church. You might be a regular attendee. What you call church today along with all of this confusion, competition, contests, recognition of the flesh and all of this money-raising is not worship. That is not worship! How long has it been since you worshipped God? I didn’t ask how long since you heard a sermon. I’m talking about how long has it been since you worshipped God from the heart and heard the Gospel of His Divine, dearly Beloved Son? How long since your heart, soul and affection were set on things above?

Where is the simplicity that is in Christ? Well, Paul said in Acts 17:24 as he was preaching on Mars Hill. It would be like he
was walking through one of our towns or cities today, and saw all of these steeples, cathedrals, churches, temples and buildings. It would be like him seeing all of these religious monuments.

He said, 'I passed by all your altars and shrines; you are a religious people; you are a superstitious people. I saw one small thing unto the unknown God'; that is the one that I am going to preach to you, 'the unknown God', God that made the world. Listen to Paul in Acts 17:24, 'God that made the world and all things therein and seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth.' He is not a little peanut-god that dwells in some little temple somewhere; He is Lord of heaven and earth. 'He doesn't even dwell in temples made with hands.' There it is, Acts 17:24; 'God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands. He is not worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything. Seeing, He giveth to all life and breath and all things.'

Christ our Lord said to the woman at the well, 'True worshippers worship God in Spirit. God seeketh such to worship Him.' God is Spirit; 'They that worship Him, worship Him in Spirit and truth.' Worshipping is not playing games like ring-around-the-rosy, holding hands, burning candles and all of these fleshly demonstrations about outward piety. God is Spirit; we must worship Him, like Paul wrote in Philippians 3:3, 'We are the true Israel who worship God in Spirit (from the heart) and we rejoice in Jesus Christ.'

We don't rejoice in our buildings, our denominations, or our numbers. We don't rejoice in that; we rejoice in Christ Jesus. 'We have no confidence in the flesh. We have no confidence in the continuation of anything that we do, have done, or are doing. This whole thing may fold up tomorrow. Let it fold up, if God be glorified. Listen to what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 66. You need to draw a big circle around verses 1 and 2. I read this to our congregation just recently; 'Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you build me? Where is the place of my rest? Where would you have me to abide? Huh?

He said, 'All these things my hands made'; I made the heavens and the earth, stars, seas and the dry land. I made the rocks; I made the trees; I made all of these things. 'All of these things have been.' Are you going to bring some of them together? Are you going to build me a house? Are you going to shut me up there to rest? But to this man will I look.'

I will tell you something that caught my attention, 'But to this man I will look.' I'm not going to look to the fellow out there that is sweating, labouring, and building some kind of temple or cathedral for God to live in. If his god is that small that he can live in that thing, then that is his whole problem. God said, 'To this Man will I look, even to him that is poor in Spirit.' Arthur Pink said one time, somebody asked him; 'What is this poor in Spirit?' He said, 'A man that is poor in spirit, spiritually, has nothing, is nothing, knows nothing and can do nothing. He has all things through Christ from God.' He is poor! 'I'll look to that man who is without, who is poor. I'll look to that man that is of a broken, contrite, heart. I will look to that man who trembleth at My Word.' Where is that man who is poor and of a broken heart and that trembleth at God's Word? I ask where is the simplicity that is in Christ?

I ask where is the Shepherd King? You talk about David's greatest moments; his greatest moments were not when he was building or getting the material together for Solomon to build that temple. His greatest moments were when he was sitting out there on a rock, playing his lute and singing, 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.' Where is that simplicity? Where is that worship? 'He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through this valley of the shadow of death; 'I will fear no evil for Thou art with me.' I thought that we had to go down to the building to meet God. David sat out on the side of the hill and said, 'Thou art with me.'

Where is that? Where is the Mary of Bethany? Oh, for someone like Mary of Bethany who sat at the feet of Christ. Our Lord said, 'She has chosen the good thing.' Martha was busy organizing things. 'Martha was busy and cumbered about with so much care,' our Lord said. She was in and out of the house, up and down the steps, slamming doors and opening cupboards and cabinets. She was preparing food, and finally she came in there and said, 'Master, don't you care that my sister lets me do all this preparation, serving and working while she just sits there at your feet and listens to you?' He said, 'Martha, Martha, Martha, you are cumbered about with so much care; Mary has chosen the good things.' Stop your feet and shut your mouth; sit down at the feet of Christ! Maybe we will learn something. We haven't learned much. 'We are ever learning and not ever coming to the knowledge of the truth. We have a form of Godliness, but deny the power thereof.'
Where are the people? I would love to preach to those who came from afar and had one request. They came from many miles and they had one request for these apostles. They said, ‘Sirs, we would see Jesus.’ We’re not here for the contests. We’re not here for the money raising. We are not here for the rally day, we are here to see Jesus. Do you reckon that anyone around here would preach Jesus Christ to us? Where are the people who heard the apostles, like those noble Bereans? Where are those noble Bereans who heard the apostles? They heard the apostles and they didn’t go out to dinner. They didn’t go down to the ballpark; ‘They went home and searched the Scriptures to see if these things be so.’ You do it, you search the Scriptures to see if I am telling the truth. Nobody cares. They just take the word of any Tom, Dick, or Harry that graduated from the seminary, has a D.D. after his name, and says he is a preacher, no matter how big a crook he is. You better buy you a Bible and search the Scriptures ‘to see whether these things be so.’

Where is the preacher who says, ‘I covet no man’s silver or gold.’ That is what Paul said to that bunch of elders down in Antioch when he started to leave and go to Rome to be killed. He said, ‘You won’t see my face anymore. I laboured among you and I coveted no man’s silver or gold. I kept back nothing profitable unto you. I didn’t shun to declare unto you all the counsel of God. I was determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.’ Where is the preacher who covets no man’s silver or gold? Where is the preacher that is not afraid of a board of deacons? Where is the preacher that is not afraid of the woman’s missionary society? Where is he that is not afraid of his denominational hierarchy, church heads, and ecclesiastical powers? Where is the preacher that is not afraid of any man? He that is boldly called the bondslave of Jesus Christ who will tell the truth whatever it costs. Where is the preacher? Who is the preacher that can say, ‘I’m content with what I have and where I am?’ The Scripture says, ‘I have learned, that no matter what state I am in, therewith to be content.’ Where is he? If you can find him, listen to him because he has something to say. He has someone to tell you about because God sent him. God’s servants are God’s servants. They are not men servants. They are not interested in pleasing men at all. They know that if they please men then they are not the servants of Christ.

Where indeed, I ask you; where is the simplicity of Christ, the simplicity of Gospel preaching? Where are the men like John Bunyan? He was the man who spent twelve years in prison because he dared to preach the Gospel of God’s grace. He dared to battle the religious traditions of his day. Where are the men like Martin Luther who was hounded and chased all over Germany because he dared to tell the truth? He had the courage to rebel against the corrupt, organized religion of his day. Where are the men like George Whitfield? These preachers, Bunyan, Luther, and Whitfield were cast out of organized religion, but they preached Christ to all who would listen to them.

Where is the simplicity of worship. I ask you? You talk about being in a mess. Where is the simplicity of worship when men and women gather together before God and praise Him in hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs? Where is the simplicity of worship when they gather together to hear the Gospel preached, where the Word of God is read and Christ alone is exalted? Where is it when you can go away from that worship service, saying, ‘Did my heart burn within me when I heard His Word, when I sang His praises and heard the Gospel preached?’

Is it not true that today’s church service is a fashion show? If we spent near as much time preparing our hearts to go to the house of God to worship Him as we spend before the mirror preparing these corrupted bodies and putting on clothes that will impress someone, we might contact God some day in a worship service. Today’s church service is a fashion show. It is not a show of grace or a show of humility. Is it not true that today’s church services are a time of fellowship with men, not a coming before the Lord? Why are people counted? I ask you, why would a church count the people that are there? What difference does it make how many are there. Doesn’t God know who is there? Well, what does it matter if anyone else knows how many are there?

Who cares about records? Who keeps records? Why keep records? Why are all of these records kept of how many we had a year ago, how much we gave a year ago and how much are we going to shoot for next year? If God isn’t there, we are wasting our time anyway. David counted Israel and God killed 70,000 men. He said, ‘I know how many people I have. ’’Why are visitors recognized? We get a card to sign and recognize the visitors. I raise their hand and stand up. They have to get a card to sign and recognize the visitors. I thought that we were there to glorify God. Well, we might miss someone, they might get mad, and they won’t come back. That would be a joy! Paul the apostle spoke of this day, this day of
competition, this day of commotion, this day of contests and this day of corruption. He warned us, but we haven’t listened. We have ignored his warning.

I’m heartsick over everything I see and hear today in the name of God. I don’t see anything anywhere on television, radio, newspaper or anywhere else that gives me any indication at all that God Almighty is within a hundred miles of this place. Oh, for a return to the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ. I am doing my dead level best at the church where I have pastored for 37 years to worship God, and preach His Word, and to tell men the truth. I pray that they hear that Gospel and come to know Christ.

Well, what would it be like? I can tell you. We worshipped God yesterday. This thing of worship is a thing of simplicity, that is in Christ, when people, the people of God gather together at the time appointed, to worship God. They come to that place for no other purpose. There are no contests, no competitions, no coercion, and no pressure. They come there to worship God, because they want to worship God. They need to worship God. They love to worship God. David said, ‘I was glad when they said to me; Let’s go to the House of the Lord.’ A lot of people will say, ‘Oh, I’ve got to go to church.’ They say, ‘Could you come over and visit with us? No, we’ve got to go to church.’ You don’t have to go to church! Anytime you feel like you have to do something, have to contribute to the Kingdom of God, don’t do it. God will not receive your presence or your gifts when they are coerced, done, and given out of a sense of responsibility.

I will tell you something else that will happen. Men and women will gather together to worship God because they want to. Second, the House of God will ring with the praises of God. I’m not talking about this modern, jive-singing that exalts the flesh and talks about what I have given up for Jesus. No, the praise of God will be in the hymns. Prayer will be offered in the Spirit of God and the Word of God will be read. There will be no announcements, no reports, no records, and no recognition of men. There will be just the uninterrupted worship of God from the beginning to the last amen. No announcements, no recognitions, no contests, reports, or records read, just worship God. Come in and sing, praise God, and read His Word. Pray, preach the Gospel. Fall on your faces before God. The Word of God will be preached. It will be the centre of the worship service, preaching God’s Word. God speaks through His Word. What Word will we preach? We will preach God in His Majesty and Glory and God in His power. Like Isaiah of old, ‘We will see the Lord.’ David said, ‘Come see the Lord; let’s magnify the Lord; let’s exalt His name together.’

I am not talking about this little peanut-god of impotence that I hear preached today, this little weak god that wants to and can’t, wills to, but is not able. I am talking about the ‘God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of heaven and earth, who reigns and rules and does what He will, when He will, with whom He will.’ He is the first cause of all things. That is the God that I am talking about, God Almighty. He will be preached. Our sinfulness will be preached. If we see God, we will see ourselves! Preachers will see themselves too! Preachers laud and exalt themselves, as if they are on cloud nine and have the world by the tail on a downhill pull. They are just as full of fear and doubt as anybody else. They are just as in need of mercy, maybe more. The Lord Jesus will be exalted and He will be preached. They will come preaching Christ. He won’t be preaching ‘another Jesus’. He will be preaching the Christ of the Bible, who He is, what He did, why He did it, and where He is now. I will tell you this, the preacher will not compromise the Word of God. He will preach it verse by verse, line upon line, precept upon precept.

Today, this thing is such a mess. It is so organized that they preach their little program or recipe. They will say, ‘Every head bowed and every eye closed.’ The organ starts playing, the choir starts singing and they start practising that psychology on you. They say, ‘Bow your head, raise your hand, raise the other hand, now, put your feet in motion and do what your hand says and walk down here and we’ll save you. You pray the sinner’s prayer. You repeat after me. I’ll tell you what to pray.’

You don’t have to teach a drowning man what to say. We preach the Gospel and the Holy Ghost will be left to work in men’s hearts. There’s no pressure, no persuasion, no psychology to get professions or joiners by decisions. The preacher will preach the Gospel; he will preach the Word of God and will leave people alone. They will leave them in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Coming to Christ is not moving your feet down an aisle; coming to Christ is in loving Him and believing Him with your whole heart. Oh my soul! People will return to their homes after that kind of service and preaching, and they return rejoicing. They return with anticipation, waiting to come back to meet with you, at the feet of Christ.

The mess we are in has a way out. We are going to have to turn to God.
We plan to hold our New Focus Conference in April, 2013, at Ossett, West Yorkshire. Members of Ebenezer Chapel Ossett have kindly offered to host our gathering which will be held at their church in Ossett town centre (shown above) and we warmly invite friends to gather for a weekend of preaching and fellowship.

Once again we hope to have Pastor Don Fortner from Danville, Kentucky, USA and brother George Ella from Mulheim, Germany as contributors to the conference. It is planned that Pastors Norman Roe, Allan Jellett, Ian Potts and Peter Meney from the UK will also take part.

In previous years these gatherings have been a great opportunity for believers in free grace to congregate from different parts of the country and meet like-minded friends. Part of the purpose of hosting the meetings in different venues is to make it more accessible for those who feel reluctant to make that initial journey, however, we hope that as well as new visitors, those who have benefitted from the preaching and fellowship in past years will join with us again.

Visitors travelling a distance probably need to consider obtaining accommodation for both Friday and Saturday nights. Ossett is close to the M1 between Dewsbury and Wakefield. There are plenty of hotels within a few miles of the church. Prices begin at around £40 for a double room per night. Breakfast is extra but worth having. In recent years a number of those attending have used Premier Inn and found them good value. Here are some options:

- **Premier Inn Wakefield South - M1, Jct39**
  - Denby Dale Road, Calder Park, Wakefield WF4 3BB
  - Tel: 0871 527 9118

- **Premier Inn Wakefield City North**
  - Herriot Way, Wakefield WF1 2UJ
  - Tel: 0871 527 9116

- **Premier Inn Wakefield Central**
  - Denby Dale Road, Thorne Park, Wakefield WF2 8DY
  - Tel: 0871 527 9114

- **Holiday Inn Wakefield M1, Jct. 40**
  - Queens Drive, Ossett, Wakefield WF5
  - Tel: 0871 423 4876

- **BEST WESTERN Hotel St Pierre**
  - 733 Barnsley Rd, Newmillerdam, Wakefield WF2 6QG
  - Tel: 0345 025 4358

Do consider meeting with us and being a part of this coming year’s event. There is no charge for the conference and meals will be provided. A collection will be taken and there will be opportunity available for those who are able to help defray costs. One additional feature of this year’s event is that we shall have access to view and buy from Ossett Christian Bookshop’s complete selection of new & secondhand books.

--- NEW FOCUS CONFERENCE 2013 ---

Our friends at Ebenezer Chapel in Ossett, West Yorkshire have kindly agreed to host our 2013 New Focus Conference.

The dates are Fri. 19th to Sun. 21st April (d.v.).

Meetings begin at 7:00 pm on Friday, 1.00 pm and 7.00 pm on Saturday and 11.00 am on Sunday, at Ebenezer Chapel, 21 Queen Street, Ossett, W. Yorks., WF5 8AS.

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