



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume VIII
Issue 200

The True Basis of Redemption

He will have a Desire to the Work of His Hands

by – Arthur P. Adams (1845-1925)

Showing that Redemption is a part of Creation, and hence its successful issue depends, not on the creature, but on the Creator. He will have a desire to the work of His own hands.

If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, until my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You: You will have a desire to the work of Your hands (Job 14:15).

Here in this passage is expressed THE TRUE BASIS OF REDEMPTION – “You will have a desire to the work of Your hands” (Job 14:15).



It is only as we recognize man as the work of God that we can understand his redemption. When I say man, I mean not merely Adam, the first man, but all the redeemed, as finished, in the image and likeness of God. To the whole redeemed race, thus finished, the words of the apostle are applicable – “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Hence, in order to understand redemption we must understand creation, for the former is simply one step in the process of the latter. Let’s then look first at the subject of creation.

CREATION

The common idea is that God created man perfect and complete in the garden of Eden, and thus started him all right; but evil invaded that peaceful and blessed retreat, successfully assailed the man and the woman, and the dreadful consequences were sin, alienation, the loss of paradise and

universal death. Thus was God’s handiwork marred and His plans disarranged, and now He must commence all over again, as it were, first to repair damages and then to carry out His original plan as best He can. This is the common idea among the great mass of Christians, and yet the simple statement of it as above is enough to make one suspect that the idea cannot be just exactly right.

Is it so that God is altogether such an one as ourselves? Whose plans may be upset? Whose will may be thwarted? Who may be compelled to change His plan because of some interfering agency or evil power entering in and for the time being getting the better of Him?

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Is it so? Why, no, we say; and yet what shall we do with the Bible story of the “fall of man” as we term it? Shall we make God responsible for it? If His will was not thwarted in that terrible fall, must we say that it was in accordance with His will? Many cannot say that – it seems blasphemous – and yet either that is true, or else His will was thwarted and His plans disarranged and upset by an evil power mightier, or for the time being, more cunning than Himself.

What shall we do in this dilemma? How shall we untangle this seeming snarl? Let us see how the Bible helps us.

I will first state the case as I understand it from the Scriptures, in my own language, and then give the Bible proof. First I would have the reader settle it in his mind that God is supreme.

GOD IS SUPREME

God is supreme in all realms and over all forces, evil as well as good. Nor would I abate one hair’s breadth of this supremacy – let the consequences be what they may, for infinitely more direful are the conclusions flowing from such abatement.

If God’s will has ever been thwarted, we have no positive guarantee that it will not be thwarted again. If His plans have ever been circumvented, disarranged and upset, the like may again take place. If evil has been more powerful than good at one time, or if God has been outwitted by evil or in any way hampered, constrained or limited by it at any time or under any circumstances, the like may again occur, and the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, any more than the gates of Eden, may not be able to keep out evil, discord and death.

I ask the reader to consider this point carefully. Many shrink from taking the position that God’s will is never thwarted but that, as the Bible expresses it, “*He works all things after the counsel of His Own will*” (Ephesians 1:11), because they say that such a view makes God responsible for the introduction of sin into the world and leads to other startling conclusions that seem impossible and even blasphemous. ▶

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God’s abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God’s purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the “preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
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Yet these persons do not consider the consequences of the opposite view, that God's will is thwarted, and that He does not work all things after the counsel of His own will; if that is so then the future is doubtful, the final triumph of the good and the perpetuity of that triumph is uncertain. No, no, it will not do: we must make God absolutely supreme. As He Himself says, "*I am God and there is none else*" (Isaiah 46:9), otherwise for all we know, there may be "*gods many and lords many*" (I Corinthians 8:5).

Just think of it a moment, for this point is so important that I will dwell upon it a little longer here at the outset. How did evil enter the world in the first place, if God did not permit it? Did "*that old serpent, the devil*" (Revelation 12:9; 20:2), enter Eden in spite of God? No, certainly not, for such a view would make the devil stronger than God, and we could not be sure who would finally triumph.

Did he get into Eden on the sly, outwitting God and getting the better of him? No, that idea would not do, for if the evil one has thus deceived the Almighty and cheated Him, what guarantee have we that he will not again get the better of Him? We must then take the ground that God permitted evil to enter the world, knowing of course full well what the consequences would be, and therefore in some sense and to some degree He is responsible for those consequences. Can you escape this conclusion except by detracting from the power and wisdom of God? The writer is free to confess that he cannot, nor does he wish to, since the Lord does not hesitate to take upon Himself the responsibility of evil, as He does all things else; for He says, "*I form light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things*" (Isaiah 45:7), and we are told over and over again that "*all things are of God*" (Romans 11:36; I Corinthians 8:6; II Corinthians 5:18; Ephesians 1:11, etc.).

We do not relieve the Creator of this responsibility by saying that He was obliged to allow evil to enter the world in order that man, as a "free moral agent," might properly be tried and proved. God need not have created man at all had He not

chosen to do so; but having created him, giving him the nature that He did give him, whether a "free moral agent" or whatever it might be, and knowing all the consequences beforehand, for "*known unto the Lord are all His works from the beginning*" (Acts 15:18), immediately He becomes responsible for those consequences. *He is the first great Cause*, and an intelligent Cause is responsible for all the effects, however remote and indirect those effects may be.

This is generally held to be true even in the case of short-sighted man. If a human being starts a chain of events that in the end proves calamitous or hurtful to someone, if the matter can be traced back to the original mover, he is held responsible for all the effects, even though he could not have foreseen them and did not intend the injury. How much more then shall He be held responsible for all His work Who foresees and fully knows all the consequences from the beginning to the end?

Let this point be settled then, that God is supreme. "*He works all things*" – absolutely all things, without any exceptions – "*after the counsel of His Own will*" (Ephesians 1:11). I exhort the readers to an uncompromising jealousy of this supreme sovereignty of God, Begrudge to the Devil, or to any power of evil, the least share in this universal sway; emulate the example of Job in this respect when he attributed all that came to him, the evil as well as the good, to the Lord, saying, "*Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord and shall we not receive evil?*" (Job 2:10).

As a matter of fact the Devil was the active agent in Job's calamities; but, as a matter of fact, the Lord was back of it all, and Satan could only move so far and in such a way as the Lord permitted (see Job 1:10-12; 2:6, 10). Hence Job was perfectly right in attributing it all to the Lord, and the Devil did not even have the satisfaction of being recognized at all; but he drops out of the narrative altogether at its very beginning, and thus may he drop out of our lives and we may deal with God alone for He controls the evil as well as the good.

We need not fear to take this position. There is abundance of Scripture to warrant it as will be ►

noticed further on; but if we had no other Scripture than this case of Job it would be sufficient warrant for us to take the position that evil is entirely under God’s control and He uses it, as He does the good, for the carrying out of His Own gracious plans and purposes. The hard experiences of Job were a blessing to him in the end, and yet his calamities were the direct work of the Devil. So will it be, under God’s direction, with all evil.

The Lord of Hosts has sworn, saying, “Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand; for the Lord of Hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” (Isaiah 24:24-27).

The Most High lives forever; Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion; and His kingdom is from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” (Daniel 4:34-35).

Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say unto Him that fashions it, “What are You making?” Or Your work, “He has no hands?” (Isaiah 45:9; read this whole chapter, and compare with it Isaiah 10:15 and Romans 9:9-24; see also Isaiah 43:13; John 19:11; Acts 4:27, 28).

There are many other similar passages; let them all be looked up and studied so that this question of the absolute sovereignty of God may be settled in your mind once for all; do not allow yourself to entertain so absurd a belief, as many do, that the jurisdiction of the universe is divided up between God and the Devil, the latter having exclusive control over a large portion from which domain the Almighty is entirely excluded, or in which His power is secondary or in some way restrained and limited.

The above Scriptures show that such a view must be false, and our reason confirms the same conclusion, for we have seen how disastrous would be the opposite position. Either God is supreme, or He is not the only God. If He is not “God alone” then there are many gods, and in fact there is no “One God.” This point being settled we are prepared to take the next step.

THE NEXT STEP

Redemption is a part of the process of creation, and creation is God’s work and not man’s. I presume that no one will question the statement that creation is entirely God’s work, but some may object to the statement that redemption is a part of the creative process, because the common idea is that redemption was a sort of an afterthought with God, brought in as a remedy for the evil that Satan had wrought. Just one Scripture will dissipate this idea, viz., that Jesus Christ is “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Revelation 8:8), and that God’s people are chosen in Him “*before the foundation of the world*” (Ephesians 1:4; I Peter 1:20).

These Scriptures plainly show that the redemption by Christ was no afterthought, but fully contemplated in the original plan, “*before the foundation of the world.*” We know furthermore that redemption is creation, for “*if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature*” (II Corinthians 5:17), and this new creation is the originally contemplated completion of the old, according to God’s order: first the natural, afterward that which is spiritual (I Corinthians 15:46).

Now the new creation is just as much God’s work as the old. No one could recreate himself, any more than he could have created himself in the first place. The Bible is very explicit and positive on this point, and this is the main thought that I want to present to my readers. Here is the proposition: THE REDEMPTION OF MAN IS THE COMPLETION OF HIS CREATION, AND DEPENDS FOR ITS FINAL ACCOMPLISHMENT ON GOD AND NOT ON THE INDIVIDUAL. This work will certainly be carried out to a successful completion because it is God’s work. “*He will have a desire to the work of His Own hands.*”

THIS IS THE TRUE BASIS OF REDEMPTION

According to the common idea, one's salvation is made to depend almost entirely on his own personal efforts. God has made all necessary provision: He has prepared the feast, spread the table, and sent out the invitation. Now if you will accept and persevere you will be saved; but if not, you will be lost; God can do no more for you; He has made all needful provision; now your personal salvation depends entirely on yourself. This is the way the matter is usually put, and thus God is practically left out of the question in the salvation of the individual; each one is taught that his future well-being depends on himself personally; if he will fulfill certain conditions God will do His part, but if he fails in these conditions God can do nothing more for him, and all that he has done will go for naught so far as he personally is concerned.

The writer has often heard this idea presented to the people in just this style, and with the utmost emphasis and positiveness – your salvation depends on you, it is for you to say what your eternity shall be, etc.

We have already noticed how positively the Bible declares that God will have His Own way in spite of all opposing forces, and Paul declared that he was perfectly confident that *“He Who has begun a good work in you will perform it”* (Philippians 1:6). We should remember that the process and completion of the creative work is as much of God as its inception. We should remember further that God's Own honor and credit are at stake in the successful carrying out of His plans. Thus does He accept the situation, and hence declares that *for His Own sake* He will complete that which He has begun.

This is the thought contained in the Scripture quoted at the outset – *“You will have a desire to the work of Your hands.”* It is as though a person should commence a work in which he took a great interest and should carry it on to a certain stage and then lay it aside for some reason. He does nothing more to it for weeks, months or years perhaps, but still his heart is set upon that

work; he is deeply interested in it, he longs to be at it again and to complete what he has begun; he has a desire to the work of his hands, his own character and reputation as a workman is at stake and he feels bound to complete the job. Some such thought as this seems to have been in the mind of the old patriarch when he uttered the words we are considering.

If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, until my change comes. You will call, and I will answer You: You wilt have a desire to the work of Your hands (Job 14:15).

It is important to notice in this Scripture that Job bases his hope of a future life not on anything he had done, or might do, but on the fact of God's proprietorship of him. He seems to have reasoned thus: I am an unfinished piece of divine workmanship; the divine Workman would desire to finish His own work; hence though I die I shall live again.

This was Job's hope; this is our hope; this is the hope of the world. When God said, *“in the beginning”* (Genesis 1:1), *“let us make man in our image and in our likeness”* (Genesis 1:26), He did not mean merely the first man, but He meant the race. That work began in Eden and has been going on uninterruptedly ever since; it has been completed thus far only in the case of one man, *“the Perfect Man”* (Ephesians 4:13), the Lord Jesus Christ, and hence He has become the pattern and the model after Whom all the redeemed shall be fashioned, so that when the question is asked, *“What is man?”* (Psalms 8:4; Hebrews 2:6), the answer is, *“the Man Christ Jesus”* (I Timothy 2:5; see Hebrews 2:5-10). Jesus is the only man thus far finished, completed and perfected; He is the only one as yet in whom the creative proposition has been consummated – *“Let us make man in our image and in our likeness”* (Genesis 1:26), for He is the brightness of the Father's glory and *“the express image of His person”* (Hebrews 1:3). The first man could not have been in the image and likeness of God in the same sense that Jesus was, because the nature of the two are broadly contrasted in I Corinthians 15:45-49: ►

The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening [life-giving] spirit; howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual; the first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly.

Thus we see that the first man could not have been in the full image and likeness of God, for he was made altogether unlike *"the second man,"* Jesus, who is *"the image of the invisible God"* (Colossians 1:15). Therefore when we read of Adam that he was made in God's image we know that the statement must be taken prophetically and prospectively, for God *"quickens the dead and calls those things which are not as though they were"* (Romans 4:17). We know that Jesus Christ was made altogether different in nature from Adam, and we know that He is the pattern after Whom all the redeemed are to be modeled. We also know that He is the *"the Perfect Man"* (Ephesians 4:13), *"The Man Christ Jesus"* our Mediator with the Father (I Timothy 2:5), the *"Man Whom God has ordained"* to judge the world (Acts 17: 31); and this same *"Son of Man"* will come again (see Revelation 1:13; 14:14; Matthew 10:23; 13:41; 24:27, 30, 44; 25:31, and many other similar Scriptures).

It is a noteworthy fact that the Scriptures emphasize the humanity of Christ far more than they do His divinity; He is divine – *"in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"* – but this truth is not made so prominent in the Bible as the fact that Jesus was thoroughly human, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; His usual title in the New Testament is *"Son of Man"* and thus He usually styled Himself. Only four times does He call Himself the *"Son of God"* (Matthew 26:63-64; Luke 22:70), while He takes to Himself the name *"Son of Man"* some eighty times. Thus does it most certainly appear that Jesus Christ is *"the Perfected Man,"* that He is a Man still – *"the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God"* (Acts 7:56),

and that *"this same Jesus"* (Acts 1:11) will come again, the Man Whom God has appointed to judge the world. Hence the conclusion seems inevitable that Jesus Christ is THE FINISHED MAN, the one only man Who has passed through the entire process of creation and reached the image and likeness of God.

Now how did Jesus reach this highly exalted and glorious position, as the first fruits and forerunner of all the saved? Was it by His Own might and power? Did He create and perfect Himself? No, most emphatically no; it was *all of God*. Jesus was entirely *"God's workmanship"* (Ephesians 2:10) just like all the rest of the redeemed. There is such a mass of Scripture to establish this truth that I will refer to it very briefly and leave the reader to study it out at his pleasure and leisure.

In the first place, God brought Him into the world (Hebrews 1:6; Luke 1:25); *"God was with Him"* (Acts 10:38). His entire career and everything that He did and said was *of God* and by His power. Jesus never claimed to perform His mighty works by His Own power. On the contrary, He expressly disclaims any such thing: He did His mighty works *"by the spirit of God"* (Matthew 12:28), the works that He did were not His Own works (John 9:4), the Words He spoke were not His Own words (John 3:34; 14:10; 17:8).

"It is My meat and drink," He said, *"to do My Father's will and to finish His work"* (John 4:34). Again He says, *"the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works"* (John 14:10; see Acts 2:22); *"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him,"* etc. Christ was the agent, God did the mighty works *"by Him."* Again, to the same effect read Acts 10:38-42. Thus was Jesus *"the beginning of the creation of God"* (Revelation 3:14). God was His God and Father, just as He is our God and Father (John 20:17). His passion and crucifixion was *of God* (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28); so also His resurrection, and exaltation (Acts 2:24; Philippians 2:9), also His return to judge, reign and deliver *"the whole creation"* (Romans 8:19-20). Jesus was weak; He says, *"Of Mine Own self I can do nothing"* (John 5:19, 30; 8:28) none of us are

any weaker than that. Paul says that Christ was “crucified through weakness, but He lives by the power of God” (II Corinthians 13:4); all His power was of God, and even His life, for He says “I live by the Father” (John 6:57).

Now turn to Isaiah 42:1-12; read the whole passage comparing it with Matthew 12:18-21, and see how thoroughly Christ’s earthly career and final victory was of God. God “made known to Him the ways of life” (Acts 2:28) and “upheld” Him, and this was the reason why it could be said of Him, “He shall not fail.”

I the Lord have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand, and will keep You (Isaiah 42:6).

Thus Jesus had to pass through a process of growth and development, just as a man must, in order to reach the divine image and likeness, and every step of this process was of God. As a youth, “He grew in wisdom and in favor with God and man, and the grace of God was upon Him” (Luke 2:40, 52). There were some things He did not know (Mark 13:32), and He had to be instructed. Among the rest he “learned obedience by the things that He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). He had to pass through a training process “that He might be a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17), and finally He was made “perfect through suffering” (Hebrews 2:10), “and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.”

All this goes to show that Jesus, during His earthly life, was passing through a process of creation, and that this entire process in all its length and breadth was of God. Jesus did not perfect Himself, but was “made perfect,” “the Perfect Man,” and thus perfected He became, as we have seen, the model and pattern of all the redeemed. They must be perfected as He was and by the same power – the power of God – in order to reach the same goal, and their creation, like that of Christ’s must be entirely of God, as it is written,

We are His [God’s] workmanship, created in

Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2: 10).

The point that I want the reader to see is that the perfection of man, the consummation of his creation in the image and likeness of God, is God’s work, and as such is sure of being accomplished, because the Great Workman is interested in His work, He has a “desire” to it, and He will not begin what He cannot complete. For the creature to fail of the purpose of its creation implies a failure on the part of the Creator, and this cannot be in the government of God. “My counsel shall stand,” He says, “and I will do all My pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10). Hence we may be sure that the ultimate purpose in the creation of everyone, whatever it may be, will be surely carried out; as the Creator cannot fail, neither can His creations. Thus does it appear that in the final outcome of man’s creation the honor of the Most High is involved, and He is bound to make that outcome a successful and glorious one in order to vindicate that honor. There is abundance of Scripture to establish this point and we shall notice it in the course of our discussion.

We have found that man is still in process of creation, and that the consummation of that creation depends on God, the Creator, and not on man, the creature. Now notice how this thought is brought out in the New Testament. We have seen that as everything in the earthly life of Christ was God-wrought, so we shall see that everything in connection with Christ’s work – the inception, process and consummation of the redemptive work – is all of God, and, being so, a successful issue is absolutely certain. In the following Scripture let the reader notice especially how GOD is made the *prime mover* and *pre-eminent cause* of the whole redemptive work.

Jesus Christ is the “Lamb of God” Who “takes away the sin of the world.” It was because God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, etc., and therefore, “God commends His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” and, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because He sent His only ►

begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." Again it is "the Father Who has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world," and "No man can come except the Father draws him." Says Christ, "All that the Father gives Me shall come unto Me, and him that comes I will in no wise cast out." "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now see II Corinthians 5:17-21:

Therefore if any man is in Christ Jesus he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God, Who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed unto us the Word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. For He [God] has made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Truly, "ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD," and "We are His workmanship; created in Christ Jesus ..." and again, "You are God's husbandry, you are God's building." Read also the 5th, 8th, 9th and 11th chapters of Romans, and many more Scriptures in the New Testament to the same effect.

I call the reader's attention to these passages in order that they may notice that the whole redemptive work is attributed to God. Christ is God's agent; God is the principal at every step, and it is His love and His power and His grace that is manifested throughout. He is "God our Savior, Who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:3, 4).

How different is this Scriptural view of the redemptive work from that false view that exalts Christ and vilifies the character of God, making the former (Christ) to be loving and gracious and

the latter (God) harsh and implacable, a being who must be appeased in order to make Him willing to forgive the sinner. Thus is the Father and the Son presented in contrast, when in fact the latter (the Son) is an exact revelation of the former (the Father), and by the same false view the teaching of Scripture is reversed by declaring that Christ's mission was to reconcile God to man, when in fact the atonement is wrought out by God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and then beseeching individuals, through His ambassadors, to be reconciled to Him. Thank God for the truth.

There is one passage of Scripture that may occur to the reader that perhaps I ought to notice in this connection; it is Philippians 2:12: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." To many this passage seems to make one's salvation depend entirely upon his own efforts, that he is to work out his own salvation, i.e., he is to save himself by his own works. Of course, it cannot mean this, for if it did it would contradict other Scripture which expressly declares that we are not saved by works but by faith – *without works*.

What then does it mean? Read the next verse. "For it is God Who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." There you have it again. "All things are of God." When God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, what part is there left for the individual to do? The "willing and the doing" is about the whole of it, is it not? Then if God working in you does both the willing and the doing according to His good pleasure, there is not much room for the good works of self. It is as the apostle says, "I labored more than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me." Thus even this text teaches the same doctrine that we have learned from so many others: our salvation is of God.

This is the consummation of creation, and the work of the Creator, just as much as it was "in the beginning." Then what shall we do with the other verse, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?" Why, the meaning of this is plain enough – work out what the Lord works in; that is all there is to it. God is working in you both to will

and to do of His good pleasure; now you work that out; let the life inwrought of God be manifested outwardly, that all may know that you have been with Jesus and learned of Him. You can only work out what God works in; you cannot work for your salvation, or secure salvation by working; but the salvation, *i.e.*, the life that God imparts, we may manifest, and that is what the text enjoins that we should do.

Thus from the foregoing we arrive again at THE TRUE BASIS OF REDEMPTION: God will have a desire to the work of His hands. He takes an interest and a pride, as we say, in His Own work, and for His Own sake He will carry it on to a successful termination. Now we will notice how this is confirmed and illustrated in the Old Testament by God’s dealings with Israel.

ISRAEL

As we read the history of this people it seems to reflect great dishonor on God, as a wasteful child brings disgrace upon his parents. From the Old Testament account it appears that God chose this people out of all other peoples and lavished upon them great blessings and gave them unusual privileges in His attempt to make of them something extra, as one might say.

They were to be to Him a “*peculiar people,*” a “*kingdom of priests and a royal nation;*” they were God’s son, His first born (Exodus 4:22); they were His vineyard toward which He had exercised the greatest care (Isaiah 5), and finally they are represented even as being married to God (Ezekiel 16). Yet, notwithstanding all these blessings, this care and close relationship to God, this people turned out bad in every respect; they were always disobedient, perverse and rebellious, continually leaving the true God Who had done so much for them and going after idols, and in every respect were a low, degraded, ungrateful, wicked people who finally rejected their Messiah and put Him to death. Thus they filled up the full measure of their iniquity and were cut off and cast aside as rejected branches from a good olive tree (Romans 11).

All this was greatly dishonoring to God. It was as though one should adopt a child and take the greatest care that it should grow up extra good, and it should turn out outrageously bad. The parents would feel disgraced and dishonored, and many would blame them for the waywardness of the child, believing that if it had had the right sort of training it would not have so widely departed therefrom. Now this is just exactly the view that is taken of the matter in the Bible. The Lord acknowledges that His name has been “*profaned among the nations*” and dishonored by the perversity of His people, and when Moses pleads for mercy and forgiveness for them, he bases his plea on the same ground (see Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:13-16; Deuteronomy 9:28; 32:27).

The reader will see from these passages that Moses pleads for the Lord’s favor on the ground that His Own reputation was at stake, and that if He failed to accomplish what He had started out to do His name would be dishonored. The Lord apparently accepts this plea and grants the prayer of His servant. This is the point that I wish the reader especially to note; the final accomplishment of the purpose of God depends on Himself and not on man. The creature may fail, but the Creator never fails, and no amount of blunders, mistakes, failures or perversions of the creature shall disarrange or thwart the plans of the Creator.

This is our hope; this is the hope of the world; this is THE TRUE BASIS OF REDEMPTION: Man is God’s Own work. He has begun to create him in His own image and likeness. He will surely finish the work, for He will have a desire to the work of His Own hands.

There is one very striking illustration of this in the early history of Israel. They came to the borders of the Promised Land and sent out the spies who (with the exception of Caleb and Joshua) brought back an evil report – “*we cannot go up and possess the land.*” The people with their usual perversity accepted this report at once and said, “*let us go back to Egypt.*” Thus after all that the Lord had done for them, after all His mighty power and special favor manifested in their ►

behalf – sufficient it would seem to confirm their faith forever – still they were ready to throw all this away, turn their backs on the Lord and go back to the land of darkness and bondage. It seemed like an utter failure of all the Lord's efforts to make anything good of this faithless people. They were a base herd of ingrates entirely unworthy of the high destiny that Jehovah had marked out for them; let them go to their own destruction, the plan has failed so far as they are concerned.

It is just at this moment of dire disaster and cowardly failure – in the very midst of the apparent defeat of the Lord's most cherished hopes, and while He pronounces the doom of that disloyal generation – that He at the same time declares, in a sort of prophetic undertone, and yet with all the confidence of omnipotence, *"But,"* – notwithstanding this apparent failure – *"as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."* Here again is the thought made prominent that the failure of the creature does not handicap the Creator; He has His Own way at last, and works His sovereign will just the same.

This episode in the history of God's ancient people, and the Lord's attitude toward them, is simply a type and sample of their whole career and of God's dealings with them: they always failed; their entire history is a series of blundering, stupid follies and rebellions; they were always breaking their promises; they were always going after other gods, and the Lord was continually chastising them until it seems as though He was tired of it, for He says by the mouth of the prophet, *"Why should you be stricken any more?"* as a father might say to a persistently wicked child.

The Lord knew that they were a stiff-necked, rebellious people from the beginning (Deuteronomy 31:16-29) and that they would keep it up to the end. *"You will revolt more and more;"* He says, and then He gives the reason: *"the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."*

Thus it was all through their history they were *"joined to their idols,"* they were *"transgressors from the womb,"* and finally their wickedness culminated in the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah, whereupon they were rejected and cast aside. Thus apparently the Lord's experiment with this people utterly failed. He tried to make something extra out of them and they turned out even worse than the surrounding heathen (see Ezekiel 16:44ff). Was not this a disgrace and a dishonor upon Him Who acknowledged Himself as their God in a special sense, their Father and even their Husband? (Isaiah 54:5).

Has the Lord's purpose concerning them failed? Has He thus been balked in His plans, and prevented from carrying them out because He could not make of them what He set out to make? No, not at all; the Lord knew before He began just how the experiment would turn out. It was no experiment with Him. *"Known unto the Lord are all His works from the beginning."* He is not taken by surprise; He is not disappointed; He meets no unforeseen difficulties, nor unexpected obstacles, but everything is known and taken into account and provided for beforehand. Will the Lord yet vindicate His wisdom and power in regard to this people? Yes, He most certainly will. The Bible most positively teaches that the Lord will yet take this people in hand again, and then He will accomplish all His will in them, and that He will do this on His Own account in order to manifest to all nations His wisdom and power. Now notice how all this is brought out in the Scriptures. The Lord says, *"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My Own sake and will not remember your sins"* (Isaiah 43:25).

Mark you, the Lord blots out their transgressions for His Own sake. He is personally interested in the matter on His Own account, and therefore He blots out their sins. Now read the rest of the chapter and the first eight verses of the following chapter; read carefully, weigh every word and see how this great and comforting truth of God's interest in the work and the consequent absolute assurance of its final fulfillment is brought out.

Now see another remarkable passage to the same effect in Isaiah 48:8-11:

*Yea, you heard not; yea, you knew not; yea, from that time that your ear was not opened; for **I knew** [mark this] that you would deal very treacherously, and was called a transgressor from the womb. For My name’s sake will I defer My anger, and for My praise will I refrain from you, that I cut you not off. Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction. For My Own sake, even for My Own sake, will I do it; for how should My name be polluted? And I will not give My glory unto another.*

In this passage is again set forth God’s personal interest in the destiny of Israel, and the consequent assurance of His will being fully accomplished therein.

Now see another passage in Ezekiel 20. This chapter sets forth the same idea; the persistent wickedness of God’s people. Nevertheless, God did not destroy them or cast them off nor visit upon them all their sin, for He had respect unto His Own reputation which they had disgraced. Therefore, He wrought in their behalf for His Own name’s sake that it should not be polluted before the nations among whom they were, and in whose sight He had made Himself known in bringing them out of Egypt. (See v:9, 14, 22, 44).

The whole chapter brings out this truth: that God is personally interested in the outcome of His dealings with Israel, that He feels disgraced, as we might say, at their failure, and that for His Own sake He will yet work for them and bring them into harmony with Himself.

This truth is still more plainly and positively brought out in chapters 36 and 37 of this same prophecy of Ezekiel. The Lord tells how His people had defiled themselves and how He had chastised them, pouring out on them His fury and scattering them among the nations. Yet they profaned His holy name more and more wherever they went,

and the heathen said sneeringly, “*These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of His land*” (:20).

This was not so much a blaming of the people, as a sarcastic reflection upon the Lord; these are the Lord’s people, those whom He undertook to make superior to other people; see what they have come to, mark how well the Lord has made out with them, etc. Thus was the Lord’s name profaned and disgraced, as when they wagged their head at Jesus on the cross and said mockingly, “*He saved others, Himself He cannot save*” (Matthew 27:42; Mark 15:31; Luke 23:35).

Will the Lord let it go that way? Is He done with His people? Are all His resources exhausted? Has He done His very utmost, and must He accept the inevitable and give it up as a bad job which He can never complete? Not so, by any means; whatsoever the Lord has set His hand to do He will surely carry through, “*and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, ‘What are You doing?’*” (Daniel 4:35). “*Has He said, and shall He not do it? Or, has He spoken and shall He not make it good?*” (Numbers 23:19).

So here in the prophecy we are considering, the Lord goes on to say:

But I had pity for My Holy Name which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, wherever they went; therefore say unto the house of Israel, “thus says the Lord God, ‘I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for My Holy Name’s sake, which you have profaned among the heathen, wherever you went; and I will sanctify My Great Name which you have profaned in the midst of them, and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord,’ says the Lord God, ‘when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.’”

God will be sanctified in Israel before all nations by carrying out His original purpose concerning them. This He will do not for their sakes, but for His Own sake, and He will gather them out ►

of all countries from wherever He had scattered them and bring them into their own land.

Then will I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them; and you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses; I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you; and I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, and you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

Mark how the Lord says He will do all this without any conditions attached whatever – "I will cleanse you, I will save you, I will cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them." There are no "ifs" about it; there are no contingencies; "I will do it, and you shall do it," and the result:

Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

Now why does the Lord do this?

"Not for your sakes do I this," says the Lord God. Be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

Then He goes on to tell what He will do further, and adds:

Then the heathen that are left round you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that was desolate; I the Lord have spoken it and I will do it.

There is no doubt about it; it is sure to be done, for God's Word never returns unto Him void nor fails to accomplish that whereto He sends it (Isaiah 55). He says, "I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isaiah 46:11).

Language could not be plainer than the foregoing Scriptures to express the thought of God's absolute sovereignty and that He always has His Own way, that whatever His purpose is He carries it out and no failure on the part of man can ever change the divine program, or in any way or in the least degree thwart the divine will. God's own honor and credit is at stake. He recognizes it so, and speaks and acts accordingly; and what seems like failure will yet be seen to be a success so absolute and grand that only omnipotence could compass it. There was no failure in connection with this people from God's standpoint. He knew from the first how everything would turn out; and the lesson He would teach them, and through them to the race – for all these things which were done for the admonition of later generations will be thoroughly learned (I Corinthians 10:11). Then in the future ages He will yet make of this people a holy people, obedient and faithful, and they shall walk in the way of His statutes and keep His judgments and do them; and they shall be ashamed of their former perverseness and disobedience, and repent them of all their evil deeds, and God's name shall be sanctified in them, which once they profaned. Mark you, God does all this of His Own sovereign will and power; and not for their sakes, but for His Own sake.

Here again is THE TRUE BASIS OF REDEMPTION: the will of God, His Own purposes and plans, His Own almighty power, unfailing wisdom and unalterable word, His proprietorship of man – "We are His workmanship." He is personally interested in the work and in its successful issue – His Own honor is at stake, He will do it for His Own sake – He will do it, and therefore it is absolutely certain of being done. Thus the final outcome depends not on man; you and I are free and responsible intermediately, and will be held strictly accountable for all the deeds done in the body; but God is the first and

the last; He has His way finally, and man has no power to stay His hand, or to say unto Him, “What are You doing?” No act of the creature can alter or disarrange the final plans of the Creator.

DEATH

We must now go a step further in our study of this subject. It is the final one, and makes the grand truth complete. I want to show that *death*, any more than anything else, is no hindrance to the perfect accomplishment of the ever blessed will of God.

We have thus far said nothing on this point; and it may be that the reader, like the great mass of Christians, holds to the idea that death, physical death, fixes forever the destiny of everyone. One may change after death from bad to worse or from good to better – there may be progress in either direction, upward or downward, but there can be no change from bad to good, or from the downward road to the upward. This is the current belief, and it is supposed by many to be fully warranted by the Bible; but as a matter of fact this belief is a mistake – it has no scriptural support at all; what foundation it has is from human tradition.

In the few closing words of this work I will give some of the evidence to establish the truth that God in Christ is Lord of the dead as well as the living, and that though a man dies in his sins, still he is not beyond the reach of the ever merciful arm of the Almighty (Psalms 136).

We have found that God the Creator has His way, and carries out His purpose with reference to His creatures whatever may be their condition or circumstances. The plainest and most positive Scripture has been cited to prove the above. Now if death fixes man’s eternal destiny, the above would not be possible. Billions of human beings have died in the past in unavoidable ignorance of the true God and of Jesus Christ Whom He has sent, and millions are dying every day in the same condition.

If the doom of these countless myriads is sealed eternally, then two conclusions follow: either God’s

purpose in their creation was that they should come to just such an end as they have come to, or else His purpose has failed. His purpose cannot fail, for He says, “*My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure*” (Isaiah 46:10). “*He works all things after the counsel of His Own will,*” i.e., in the final outcome God’s will is accomplished. Neither can we accept the conclusion that these myriads who have lived in ignorance and sin, and died in darkness – and, according to the current belief, are therefore hopelessly lost – have hereby fulfilled the purpose of their creation. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the revealed nature of God and diametrically opposed to all the teaching of Holy Scripture, wherein we are taught that God loves the world, that He sent His Son to be its Savior – “*the propitiation for the sins of the whole world*” – that the Son is the “*True Light which lights every man that comes into the world*” (John 1:9), and that finally, the whole creation “*... shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*” (Romans 8:19-21).

Therefore, since we cannot accept either conclusion we must also reject the premise. The only way out of this difficulty is to admit the possibility of enlightenment and salvation after death. Take for example the declaration that God will have “*all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:4). How can the will of God in this particular be carried out if death fixes the eternal condition of all, since the great mass of mankind has died, and are still dying, without any knowledge of the truth at all? This is so with many other Scriptures (John 1:9; Luke 2:10, etc).

Take the case of Israel that we have been considering. We know that God will carry out His will regarding them, notwithstanding all their perversity and failure. Yet how can this be if He cannot reach the millions of this people who have died in the past? God did not have His Own way with them, and now their doom is sealed. Is it so? Not thus does Holy Scripture speak to the writer. We have seen what great blessings God has promised this people in the future. Do the ones to whom these promises were given, those who were living at the time, have no share in their fulfillment? Have ►

they passed forever beyond the reach of all benefit from these gracious and wonderful words of future good, when they should be ashamed and repent of their wrongdoing? Do these words apply only to some future generation of this people who may happen to be living on the earth at the time of their fulfillment?

In answer to these questions read Ezekiel 37 – the vision of the valley of dry bones – and notice that *“the whole house of Israel”* is the subject under discussion, and that God promises to *“open their graves and bring them up out of their graves,”* and bestow upon them the great blessings enumerated.

See also the remaining part of the chapter and notice how all Israel – both houses, Judah and Ephraim – are included, and God will bless them and save them and cleanse them, etc., and David shall rule over them, etc. Surely no one can read this chapter without being strongly impressed with the thought that there is a wonderful future for this people in which all of them are to share, even *“the whole house of Israel.”*

Paul confirms all this in Romans 11. I have not space to observe this wonderful chapter particularly, but recommend the reader to study it carefully verse by verse, for the light it gives on the gracious ways of God is marvelous; and notice especially that the apostle’s conclusion is that *“all Israel shall be saved”* (:26).

I will throw out a thought here for the reader’s consideration. I shall not be able to amplify it but perhaps the reader will be interested enough in the subject to study it for himself. We have been considering the history of Israel in its past and the glorious prophecies of the future, solely with reference to this one people. I have no doubt but that these prophecies are to be fulfilled literally; they mean all that, but, mark you, they mean more. Israel stands for the race; the history of that people, their past and their future and God’s dealings with them is but a sample and a type and a promise of the future of the race; thus will God deal with mankind; through a similar experience shall they

all pass unto a like glorious destiny. Without going into this subject further here, I will refer the reader to the following passages: Deuteronomy 32:8; Isaiah 19:23, 25; Romans 11 (the whole chapter); I Corinthians 10:1-11; etc. Thus understood, the history of this people becomes of universal interest, and thereby a reason appears why it should occupy four-fifths of the sacred writings. Yet we must now pass on to the final illustration of THE TRUE BASIS OF REDEMPTION.

SODOM

The force of the foregoing argument drawn from the history of Israel might be somewhat evaded by asserting that the promises of future good to this people are to be fulfilled only to the righteous portion of the race who may be living when the time comes for the complete fulfillment of these prophecies.

Now as if to nullify such a parrying of the teaching of God’s Word, whereby the Holy One of Israel is *“limited”* (Psalms 78:41), the Lord has given us an illustration of this same truth which does not admit of any such explanation. In the case of the wicked Sodomites, there was no righteous among them at all; if there had been ten righteous persons in all the cities of the plain of Jordan they would not have been destroyed (Genesis 18). Furthermore, if there are any future blessings for them, it must be for the wicked dead, for they were all destroyed – not one escaped; they all perished in their sins – and whatever of good or ill there is for them in the future must necessarily be posthumous (Luke 17:29).

The record of the exceeding wickedness of this people and their awful destruction is familiar to every Bible reader (Genesis 19). Yet it is strange how many there are, even of those who are quite familiar with the written Word, who nevertheless have never noticed the wonderful prophecy of future restoration and blessing for these typical sinners. This prophecy is in Ezekiel 16.

I will briefly notice the leading points in the prophecy. If the reader will study all the references and carefully consider the subject without prejudice, I

think that he will admit that this prophecy, together with the connected passages referred to, fully warrants a hope of future good for "exceedingly" wicked Sodom (Genesis 13:13), and, by a fair inference, for all the wicked dead.

Now turn to the 16th chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy and read it through carefully. You will notice that the first part of the chapter is highly figurative; but as we get along into the middle part it becomes less and less figurative, until in the latter part of the chapter the figure is dropped altogether and the statements are in plain and direct terms.

Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem are three contrasted cities. Sodom and Samaria are the younger and the older, or (margin) the lesser and the greater sister of Jerusalem. The idea is that all three are of the same family in sin, but Sodom is the least guilty of the three and Jerusalem the most guilty because the former city had the least light and Jerusalem the most; in fact the sin of Sodom was "*a very little thing*" in comparison to that of Jerusalem. We need not be surprised therefore, or in the least degree incredulous when we find future blessings promised to Jerusalem, if we find them also promised to less guilty Sodom.

We know that there are such blessings promised to Jerusalem; see, for example, the 40th and 60th chapters of Isaiah, the 30th and 31st of Jeremiah, the 20th and 36th of Ezekiel, the 2nd of Hosea, and many others; also the last part of this 16th of Ezekiel, as we shall notice presently. These are unmistakable promises of future blessings for Jerusalem and Israel; but are there any such blessings for the wicked Sodomites? Read on in the chapter – :53 and the two following read as follows:

I will turn again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters [the cities of the plain], ***and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters*** [the other cities of Israel] ***and the captivity of your captives in the midst of them; that you may bear your own shame, and may be ashamed of all that you have done, in that you are a comfort unto them; and your sisters, Sodom and***

her daughters, shall return to their former estate; and you and your daughters shall return to your former estate.

Now what does this remarkable prophecy mean? What does "*turn again their captivity*" mean? This is explained in the next verse – "*return to their former estate.*" What else can this mean, in the case of the Sodomites at least, but that God will bring these wicked people back again from the captivity of the grave (Ezekiel 16) and restore them to their former fleshly life? If not, then what?

Read the rest of the chapter and you will see that they are to be blessed and "*forgiven*" together with Samaria and Jerusalem. God will remember His covenant with Jerusalem "*in the days of her youth*" (:60), and will establish with her "*an everlasting covenant.*" Then she shall remember her ways and be ashamed when she shall receive her sisters, the elder and the younger – Samaria and Sodom – and they shall be given to her for "*daughters,*" yet not by her covenant – that is, the old covenant which she had broken – but by a new covenant which He will establish with her. She shall know the Lord, *i.e.*, she shall have "*life eternal*" (John 17:3), and she will remember and be confounded and never open her mouth any more, when the Lord has forgiven her all her sins.

There can be no doubt but that a future blessing is foretold here for Jerusalem, Samaria *and* Sodom; and in the case of the last named it must be a future blessing for the wicked dead; no other interpretation can be put upon the passage except it be forced upon it. Why should we wish to put any other interpretation upon it? Why should it be thought "*a thing incredible*" (Acts 26:8) that God should thus raise the wicked dead to be dealt with in grace and mercy? How else can the Word of God stand that we have been considering, that so plainly teaches, as we have seen, that God has His Own way at last and brings His creation to a successful issue, completing and perfecting His Own workmanship?

Let us look a little further at the case of Sodom and see how reasonable is this prophecy of its ►

future restoration and blessing, and how eminently in harmony it is with other Scripture. In :49-50 of this chapter *“the sin of Sodom”* is set forth, and we see that that sin is exactly the same as could be truthfully laid to the charge of every large city in the world today. Yet there is one sin, worse than all the rest, of which Sodom was not guilty, but the modern cities of Christendom are guilty of that same sin – it is this: the sin against light, the misuse of special privileges, the rejection of the truth, the denial of Christ.

Sodom never had such opportunities as these and therefore could not commit these sins; but modern cities do have these privileges and are therefore more guilty than ancient Sodom; this was just exactly what made the difference between Sodom and Jerusalem, so that the sin of the former (Sodom) was *“a very little thing”* compared to that of the latter (Jerusalem). Does it not seem strange that Sodom should be eternally lost without ever having any opportunity at all to obtain eternal life, especially so since Jesus expressly tells us that if Sodom had had this light it would not have perished as it did (Matthew 11: 20-24)?

On the ground that the doom of Sodom is eternal, the above considerations are inexplicable; but on the ground of this prophecy of the restoration and blessing of Sodom at some future time, every difficulty disappears, and we can plainly see how true it is that death cannot separate us from the love of God any more than *“any other creature”* (Romans 8:38-39).

It must not be overlooked also that this restoration of the wicked nations at some future time is not confined to Sodom alone. Moab, Ammon and Elam are to be similarly restored *“in the latter days”* (Jeremiah 48:47; 49:6, 39). Also read carefully the prophecy of Obadiah with reference to Edom, and note especially the last verse. Finally David makes this restoration of the nations universal when he says,

All nations that You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name; for You are great and do

wondrous things; You are God alone” (Psalm 86:9-10; c.f. Revelation 15:1-4).

Here, then, is the most positive evidence that the failure of the creature even to the extreme of physical death is no hindrance to the Creator in fully carrying out His original plan. Indeed, why should it be?

Is it because death is such a decided check to ourselves, and we stand so helpless and blank at the grave’s mouth utterly unable to go any further either in our love or hate, that we think God is equally helpless, and that death is to Him also a rock-bound coast with power to say to the great ocean of His mercy and love *“thus far shall you go but no farther”* (Job 38:11)? Or, is God simply able to imprison eternally His enemies without being able through all eternity to make them His friends? Or, again, shall the skill and power of the Almighty be baffled and nullified by some millions of bits of crude material, successfully resisting His workmanship, rendering all of His gracious efforts vain, and turning out after all wretched failure and ugly monstrosities, so that no choice is left to the Creator but to give over His efforts, and thrust these failures out of sight, or crush them out of existence forever?

In all of these questions I am looking at the matter solely from God’s standpoint, leaving out all consideration of man’s “freedom” and “responsibility.” This we have a right to do because He claims to be *“able even to subdue all things unto Himself”* (Philippians 3:21). He says He will *“reconcile all things unto Himself”* (Colossians 1:20), that *“every creature”* shall finally praise Him (Revelations 5:13), and He will be *“All in all”* (I Corinthians 15:58).

When the Lord God Almighty makes such declarations as these it is not for mortal man to raise obstacles and suggest objections, and wonder how the Lord can do this and that. It is enough that He is able, and He will; *the how* we can leave to His Own infinite resources.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE HOW

We are not however left entirely in the dark as to *the how*, as we have seen from the foregoing considerations. God can punish for wrongdoing with the utmost severity, as in the case of Sodom, and yet when it pleases Him He can restore those who have thus been destroyed under the rain of His righteous wrath, and can bring them to Himself, accomplishing fully in them the original purpose of His creation.

Thus “*He turns man to destruction and says, ‘Return, you children of men’*” (Psalm 90:3). He kills and makes alive; He wounds and His hands make whole; He has torn and He will heal us (Deuteronomy 32:39; I Samuel 2:6). Blessed be His Name forever, His power is unlimited! We are the clay, and He is the Potter (Isaiah 64:8), and thus the Great God and Father of all is “*a Faithful Creator.*”

A FAITHFUL CREATOR

Did the reader ever think of the significance of this expression? The apostle says,

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a Faithful Creator (I Peter 4:19).

According to the prevailing theological ideas it would be difficult to tell what God, as a Creator, has to do with the above described circumstances. If it had said God our heavenly Father, or God our Redeemer, or something of that kind, it would be perfectly explicable; but our Creator! Why, we are apt to think that creation is something accomplished and in the past, and then it was marred and afterwards patched up – partially – the damage not being wholly repaired. Can you not see, friend reader, that this idea is a mistake? God is *still* our CREATOR. The work is not yet finished; completion and perfection is not something that man once had and lost, but it is yet before him. The Almighty is the Great Workman, and we are “*His workmanship.*” Everything that comes to us

is part and parcel of the *creative process*, and all tends to the *grand consummation* of the divine Artificer’s glorious work.

GOD MY CREATOR

There is infinite comfort in this great truth. God as my Creator – still creating me – is responsible for my *final* completion. Hence that completion is *absolutely* sure.

I have therefore a *claim* on Him, I have a *right* to look to Him for help and succor in every time of need, and this claim, and this right, is fully recognized and acknowledged in this expression – “*A Faithful Creator.*”

Ah, it is most blessed to be able to say in the midst of trouble and overwhelming sorrow, “*I am Yours ... Your hands have made and fashioned me ... You will have desire to the work of your hands*” (Psalm 119:94, 73; Job 14:15).

Thus did Moses plead with God, as we have seen, daringly urging, not the people’s deserving, but God’s responsibility, as if to say, you have commenced this work, you are responsible for its completion; and the Lord accepts the plea and acts upon it. So, later in the history of this same people, the prophet, although he fully confesses and deeply deplores the sinful, undeserving character of the people, yet he urges the same plea, and receives a similar gracious response.

Read the 63rd and 64th chapters of Isaiah. First, we have that dreadful account of the treading of the winepress by the red-appareled One from Edom, and Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength. Yet this account is sandwiched in between the description of this same personage, speaking in righteousness and mighty to save, and (:7), the mention of the “*loving kindnesses*” and “*great goodness*” of the Lord; and then, as though to account for this kindness and goodness toward such an unworthy people, the prophet says (:8), “*For He says, ‘Surely they are My people, children that will not lie.’ so He was their Savior.*” An indulgent Father speaks of His children apologetically in ►

such a way as He desires them to be, and hopes they will be; and then He continues,

In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

Thus, He dealt with them in great mercy and love, because they were *“His people,”* and now note, *“But they rebelled, and vexed His holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.”* Notice again, *“Then He remembered the days of old, Moses, and His people, saying, ‘Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His holy Spirit within him?’”* Thus He goes on appealing to the Lord on the ground of His proprietorship of them, and the fact of former mercy and love. Again in the 16th verse we read,

Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not; You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; Your Name is from everlasting (Isaiah 63:16).

The prophet insists that God is their Father and Redeemer, although they had acted unworthy of the children of Abraham and had disgraced the name of Israel, yet still they would hold on to their relationship to God. Then again in the last verse of this same chapter, *“We are Yours.”* Notice the significance of this continued reiteration of God’s proprietorship of them, both as Father and as Owner, together with unstinted self-condemnation and humble confession of sin; and yet – *“We are Yours”*; *“Doubtless You are our Father”* – there is no doubt about it, notwithstanding its apparent unlikeliness: we are *“the tribes of Your inheritance,”* *“the people of Your holiness.”*

The same thought runs through the next chapter, (64) and the same assertion of relationship to God culminates in the eighth and ninth verses:

Now, O Lord, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You our Potter; and we all are the work of Your hand. Be not wroth [very angry; much exasperated] very sore [greatly, severely], O Lord, neither remember iniquity forever. Behold, see, we beseech You, we are all Your people.

How daring, and seemingly presumptuous is the claim! How vivid the expression of it – *“You are our Father”* – we insist upon that; You cannot disown us and, more than that, we are the clay and You our Potter and we are all the work of Your hand. O, what a word is this! It seems audacious thus to throw the responsibility upon God, and then with the utmost intensity and vividness to say, *“Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity forever. Behold, see, we beseech You – **we are all Your people.**”*

Do you catch the spirit of this Scripture? Do you note its deep significance? To the writer it is an admission of the responsibility of the Creator, and that admission carries with it a promise of final good to every creature, so that I do not marvel at all, nor is there any tax made upon my faith, when I am told that *“the whole creation”* (Romans 8:22) shall ultimately be delivered, and *“every creature”* (Revelation 5:13) shall finally praise God.

He is *my Redeemer*: redemption is a part of creation; creation is still in progress. The Creator is the *sole* responsible party for the final outcome, and thus we may commit ourselves unto God in all circumstances and with the utmost confidence, as unto *“a Faithful Creator.”*

This is THE TRUE BASIS OF REDEMPTION – God our Creator, responsible for His Own creation, and every attribute of His Being pledged to its successful completion. God is able, and He will. The creature may rest secure on that basis, his *sole plea in every time of need*, and the all-sufficient ground and full assurance of his deliverance and final triumph being, *“I AM THINE”*

(1895)

Dear Truth Seekers,

Greetings in the glorious grace of our Father, and in the wonderful name of His Son, our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

It is my joy to have the space for an editorial in this issue. Our past few issues have been so full that I have not had the space to share a personal word with you. Know that I love each of you, and count it an honor and a privilege to come to you each week in this way.

Our 200th Issue

We are glad to bring you this enlarged, special issue of the *Bible Student's Notebook (BSN)*. It is hard to believe that we are already at our 200th issue. We published our first issue in May, 1989. It started out as an occasional periodical, before becoming a weekly in December, 2007. My constant prayer has been that these pages will be used of God to strengthen His dear saints, and bring glory to Himself.

Sharing the truth that I have learned from my personal studies truly has been a lifelong passion. The topics that I have dealt with have certainly not been mainstream. It has always been my desire to try to keep an open mind regarding truth. I have always sought to encourage our readers to be like the Bereans, who “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11), and to “prove all things” (I Thessalonians 5:21). This spirit has personally led me through a lifetime of transition – correcting and adjusting my doctrinal views.

I certainly do not claim infallibility for the contents of the *BSN*. It is simply a platform whereby I can share with those who have an interest, things that I currently see. A close look at the past issues will reveal the many changes in my understanding over the years.

In the very first issue I wrote in the editorial a section called *Attitude*, which still reflects the passion of my heart:

We have no corner on truth, nor does anyone else. None possesses ‘all truth’ infallibly. Therefore we seek to fellowship with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and take pleasure in His precious Word. We agree with the words of George Whitefield when he said,

I truly love all that love the glorious Emmanuel, and though I cannot depart from the principles which I believe are clearly revealed in the Book of God, yet I can cheerfully associate with those that differ from me, if I have reason to think that they are united to our common Head.

We desire to avoid destructive “uniformity” and allow for differences of opinion. We don’t expect our readers to agree with everything that will appear within the pages of

this publication. But we do trust that you will study out the information and that it will stimulate further Bible study. As one editor has so well said,

I hope anyone following after me will go farther than I have gone in the search for truth, will see more of the word of God than I have seen, and will explore where I never dreamt treasures were to be found.

And do not be surprised if, from time to time, you read articles which reflect *change* from previous things which we have said or written. This is *progress*.

We simply ask that you keep an open Bible and an open mind.”

I could never have imagined where this attitude would have led in these ensuing two decades. What a great adventure is the life of faith! I must say that I eagerly look forward to the rest of my journey, and am thankful for those whom the Father has provided to share mutually in this divine quest.

This Issue: The True Basis of Redemption

The subject of this issue is *The True Basis of Redemption* (also available as a 47 page booklet, #1975, \$4.95). I am very excited to bring you this wonderfully powerful message. I have been looking forward to doing so for a few months now; but because of its size, I did not want to bring it to you in multiple issues – so our 200th issue seemed ideal!

This excerpt from it serves as a great summary of its contents:

This is the true basis of Redemption – God our Creator, responsible for His Own creation, and every attribute of His being pledged to its successful completion. Man's part of the work, although necessary and important, is subordinate and intermediate – God is able, and He will. The creature may rest secure on that basis – the all-sufficient ground and full assurance of his deliverance and final triumph in the redemption of Jesus Christ.

Arthur P. Adams

This is not the first study that we have published in the *BSN* from the pen of Arthur P. Adams (1847-1925). This, along with the other articles, was taken from his periodical *The Spirit of the Word* published 124 years ago.

Previous installments of Adam’s writings that we have carried in the *BSN* are:

All Things (#75)
The Reconciliation of All (#74)
God's Attention (#75)
God Will Find a Way (#99)

God's Workmanship (#99)
Trust (#102)
The Purpose of Trials (#111)
The Purpose of Evil (#116)
Purpose in Creation (#187)
Failure (#189)
The Spirit of the Word & Theological Reversals (#192)

Robert L. Short: Asleep in Christ

If you do not remember his writings, I encourage you to read these great articles again. Even though Adams wrote over one hundred years ago, in many ways his writings are just as fresh as if they had been written today. They have found a great place in my heart.

We have just learned that our brother Robert L. Short (1932-2009) of Little Rock, has fallen asleep in Christ. He was a former Presbyterian minister who came to embrace the salvation of all. He authored a number of books that conveyed this glorious message, including a book that we carry, *Short Meditations on the Bible and Peanuts* (#4105, 143 page PB, \$14.95).¹ He utilized Charles M. Schulz' Peanuts characters to explain, among other things, the doctrine of universal salvation. Most people do not know that Schulz himself also believed Jesus would ultimately save all mankind.

Adams was born in 1845. He was married to Ophelia ("Addie"). It is always interesting for me to note the journey through which the Lord brings others in their pursuit of truth. Adams's journey was an interesting one indeed.

My last correspondence with brother Short was just last year. He was encouraging me on my book, *The Salvation of All*.

Rest well dear brother; we will see you in the morning.

He was a Methodist minister whose independent study of the Scriptures led him to separate from his denomination in 1878. For a short while he was acquainted with Charles Russell, and then with Nelson Barbour. Barbour was purported to have held to what some then called "Rellyism" (Universal Reconciliation). Adams disassociated with them early in the 1880s. He then became associated with John Paton (1843-1922 – See his biographical sketch in BSN #166). One source states that "Adams became a significant force among those opposing Zion's Watch Tower."

My Latest Book

Speaking of my book, *The Salvation of All*, we now have in stock an abridgment of it, entitled, *Nothing Will Be Lost! – The Truth About God's Good News*. It is an 88-page paperback designed as a give-away edition, with quantity pricing. Chapters include:

In 1885 he became the editor of the monthly periodical *The Spirit of the Word*, of Beverly, MA. He published it for at least 22 years (as it was listed in the 1907 *A Guide to the Current Periodicals and Serials of the United States and Canada*; by H.O. Severance). He also published many booklets and books, including *Bible Harmony*. He died in 1925, presumably at his last known residence of Poughkeepsie, New York.

The Salvation of All
 God's All-Inclusive All
 The Beauty of God's Holiness
 Fear: An Elementary Education
 World Reconciliation
 Nothing Will Be Lost
 My Journey to Universal Reconciliation

Single copy price is (#3750) \$9.⁹⁵
 The 10-pack price is (#3751) \$59.⁹⁵

Wonderful Fellowship in PA & OH

Join with us in helping to get God's Good News out to others!

In June we had two wonderful fellowship opportunities. These were times of great teaching and personal fellowship with fellow-members of God's ecclesia.

Until next week, my love to you!

We gathered for three days with saints in **Chagrin Falls, OH**. Our fellowship host was Ted McDivitt. We had the privilege of meeting a number of saints for the first time. It was also our joy to be able to teach and share our testimony. Others who taught at this fellowship were: Don Blast (Ontario), Matt Brungard (Ohio), Ken Clinton (Tennessee), Rick Farwell (South Carolina), Dean Hough (Michigan), Tony Nungesser (Michigan), and Dan Sheridan (Illinois). Our personal hosts were Greg and Barb Camacho.

Your fellow,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

We also gathered for two days with saints in **Youngwood, PA**. This fellowship was hosted by Joe Gardner and Bill Harter. We taught along with Brothers Jean Douglas (Georgia), and Martin Zender (Ohio). Again, we had a sweet time of fellowship.

"The great mass of Christians do not know God so as to trust Him, not only because they have not *the truth* in regard to Him, but also because they believe many *lies* about Him. They are led astray by their "blind leaders." It is a wonder that Christians trust Him as much as they do, when by their horrid ideas of Him they make Him out to be anything but a God of love, worthy of trust." – Arthur P. Adams, 1885