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"Keeping Covenant" Archive

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Articles by Tom & Katie Stewart

"And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like Thee, in Heaven above, or on Earth beneath,
Who keepest covenant and mercy with Thy servants that walk before Thee with all their heart"

(1Kings 8:23).

God keeps His Word, and expects the same of us.

From the beginning of man's history, the Creator has progressively made Himself known through His Word and works. "Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?" (Jeremiah 23:23). Though man often complains that life has no instruction manual, the Faithful God has always made Himself known to man. "1 God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 hath in these Last Days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1-2). The very fact that the Son of God, Who is the "Word of Life" (1John 1:1), came into this world as human flesh, demonstrates *the importance that God places upon making His Word known*. "19 For it pleased the Father that in Him [Jesus] should all fulness dwell... 2:3 In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge... 9 For in Him [Jesus] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 1:19; 2:3, 9).

Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, which Ussher's Chronology places at 1004 BC, indicates the understanding that Israel's godly king possessed of the character of God, about 3,000 years after man's creation. "There is no God like Thee, in Heaven above, or on Earth beneath, Who keepest covenant [i.e., performs His agreement or contract] and mercy with Thy servants that walk before Thee with all their heart" (1Kings 8:23). Whatever else that could be said of the Living God, Solomon knew that *Jehovah keeps His Word*, which binds Him to the Saints with an ironclad covenant. "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the Faithful God, which keepeth covenant [Hebrew, berith] and mercy with them that love Him and keep His Commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9). Of course, *all that remains, is for man to be correspondingly faithful at keeping his word to God*. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1John 2:6).

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The Promise of the Spirit

Part 1

"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the Promise of the Spirit through faith"

(Galatians 3:14).

by Tom Stewart

6-5-2000

Thesis: The possibility that a Christian can walk in perfect love, yielding to God entire obedience, is secured to the Saints by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Proof: Under the present New Covenant, the Covenant Keeping God has fulfilled to His people the Promise, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2Corinthians 6:16). And, that blessed Promise was originally given through Abraham, before even the Old Covenant came to Moses on Mount Sinai. Jehovah promised Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the Earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). **The Abrahamic Covenant is the promised blessing of "all families of the Earth" (12:3), while the New Covenant represents the fulfillment of that Promise in the form of the Indwelling Spirit of God blessing us "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).** "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the Promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14).

Notice that the promised Spirit, Who causes us to walk in sanctifying, holy obedience, is ours through faith, and that He came by means of the Abrahamic Covenant. The LORD Jesus Christ "took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16) that He might atone for the sins of mankind, and also, that He might give to His Church the Holy Spirit of Promise (Ephesians 1:13) at Pentecost. In particular, the reception of the Blessed Paraklete was through the exercise of faith-- just as Abraham trusted God to fulfill God's Word to him. "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Galatians 3:9). By faith, the apostles gathered in the upper room to receive the Holy Spirit, Who is the "Promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). Today, if we are Christians, then "are [we] Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the Promise" (Galatians 3:29).

The terms *New Testament* and *Indwelling Holy Spirit* are much taken for granted today, insomuch that they do not convey the power of what the Almighty originally intended for them to represent. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). In Charles G. Finney's August 14th 1839 lecture in "The Oberlin Evangelist" on "The Covenants", he remarked:

"I have said the promise of this covenant [the New Covenant, where *covenant* is the Hebrew word *berith*, or New Testament; and, where *testament* is the synonymous Greek word *diatheke*] became due at the day of Pentecost. The extent to which it has been fulfilled and will be fulfilled has depended and will continue to depend upon the extent to which it is understood, believed and embraced by the church. From the nature of the case, it is a covenant to be made with individuals. No one can receive it but by faith. And as the promise is now due, it is the privilege and duty of every soul to lay hold on full salvation."

Finney implied in this statement that "full salvation" was not merely the blessed assurance of a future home in Heaven, but also, the blessedness of a **present**, sanctified walk of obedience. "5 But whoso keepeth His Word, in Him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. 6 He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1John 2:5-6). [For further clarification of the concept of walking without sinning, please see our article, "Must We Then Sin?" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Must.We.Then.Sin.html> --] The blessedness of the Spirit's indwelling is not simply to make the Saints happy, but also **that we might be enabled to walk consistently and obediently holy**. That forms new meaning to this concept of *keeping Covenant* with God. "23 And this is His Commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us Commandment. 24 And he that keepeth His Commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And **hereby we know that He abideth in us**, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (3:23-24).

Each generation of Saints must discover for itself the actual value of the Holy Spirit's New Testament blessing. "As for Me, this is My Covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My Words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever" (Isaiah 59:21). Too often, rather than teaching the Church how the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence has been intended by God to make us to walk in loving obedience, modern teachers:

- (1) negate or minimize the necessity or possibility of entire obedience to God, i.e., "Supposing that gain is Godliness: from such withdraw thyself" (1Timothy 6:5),
- (2) neglect the Holy Spirit's indwelling with doctrinal statements that take for granted or overlook His presence, i.e., "[Paul] said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (Acts 19:2), or
- (3) equate an ecstatic, emotional state of happiness with the Spirit's purpose for indwelling the Saints, i.e., "2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy... 4 traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2Timothy 3:2, 4).

The Old Testament has amassed passage upon passage that attests to the Almighty's intention of blessing His people with His Spirit. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring" (Isaiah 44:3). It is plain that the LORD's intention for His people has always been securing their heartfelt obedience. "But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33). Not simply a temporary obedience, but an Everlasting Covenant of ongoing obedience, is the Promise of God. "And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (32:40). How can the Church today **not** believe that the Holy Spirit was given to secure the obedience of the individual Believer? "And I will put My Spirit within you, and **cause you** to walk in My Statutes, and ye shall keep My Judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:27).

After Pentecost, the Apostle Peter led the other apostles in answering the Jews, that God's Spirit is **given to those that obey Him**, i.e., just as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel prophesied. "29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men... 32 And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath **given to them that obey Him**" (Acts 5:29, 32). In other words, the "obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26) begets further obedience and faith; but, the entire process of love, faith, and obedience is the product of *the working of the Spirit of God*. "And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father" (John 6:65). Even the wisdom of Solomon realized that man needed God's assistance to bend or incline him in the direction of loving obedience. "That He may incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His Commandments, and His Statutes, and His Judgments, which He commanded our fathers" (1Kings 8:58).

Conclusion

Under the New Covenant or Testament, it is generally understood that individual Christians possess the Holy Spirit. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9). It may now be considered common knowledge that God dwells not only WITH His people, but IN His people. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1Corinthians 3:16). Further, this new, indwelling relationship is the product of the New Birth. "3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:3-7).

But, **the grand design of the Spirit's indwelling is to secure the perfect love, complete obedience, or entire sanctification that has ALWAYS been demanded by the Moral Law**. "36 Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great Commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40). This Law of Love is understood in the New Testament as the Law of Christ. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Always, it has been man's imperative to understand how to submit to this Law; and, now it is plain that a Covenant as old as Abraham has been **fulfilled** through the New Covenant's giving of the Holy Spirit-- which, **BY FAITH secures for us perfect obedience to God**. "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the Promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14).

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless

unto the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23).

Maranatha!

For a more complete development of the thesis of this article, read Charles G. Finney's lectures in "The Oberlin Evangelist" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Finney.Oberlin.Evangelist.html> --, in particular,

- "The Promises" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.The.Promises.html --,
- "The Holy Spirit of Promise" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Holy.Spirit.Promise.html --, and
- "The Covenants" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.The.Covenants.html --.

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A Covenant of Peace

Part 2

"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of My Peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee"

(Isaiah 54:10).

by Tom Stewart

6-15-2000

Thesis: The certainty that a Christian will live his life in peace is personally assured through the Living God's Covenant of Peace.

Proof: Man negatively defines peace as the absence of war or hostilities with himself; while, more importantly, *God positively represents His peace as the active, joyful submission to His will, which is attended with a lack of conflict with Himself.* "And, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in Earth, or things in Heaven" (Colossians 1:20). With God, True Peace is only found in and through Jesus Christ, Whose "Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The temporary tranquility that may come from man's lack of mortal combat with man, is fleeting; and still, it belies the truth that man's peace can only affect the outward, and that, only for a short time. "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2).

In contrast, the peace offered by God to all those who submit by faith to the sacrifice of His Son for their sins, is an Eternal Healing, and "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of [Christ's] hand" (John 10:28). "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Concerning the superiority of God's peace, our LORD Jesus Christ comfortingly promised, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). And, Christ's peace permeates completely the inner man. "6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Spiritual peace causes us to be unruffled by any provocations. "Great peace have they which love Thy Law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

Conflict attends man's relationship to man, while abiding in this world. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1). Man's own wickedness deprives him of peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:21). However, when peace has been made with God through faith in Christ Jesus, the newly born Saint has the opportunity of experiencing True Peace. "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace"

(Luke 7:50). The peace that God gives, always begins with the reconciliation of man through Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the Cross to atone for the sins of mankind. "20 And, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in Earth, or things in Heaven. 21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled" (Colossians 1:20-21).

Though Jesus pledged His people tribulation while in this world, He has comforted us that He has overcome the world. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Further, He has revealed to us that we, too, may have victory over the world through faith. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1John 5:4). Upon this principle of faith, i.e., "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2Corinthians 5:7), God has dealt with His people, and expects us to personally receive His covenants, just as the Roman centurion trusted Jesus to heal his servant. "The centurion answered and said, LORD, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the Word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Matthew 8:8). God rewarded the centurion according to his faith. "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour" (8:13).

There is such a thing as a Covenant of Peace that may be claimed in faith by the Children of God as present protection from the ravages of the enemy. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of My Peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:10). *As with all of God's covenants, the faith exercised by the recipient, affects the implementation of the covenant*, i.e., "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). Consequently, this newfound peace with God may be pressed to mean more than future serenity in Heaven or even present tranquility of heart, but may also be extended to mean peace with our enemies. "When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7). It must be remembered that it is God's Promise-- not man's assurances-- that must be trusted by the Saints for the fulfillment of His Covenant of Peace. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

God's Covenant of Peace is ours by faith, even if the authority over us seems to be against us. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). Our confidence in the LORD God causes us to put great stock in His Words. "The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction" (Jeremiah 15:11). It is unimportant that our enemies may appear to be so impressive to our physical senses, because it is our faith that will apprehend God and "win Christ" (Philippians 3:8). "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). Knowing this, therefore, the Apostle Paul exhorts us, "1 that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour" (1Timothy 2:1-3).

Conclusion

The one who needs most the Covenant of Peace, is the one that is most providentially directed to receive it, because "my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). It has been the experience of the Saints throughout the ages that God's Covenant of Peace has been available to those who have been led to lay hold of it. "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Psalm 91:10). "There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief" (Proverbs 12:21). It is just when the enemy casts the greatest shadow, that we need most to turn to the Promises of God and trust in Jehovah's Covenant of Peace. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19). Just as God answered when Jehoshaphat cried out in his time of need, we, too, ought to trust in God's Covenant of Peace for our present deliverance. "And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them to depart from him" (2Chronicles 18:31). Better yet, we ought to take the initiative, foresee the evil coming, and claim **now** the Covenant of Peace, i.e., "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3).

God has supplied the Covenant, but we must fulfil the always present condition of faith, to receive the benefits of His Peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isaiah 26:3). The certainty is there that we may live a life of peace; but, the extent of that peace is limited only by our faith. "Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matthew 15:28). "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). May we be able to confess like Solomon that God has blessed us with His peace, i.e., "the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side" (1Kings 5:4).

Maranatha!

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God of the Rear Guard

Part 3

"For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you;
and the God of Israel will be your Rereward [literally, Rear Guard]"

(Isaiah 52:12).

by Tom Stewart

7-27-2000

Thesis: Because man was not designed by the Creator with eyes in back of his head, God has covenanted with His people to protect and guard them from behind.

Proof: In the spirit of the world, man's selfishness makes much of looking out for his own interests, especially watching out or protecting his back. "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them" (1John 4:5). "After all," they would argue, "if we do not look out for ourselves, who else will?" "This wisdom descendeth not from Above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:15). And, the "wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (1Corinthians 3:19). What we should consider, is that **God intentionally fashioned us with the inability to watch our own back, so that we would have to depend upon Him.** "14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the LORD will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:14-15).

It is a tribute to God that He created us in His own moral likeness. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (Genesis 1:27). Everything about our creation, speaks of the wisdom and love of God, for how could the Creator's work be anything but "very good" (1:31)? "I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psalm 139:14). Our eyes illustrate how the Creator intended for us to see, i.e., with a single focus, both physically and spiritually. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of Light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34). Attentiveness to hear what is spoken to the head and the heart, is the Creator's purpose in giving us "ears to hear" (Mark 4:9). Our mouths, hands, and feet represent how we are to use the features and graces God has bestowed upon us. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:7). It is instructive that the "breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14) of what is called the Christian's "whole armour of God" (6:11), armors the front, leaving the back exposed (using the Roman soldier as the illustration.) Thus, it necessitates an offensive stance facing the enemy, as well as, strategic planning on a large enough scale to keep the enemy from attacking from the rear, which is just what is intended by God promising to "be your **Rereward** [literally, **Rear Guard**]" (Isaiah 52:12). "8 Keep me as the apple of the Eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings, 9 from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about" (Psalm 17:8-9).

When man acts wickedly, he takes great pride that he can take care of himself. "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17). Self replaces the Almighty. "For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful" (Psalm 36:2). The foolishness of his heart is summarized with the thought, "There is no God" (14:1). How can anyone forget God so thoroughly? Whenever we commit the least sin, at that moment, we have changed from Light to darkness, from Love to hate, from Devotion to God to dedication to self. "For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Then, when we continue to **refuse to admit** our sin, i.e., "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us" (1John 1:8), we degenerate into an even more self-deceived state, e.g., "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2Timothy 3:13). Before long, we may even surprise others with the degradation of our conduct, while we continue to obstinately and self-righteously maintain our innocence. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is NOT in us" (1John 1:10). Thus, we pervert God's original plan for our loving submission to His command to

"have dominion" (Genesis 1:28) over the planet, into an ultimate declaration of our independence from God. "4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. 6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity" (Psalm 10:4, 6). [For a more thorough discussion of what is sin, why we sin, and how not to sin, please see our article, "Must We Then Sin?" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Must.We.Then.Sin.html> --.]

As the Church approaches the end of this Church Age, the Saints who are now alive, must address the concept that Someone must be guarding the last of us, as we leave this planet, i.e., by Pre-Tribulational Rapture, Pre-Wrath Rapture, etc. "19 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and **went behind them**; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and **stood behind them**: 20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night" (Exodus 14:19-20). [Please read our article, "Harpazo: The Scriptural Concept of Rapture" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Prophecy/Harpazo.html> -- concerning the general idea of the Rapture, and "The Seventh Trumpet and the Second Rapture" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Prophecy/The.7th.Trump.2nd.Rapture.html> -- concerning the Scripturalness of a Pre-Wrath Rapture. And, "Thy Hidden Ones" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Prophecy/Thy.Hidden.Ones.html> -- gives a discussion of God's protection, especially of Tribulation Saints, by means of hiding; while bringing into perspective the possibility of *multiple* Raptures.] Just as the angel of God served as Israel's rear guard from Pharaoh's chariots, the LORD Jesus understands the difficult situation of His people, who are the "Remnant of His Heritage" (Micah 7:18), that vex their "righteous soul from day to day with [the world's] unlawful deeds" (2Peter 2:8). By faith, before the enemy, who spread themselves out against the Saints as a "green bay tree" (Psalm 37:35) to exterminate the Faithful, *our God will interpose Himself, watching our back side, to deliver us; even if He must Rapture us*. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

Elisha's deliverance from the king of Syria illustrates how willing God is to protect-- *from the front, as well as the rear*-- those who put their trust in Him to do it. "8 Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. 9 And the man of God [Elisha] sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. 10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. 11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? 12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. 13 And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. 14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host [of the Syrians] compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his [Elisha's] servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 16 And he [Elisha] answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire *round about Elisha*" (2Kings 6:8-17).

Conclusion

Just as we understand the specific Promise of Isaiah 52:12, "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your Rereward [Rear Guard]", to be God's Covenant of *Himself being our Rear Guard*, all of God's Promises may be utilized as Covenants for His protection. "Whereby are given unto us Exceeding Great and Precious Promises: that by These ye might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having **escaped** the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Peter 1:4). [Please visit the "Promises" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/WStS.Promises.html> -- section of our website, for an extensive listing and discussion of the Promises of God.] **We ought to walk with confidence, when we consider that the God of Omnipotence not only goes before us, but He guards us from behind!** "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

As C. H. Spurgeon -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.Haddon.Spurgeon.html> -- so aptly stated about the Promises of God:

"A PROMISE from God may very instructively be compared to a check payable to the order. It is given to the believer with the view of bestowing upon him some good thing... He is to take the promise, and endorse it with his own name by personally receiving it as true... This done, he must believingly *present* the promise to the Lord, as a man presents a check at the counter of the Bank. He must plead it by prayer, expecting to have it fulfilled" --from the Preface of Spurgeon's "Faith's Checkbook" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Spurgeon/Faith.Checkbook/Faiths.Checkbook.Preface.html> --.

"4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and He heard me out of His Holy Hill. Selah. 5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me. 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me *round*

about. 7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. 8 Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: Thy blessing is upon Thy people. Selah" (Psalm 3:4-8).

Amen, and Amen.

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Thou Maintainest My Lot

Part 4

"The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot"

(Psalm 16:5).

by Tom Stewart

12-18-2000

Thesis: Every Saint may have absolute certainty that the Almighty God will continue to sustain his lot in life-- spiritual, physical, emotional, financial, etc.-- even in the face of all apparent opposition.

Proof: If the Holy Spirit has impressed upon you the importance of Christ's ability to maintain all aspects of your walk with Him-- spiritual, physical, emotional, financial, etc.-- then the Psalmist's assertion, "Thou maintainest my lot", is more than interesting reading. The Saints throughout the ages have added their own "Amen" to the truth of that statement. When Jacob journeyed to Padanaram, "he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the Earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12). God's Providential Provision impressed Jacob so much that "Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God" (28:20-21). The Immutable God Who said, "I change not" (Malachi 3:6), still desires to demonstrate His faithfulness in Provision and Maintenance of our lot in life, through "His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Elijah

Scripture affords us the opportunity of intimately glimpsing at the lives of those whom God has maintained their lot. "33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained Promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Hebrews 11:33-34). For example, Elijah the Tishbite [Read "Elijah and the Prophets of Baal" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Stories/Stories.of.Faith/Elijah.Prophets.of.Baal.html> --], a prophet of the Old Covenant, had not the fuller revelation given to the Apostle Paul that "God [would] supply all [our] need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19); but, Elijah had the bold confidence in the Almighty to pray for a 3 1/2 year drought of starvation upon the land which sustained him. Elijah knew that Jehovah Jireh "will provide" (Genesis 22:8), so it probably did not surprise him when the "Word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee" (1Kings 17:9).

Coming to Zarephath, he found the widow woman gathering sticks, and said, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink" (17:10). As she went to fetch it, Elijah called out, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand" (17:11). The widow, a Sidonian of Jezebel's home country, replied, "As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die" (17:12). What pathos, but what Providence, that this Gentile widow would encounter a mortal man who had just come from the Brook Cherith, where the Living God sustained him by the ravens! "And the ravens brought [Elijah] bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook" (17:6). "There is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" (1Samuel 14:6).

We see here that God not only looked out for His anointed prophet Elijah, but cared for the physical welfare of a Gentile widow and her son. And, no doubt, this widow of Zarephath-- like Ruth-- came to "trust under the shadow of [the God of Israel's] Wings" (Psalm 36:7), "for Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). Elijah spoke words of comfort unto her, "Fear not; go and

do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the Earth" (1Kings 17:13-14). "For all the Promises of God in [the Messiah] are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2Corinthians 1:20). Just as the Faithful God's Word "shall not return unto [Him] void, but It shall accomplish that which [He] please[th]" (Isaiah 55:11), He fulfilled the prophet's Word to the widow. "15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the Word of the LORD, which He spake by Elijah" (1Kings 17:15-16).

David

David, the shepherd King of Israel, preceded his coronation to the throne with fugitive days of fleeing from Saul. "1 O LORD my God, in Thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me... 10 My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart" (Psalm 7:1,10). David's plea for deliverance found ready ears in the LORD God, though David's continued flight from Saul may have given the appearance that the Almighty was unwilling to deliver David. "1 How long wilt Thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (13:1-2). David the Psalmist concluded that his deliverances were divinely forestalled to accomplish the appropriate character development that is gained from the understanding of the Word of God. "67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word... 71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy Statutes" (119:67, 71). Blessed is the man who comprehends the value and necessity of suffering, even in these New Testament times. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). A. T. Pierson wrote of George Mueller's physical infirmities:

"Even his sore affliction, seen in the light of such prayer-- prayer itself illuminated by the word of God-- became radiant; and his soul was brought into that state where he so delighted in the will of God as to be able from his heart to say that he would not have his disease removed until through it God had wrought the blessing it was meant to convey" (excerpted from Chapter 10 "The Word of God and Prayer" of "George Mueller of Bristol").

It is a confident trust that allows ourselves to be placed entirely in someone else's hands, to dispose of us as they see fit. "My times are in Thy hand" (Psalm 31:15). This was the attitude of David, who recognized that Jehovah maintained his lot. "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the Righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (37:25). Jehovah Jesus has been the "Same yesterday, and to day, and [will be] for ever" (Hebrews 13:8); therefore, His supply of David is our certainty for our supply today and tomorrow. "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Maintaining our lot means that we, like David, need deliverances of body, soul, and spirit. "And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23). And, like David, Peter, and Paul, we can appreciate the need for deliverance from Satan, the "roaring lion, [who] walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1Peter 5:8). "17 Notwithstanding the LORD stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the LORD shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His Heavenly Kingdom: to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2Timothy 4:17-18).

Christ Jesus

We agree with Paul. It is "without controversy [that] great is the Mystery of Godliness: [that] God was manifest in the flesh" (1Timothy 3:16). For the Eternally Begotten Son of God to incarnate in human flesh, preach to us the Sermon on the Mount, and acquaint us with the values of Eternity, demonstrates His commitment to maintain our lot for here and hereafter. Showing us that **our priorities must be properly set** for God to maintain our lot, He said, "Lay NOT up for yourselves treasures upon Earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: **but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (6:19-20). It was the 20th century missionary to the Auca Indians of Ecuador (1955)-- and martyr-- Jim Elliot, who wisely agreed with the Saviour, when he prophetically recorded on October 28th 1949 in his journal,

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose" (from "Through Gates of Splendor" by Elisabeth Elliot).

Our lack of understanding impedes our Saviour's ability from maintaining our lot. Why else would the Scriptures say, "Where there is no vision [Hebrew, chazown, meaning oracle, prophecy, or divine communication], the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18), unless the lack of understanding of the Holy Oracles would cause our lot to be diminished? And, what "lot maintaining"

understanding did our LORD give? Jesus taught us the Truth of the singleness of the eye, which the 19th century Charles G. Finney -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html> -- (1792-1875) labelled as the Unity of Moral Action, i.e., that we cannot be both holy and sinful at the same time. [Please read "Unity of Moral Action" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html> -- by Charles G. Finney] "21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the One, and love the other; or else he will hold to the One, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:21-24). Of what "lot maintaining" value, then, is this singleness of eye? If God maintains only the lot of the Righteous, then only when we are consciously walking apart from known sin, can He so bless us with sustenance, deliverance, and maintenance. "If we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from **all** sin" (1John 1:7). And, only when we are walking apart from known sin, can He bless us with the certainty that we will be blessed with the answer to our petition to maintain our lot. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (3:22).

So complete should our confidence be that the Heavenly Father will maintain our lot, that we are forbidden to expend our energy in sinful anxiety and worry, i.e., useless thought that has no positive effect. "25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? 28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:25-32). Did not the Psalmist record in Divine Writ, the certainty of the maintenance of the Godly? "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (Psalm 37:3). Was this not also the understanding of the Apostles? "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1Peter 5:7).

The Moral Law had already demanded in both the Old and New Testaments, what Jesus reported: "The first of all the Commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God is One LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the First Commandment. And the Second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other Commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31). What the Moral Law commanded, the LORD Jesus held out to the Earnest Seeker, the blessedness of the Spirit of that Law-- *not* the deadness of the letter or the corruptness of traditions. And, concerning the baseless traditions of man of how God will or will not maintain the Saints' lot, e.g. "God helps those who help themselves" [from Aesop's Fables, where Hercules advises a mortal stuck in the mud, 'The gods help them that help themselves'], *antiquity* is not *authority*, but may be only *vetustas erroris*-- the old age of error. Jesus settled the matter for the Righteous, of how to maintain their lot, when He said. "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:19-34).

George Mueller

Reflecting on how George Mueller -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/W.S.t.S.Voice.html#Mueller> -- (1805-1898) of Bristol, England trusted God for the daily provision of the sustenance of orphans-- still greater, he proved the willingness and ability of a Prayer Hearing God to maintain not only his, but the orphans' lot in the modern times of the 1800s. "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come" (Psalm 65:2). Certainly, George Mueller had the ready Promise of Jehovah, the True "Father of the Fatherless" (68:5), that He "relieveth the fatherless and widow" (146:9); but, Mueller's greater honor was his opportunity to demonstrate the faithfulness of God in answering the prayers of those who will trust Him. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (81:10). His biographer, A. T. Pierson, had a heartfelt sympathy with the principles of George Mueller's life and ministry; and, soon after Mueller's home going to the LORD, Pierson released a memoir of Mueller, "George Mueller of Bristol: And, His Witness to a Prayer Hearing God" (1899), which was authorized by James Wright, Mueller's son-in-law and successor. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly..." (James 5:17). George Mueller distinguished between the *gift of faith* and the *grace of faith*. When we "do or believe a thing where the not doing or believing would *not* be sin", it is the *gift of faith*, ["4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit... 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit" (1Corinthians 12:4, 9)]; while, the *grace of faith*, ["For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8)], is "where we do or believe what not to do or believe *would* be sin." And, seeing George

Mueller's "manner of life" (2Timothy 3:10), "they glorified God in [him]" (Galatians 1:24).

Pierson relates in his biography of Mueller:

"If few men have ever been permitted so to trace in the smallest matters God's care over His children, it is partly because few have so completely abandoned themselves to that care. He [Mueller] dared to trust Him, with whom the hairs of our head are all numbered, and who touchingly reminds us that He cares for what has been quaintly called 'the odd sparrow.' Matthew records (10:29) how two sparrows are sold for a farthing, and Luke (12:6) how five are sold for two farthings; and so it would appear that, when two farthings were offered, an odd sparrow was thrown in, as of little value that it could be given away with the other four. And yet even for that one sparrow, not worth taking account in the bargain, *God cares*. Not one of them is forgotten before God, or falls to the ground without Him. With what force then comes the assurance: 'Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows' [Matthew 10:31]" (from Chapter 5 "The Pulpit and the Pastorate" of "George Mueller of Bristol").

Conclusion

The words of the LORD Jesus to His disciples show us that He is concerned about maintaining our lot, even now. "I will not leave you comfortless [Greek, orphanos, meaning fatherless]; I will come to you" (John 14:18). Through such a vast outpouring of Divine Power through the Cross and at Pentecost, He has given us all things to care for us body, soul, and spirit.

"According as His Divine Power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto Life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2Peter 1:3). Will we believe Him? Will we trust the promises of Jehovah Jireh to maintain our lot? "Whereby are given unto us Exceeding Great and Precious Promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (1:4). May we be able to say in faith with the Psalmist, "Thou maintainest my lot" (Psalm 16:5).

Maranatha!

END OF COLLECTION