

NOTES
ON
THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

by

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"Things new and old."

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by

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Numbers 1 - Numbers 2

We now enter upon the study of the fourth grand division of the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses; and we shall find the leading characteristic of this book quite as strongly marked as that of any of the three books which have already engaged our attention.

- in the Book of Genesis, after the record of creation, the deluge, and the Babel dispersion, we have GOD's election of the seed of Abraham.
- in the book of Exodus, we have redemption.
- Leviticus gives us priestly worship and communion.
- in Numbers we have the walk and warfare of the wilderness.

Such are the prominent subjects of these most precious sections of inspiration, while, as might be expected, many other points of deepest interest are collaterally introduced. The Lord, in His great mercy, has led us through the study of Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus; and we can reckon on Him, with confidence, to conduct us through the Book of Numbers. May His Spirit lead the thoughts, and guide the pen, so that not a sentence may be committed to writing that is not in strict accordance with His holy mind! May every page and every paragraph bear the stamp of His approval, and be, at once, conducive to His glory, and the permanent profit of the reader!

"And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of

Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel; thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies" (Numbers 1:1-3).

Here we find ourselves, at once, "**in the wilderness,**" where those only are to be taken account of who are "**able to go forth to war.**" This is strongly marked.

- in the book of Genesis the seed of Israel were in the loins of their father Abraham.
- in the Book of Exodus they were in the brick-kilns of Egypt.
- in Leviticus they were gathered round the tabernacle of the congregation.
- in Numbers they are seen in the wilderness.

Then, again, in full keeping with the above, and in confirmation thereof,

- in Genesis we hearken to the call of GOD in election;
- in Exodus we gaze upon the Blood of the Lamb in redemption;
- in Leviticus we are almost entirely occupied with the worship, and service of the sanctuary.

But no sooner have we opened the book of Numbers than we read of men of war, of armies, of standards, of camps, and trumpets sounding alarm.

All this is highly characteristic, and marks off the book on which we are now entering as one of special interest, value, and importance to the Christian. Each book of the Bible, each section of the inspired canon, has its own distinct place and object. Each has its own niche assigned to it by its divine Author. We must not entertain, for a moment, the thought of instituting any comparison in point of intrinsic value, interest, and importance. All is divine, and therefore perfect. The Christian reader fully and heartily believes this. He reverently sets his seal to the truth of the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture - of all Scripture, and of the Pentateuch amongst the rest; nor is he to be moved, one hairs breadth, from this by the bold and impious attacks of infidels, ancient, medieval, or modern. Infidels and rationalists may traffic in their unhallowed reasonings. They may exhibit their enmity against the book and its author; but the pious Christian rests, notwithstanding all, in the simple and happy belief that "**All Scripture is given by inspiration God.**"

But while we must utterly reject the idea of any comparison as to authority and value, we may, with, much profit, compare the contents, design, and scope of the various books of the Bible. And the more profoundly we meditate upon these, the more forcibly shall we be struck with the exquisite beauty, infinite wisdom, and wonderful precision of the volume a whole, and of each distinct division the thereof.

The inspired writer never swerves from the direct object of the book, whatever that object may be. You will never find anything in any one book of the Bible which is not in the most perfect harmony with the main design of that book. To prove and illustrate this statement would lead us through the entire canon of Holy Scripture, and hence we shall not attempt it. The intelligent Christian does not need the proof, however much he might be interested in the illustration. He takes his stand upon the great fact that the book, as a whole, and in all its parts, is from GOD; and His heart reposes in the conclusion, that in that whole, and in each of those parts, there is not

a jot or a tittle which is not in every way worthy of the divine Author.

Hear the following words from the pen of one who expresses himself as "deeply convinced of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, given to us of GOD, and confirmed in this conviction by daily and growing discoveries of their fullness, depth, and perfectness, ever more sensible, through grace, of the admirable perfection of the parts, and the wonderful connection of the whole."

"The Scriptures," says this writer, "have a living source, and living power has pervaded their composition: hence their infiniteness of bearing, and the impossibility of separating any one part from the whole, because one GOD is the living center from which all flows; one CHRIST the living center round which all its truth circles, and to which it refers, though in various glory; and one Spirit the divine sap which carries its power from its source in GOD to the minutest branches of the all-uniting truth, testifying of the glory, the grace, and the truth of Him whom GOD sets forth as the object, and center, and head of all that is in connection with Himself, of Him who is, withal, GOD over all, blessed for evermore. . . . The more - beginning from the utmost leaves and branches of this revelation of the mind of GOD, by which we have been reached when far from Him - we have traced it up towards its center, and thence looked down again towards its extent and diversity, the more we learn its infiniteness, and our own feebleness of apprehension. We learn, blessed be GOD, this, that the love which is its source is found in unmingled perfectness and fullest display of those manifestations of it which have reached us even in our ruined state. The same perfect GOD of love is in it all. But the unfoldings of divine wisdom in the counsels in which GOD has displayed Himself remain ever to us a subject of research, in which every new discovery, by increasing our spiritual intelligence, makes the infiniteness of the whole, and the way in which it surpasses all our thoughts, only more and more clear to us."

It is truly refreshing to transcribe such lines from the pen of one who has been a profound student of Scripture for forty years.

They are of unspeakable value, of a moment when so many are ready to cast a slight upon the sacred volume. Not that we are, in any wise, dependent upon human testimony in forming our conclusions as to the divine origin of the Bible, inasmuch as these conclusions rest upon a foundation furnished by the Bible itself. GOD's Word, as well as His work, speaks for itself; it carries its own credentials with it; it speaks to the heart; it reaches down to the great moral roots of our being; it penetrates the very innermost chambers of the soul; it shows us what we are; it speaks to us as no other book can speak; and, as the woman of Sychar argued that JESUS must be the CHRIST because He told her all things that ever she did, so may we say in reference to the Bible, It tells us all that ever we did, is not this the Word of GOD?

No doubt it is only by the Spirit's teaching that we can discern and appreciate the evidence and credentials with which Holy Scripture presents itself before us; but still it does speak for itself, and needs not human testimony to make it of value to the soul. We should no more think of having our faith in the Bible established upon man's testimony in its favour than we should think of having it shaken by his testimony against it.

It is of the very last possible importance, at all times, but more especially at a moment like the present, to have the heart and mind established in the sound truth of the divine authority of Holy

Scripture - its plenary inspiration - its all-sufficiency for all purposes, for all people, at all times. There are two hostile influences abroad, namely, infidelity, on the one hand, and superstition, on the other. The former denies that GOD has spoken to us in His Word. The latter admits that He has spoken, but it denies that we can understand what He says, save by the interpretation of the Church.

Now, while there are very many who recoil with horror from the impiety and audacity of infidelity, they do not see that superstition, just as completely, deprives them of the Scriptures.

For wherein, let us ask, lies the difference between denying that GOD has spoken, and denying that we can understand what He says? In either case: are we not deprived of the Word of GOD? Unquestionably. If GOD cannot make me understand what He says - if He cannot give me the assurance that it is He Himself who speaks, I am, in no wise, better off than if He had not spoken at all. If GOD's Word is not sufficient, without human interpretation, then it cannot be GOD's Word at all. That which is insufficient is not GOD's Word.

We must admit either of two things, namely:

- that GOD has not spoken at all, or
- if He has spoken, His Word is perfect.

There is no neutral ground in reference to this question. Has GOD given us a revelation? Infidelity says, "No." superstition says, "Yes, but you cannot understand it without human authority." Thus are we, in the one case as well as in the other, deprived of the priceless treasure of GOD's own precious Word; and thus, too, infidelity and superstition, though apparently so unlike, meet in the one point of depriving us of a divine revelation. But, blessed be GOD, He has given us a revelation. He has spoken, and His Word is able to teach the heart and the understanding also. GOD is able to give the certainty that it is He who speaks, and we do not want any human authority to intervene. We do not want a poor rush-light to enable us to see that the sun is shining. The beams of that glorious Luminary are quite enough without any such miserable addition. All we want is to stand in the sunshine and we shall be convinced that the sun shines. If we retire into a vault or into a tunnel, we shall not feel his influence; and just so is it with regard to Scripture, if we place ourselves beneath the chilling and darkening influences of superstition or infidelity, we shall not experience the genial and enlightening power of that divine revelation.

Having said thus much as to the divine volume as a whole, we shall now proceed to consider the contents of the section which lies open before us.

- in Numbers 1 we have the declaration of the "**pedigree**;" and
- in Numbers 2, the recognition of the "**standard**."

"And Moses and Aaron took these men which are expressed by their names: and they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month, and they declared their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers; according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls, as the Lord commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai" (Numbers 1:17-19).

Has this any voice for us? Does it convey any great spiritual lesson to our understanding? assuredly it does. In the first place, it suggests this important question to the reader, "Can I declare my pedigree?" It is greatly to be feared there are hundreds, if not thousands, of professing Christians who are wholly incompetent to do so. They cannot say with clearness and decision, "**Now are we the sons of God**" (I John 3:2).

- "**we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.**"
- "**and if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise**" (Galatians 3:26, 29).
- "**for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God . . . The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God**" (Romans 8:14, 16).

This is the Christian's "**pedigree**," and it is his privilege to be able to "**declare**" it. He is born from above - born again - born of water and the spirit, i.e., by the word and by the Holy Ghost (Compare, diligently, John 3:5; James 1:18; I Peter 1:23; Ephesians 5:26). The believer traces his pedigree directly up to a risen CHRIST in glory. This is Christian genealogy. So far as our natural pedigree is concerned, if we trace it up to its source, and then declare it honestly, we must see and admit that we are sprung from a ruined stock. Ours is a fallen family. Our fortunes are gone; our very blood attainted; we are irrecoverably ruined; we can never regain our original position; our former status and the inheritance which belonged to it are irretrievably lost.

A man may be able to trace his genealogical line throughout a race of nobles, of princes, or of kings; but is he is finally to "**declare his pedigree**," he cannot stop short of a fallen, ruined, outcast head. We must get to the source of a thing to know what it really is. It is thus GOD looks at and judges of things, and we must think with Him if we would think aright. His judgment of men and things must be dominant for ever. Man's judgment is only ephemeral, it lasts but for a day; and hence, according to faith's estimate, the estimate of sound sense, "**It is a small thing to be judged . . . of man's judgment**" (I Corinthians 4:3). Oh! how small! Would that we felt more deeply how small a thing it is to be judged of man's judgment! Would that we walked, habitually, in the real sense of the smallness thereof! It would impart a calm elevation and a holy dignity which would lift us above the influence of the scene through which we are passing. What is rank in this life? What importance can attach to a pedigree which, if honestly traced, and faithfully declared, is derived from a ruined stock? A man can only be proud of his birth when he stops short of his real origin: as "**born in sin and shapen in iniquity**." Such is man's origin - such his birth. Who can think of being proud of such a birth, of such an origin? Who but one whose mind the god of this world hath blinded?

But how different with the Christian! His pedigree is heavenly. His genealogical tree strikes its roots into the soil of the new creation. Death can never break the line, inasmuch as it is formed in resurrection. We cannot be too simple as to this. It is of the utmost importance that the reader should be thoroughly clear on this foundation point. We can easily see from this first chapter of Numbers, how, essential it was that every member of the congregation of Israel should be able to declare his pedigree. Uncertainty, on this point, would have proved disastrous; it would have produced hopeless confusion. We can hardly imagine an Israelite, when called to declare his pedigree, expressing himself in the doubtful manner adopted by many Christians now-a-days. We cannot conceive his saying, well, I am not quite sure. Sometimes I cherish the hope that I am

of the stock of Israel, but at other times, I am full of fear that I do not belong to the congregation Of the Lord at all. I am all in uncertainty and darkness. Can we conceive of such language. Assuredly not. Much less could we imagine anyone maintaining the monstrous notion that no one could possibly be sure as to whether he was a true Israelite or not until the day of judgment.

All such ideas and reasonings - all such doubts, fears, and questions, we may rest assured, were foreign to the mind of the Israelite. Every member of the congregation was called to declare his pedigree, ere taking his place in the ranks as a man of war. Each one was able to say, like Saul of Tarsus, "**Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel,**" &c. All was settled and clear, and necessarily so if there was to be any real entrance upon the walk and warfare of the wilderness.

Now, may we not legitimately ask, "If a Jew could be certain as to his pedigree, why may not a Christian be certain as to his? Reader, weigh this question, and if you are one of that large class of persons who are never able to arrive at the blessed certainty of their heavenly lineage, their spiritual birth, pause, we beseech you, and let us reason with you on this momentous point. It may be you are disposed to ask, "How can I be sure that I am, really and truly, a child of GOD, a member of CHRIST, born of the Word and Spirit of GOD? I would give worlds, were they mine, to be certain as to this most weighty question."

Well, then, we would earnestly desire to help you in this matter. Indeed one special object before us in penning these "*Notes*" is to assist anxious souls, by answering, as the Lord may enable us, their questions, solving their difficulties, and removing the stumbling-blocks out of their way.

And, first of all, let us point out one special feature which belongs to all the children of GOD, without exception. It is a very simple, but a very blessed feature. If we do not possess it, in some degree, it is most certain we are not of the heavenly race; but if we do possess it, it is just as certain that we are, and we may, therefore, without any difficulty or reserve, "**declare our pedigree.**"

Now what is this feature? What is this great family characteristic? Our Lord JESUS CHRIST supplies the answer. He tells us that "**Wisdom is justified of all her children**" (Luke 7:35; Matthew 11:19) all the children of Wisdom, from the days of Abel down to the present moment, have been marked by this great family trait. There is not so much as a single exception. All GOD's children - all the sons of Wisdom have always exhibited, in some degree, this moral feature - they have justified GOD. Let the reader consider this. It may be he finds it hard to understand what is meant by justifying GOD; but a passage or two of Holy Scripture will, we trust, make it quite plain. We read in Luke 7 that "**all the people that heard Jesus, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him**" (ver. 29, 30). Here we have the two generations brought, as it were, face to face. The publicans justified GOD and condemned themselves. The Pharisees justified themselves and judged GOD. The former submitted to the baptism of John - the baptism of repentance. The latter refused that baptism - refused to repent - refused to humble and to judge themselves.

Here we have the two great classes into which the whole human family has been divided, from the days of Abel and Cain down to the present day; and here, too, we have the simplest possible test by which to try our "**pedigree.**" Have we taken the place of self-condemnation? Have we

bowed in true repentance before GOD? This is to justify GOD. The two things go together - yea, they are one and the same. The man who condemns himself justifies GOD; and the man who justifies GOD condemns himself. On the other hand, the man who justifies himself judges GOD; and the man who judges GOD justifies himself.

Thus it stands in every case. And be it observed that the very moment we take the ground of repentance and self judgment, GOD takes the ground of a Justifier. GOD always justifies those who condemn themselves. All His children justify Him, and He justifies all His children. The moment David said, "**I have sinned against the Lord,**" the answer was, "**the Lord hath put away thy sin.**" Divine forgiveness follows, with the most intense rapidity, human confession.

Hence it follows that nothing can be more foolish than for any one to justify himself, inasmuch as GOD must be justified in His sayings, and overcome when He is judged (Comp. Psalm 51:4; Romans 3:4). GOD must have the upper hand in the end, and then all self justification shall be seen in its true light. The wisest thing therefore is to condemn ourselves. This is what all the children of wisdom do. Nothing is more characteristic of the true members of wisdom's family than the habit and spirit of self-judgment. Whereas, on the other hand, nothing so marks all those who are not of this family as a spirit of self-vindication.

These things are worthy of our most earnest attention. Nature will blame anything and everything, any one and every one but itself. But where grace is at work, there is ever a readiness to judge self, and take the lowly place. This is the true secret of blessing and peace. All GOD's children have stood on this blessed ground, exhibited this lovely moral trait, and reached this grand result. we cannot find so much as a single exception in the entire history of Wisdom's happy family; and we may safely say, that if the reader has been led, in truth and reality, to own himself lost - to condemn himself - to take the place of true repentance-then is he, in very deed, one of the children of Wisdom, and he may therefore, with boldness and decision, "**declare his pedigree.**"

We would urge this point at the outset. It is impossible for any one to recognize and rally round the proper "**standard**" unless he can declare his "**pedigree.**" In short, it is impossible to take up a true position in the wilderness so long as there is any uncertainty as to this great question. How could an Israelite of old have taken his place in the assembly - how could he have stood in the ranks - how could he expect to make any progress through the wilderness, if he could not distinctly declare his pedigree? Impossible. Just so is it with Christians now. Progress in wilderness life - success in spiritual warfare, is out of the question if there be any uncertainty as to the spiritual pedigree. We must be able to say, "**we know that we have passed from death unto life**" - "**We know that we are of God**" - We believe and are sure, ere there can be any real advance in the life and walk of a Christian.

Reader, say, can you declare your pedigree? Is this a thoroughly settled point with you? Are you clear as to this in the very depths of your soul? When you are all alone with GOD, is it a perfectly settled question between you and Him? Search and see. Make sure work of it. Do not slur the matter over. Build not upon mere profession. Say not "I am a member of such a church; I receive the Lord's supper; I hold such and such doctrines; I have been religiously brought up I live a moral life; I have done nobody any harm; I read the Bible and say my prayers; I have family worship in my house; I give largely in the cause of philanthropy and religion." All this

may be perfectly true of you, and yet you may not have a single pulse of divine life, a single ray of divine light. Not one of these things, not all of them put together, could be accepted as a declaration of spiritual pedigree. There must be the witness of the spirit that you are a child of GOD, and this witness always accompanies simple faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. "**He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself**" (I John 5:10). It is not, by any means, a question of looking into your own heart for evidences. It is not a building upon frames, feelings, and experiences. Nothing of the sort. It is a childlike faith in CHRIST. It is having eternal life in the Son of GOD. It is the imperishable record of the Holy Ghost. It is taking GOD at His Word. "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment (*krisin*), but is passed from death unto life**" (John 5:24).

This is the true way to declare your pedigree; and be assured of it, you must be able to declare it ere you can "**go forth to war.**"

We do not mean to say you cannot be saved without this. GOD forbid we should say any such thing. We believe there are hundreds of the true Spiritual Israel who are not able to declare their pedigree. But we ask, Are such able to go forth to war? Are they vigorous military men? Far from it. They cannot even know what true conflict is; on the contrary, persons of this class mistake their doubts and fears, their dark and cloudy seasons, for true Christian conflict. This is a most serious mistake; but alas! a very common one. We continually find a, low, dark, legal condition of soul defended on the ground of Christian conflict, whereas, according to the New Testament, true Christian conflict or warfare is carried on in a region where doubts and fears are unknown.

It is when we stand in the clear daylight of GOD's full salvation - salvation in a risen CHRIST - that we really enter upon the warfare proper to us as Christians. Are we to suppose, for a moment, that our legal struggles, our culpable unbelief, our refusal to submit to the righteousness of GOD, our questionings and reasonings, can be viewed as Christian conflict? By no means. All these things must be regarded as conflict with GOD; whereas Christian conflict is carried on with Satan. "**We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places**" (Ephesians 6:12).

This is Christian conflict. But can such conflict be waged by those who are continually doubting whether they are Christians or not? We do not believe it. Could we imagine an Israelite in conflict with Amalek in the wilderness, or with the Canaanites in the land of promise, while yet unable to "**declare his pedigree**" or recognize his "**standard?**" The thing is inconceivable. No, no; every member of the congregation, who was able to go forth to war was perfectly clear and settled as to those two points. Indeed he could not go forth if he were not so.

And, while on the important subject of Christian conflict, it may be well to call the reader's attention to the three portions of New Testament Scripture in which we have three distinct characters of conflict presented, namely, Romans 7:7-24; Galatians 5:17; Ephesians 6:10-17. If the reader will just turn, for a moment, to the above Scriptures, we shall seek to point out the true character of each.

In Romans 7:7-24 we have the struggle of a soul quickened but not emancipated - a regenerated soul under the law. The proof that we have before us, here, a quickened soul is found in such utterances as these, "**That which I do, I allow not**" - "**to will is present with me**" - "**I delight in the law of God after the inward man.**" None but a regenerated soul could speak thus. The disallowance of the wrong, the will to do right, the inward delight in the law of GOD - all these are the distinct marks of the new life - the precious fruits of regeneration. No unconverted person could truthfully use such language.

But, on the other hand, the proofs that we have before us, in this Scripture, a soul not fully emancipated, not in the joy of known deliverance, not in the full consciousness of victory, not in the assured possession of spiritual power - the plain proofs of all this we have in such utterances as the following, "**I am carnal, sold under sin**" - "**what I would that do I not; but what I hate that do I**" - "**O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?**"

Now, we know that a Christian is not "**carnal,**" but spiritual; he is not "**sold under sin,**" but redeemed from its power; he is not a "**wretched man**" sighing for deliverance, but a happy man who knows himself delivered. He is not an impotent slave, unable to do the right thing, and ever compelled to do the wrong; he is a free man! endowed with power in the Holy Ghost, and able to say, "**I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me**" (Philippians 4).

We cannot here attempt to enter upon a full exposition of this most important Scripture; we merely offer a suggestion or two which may help the reader to seize its scope and import. We are fully aware that many Christians differ widely as to the interpretation of this chapter. Some deny that it presents the exercises of a quickened soul; others maintain that it sets forth the experiences proper to a Christian. We cannot accept either conclusion. We believe it exhibits to our view the exercises of a truly regenerated soul, but of a soul not set free by the knowledge of its union with a risen CHRIST, and the power of the Holy Ghost.

Hundreds of Christians are actually in the seventh of Romans but their proper place is in the eighth.

They are, as to their experience, under the law. They do not know themselves as sealed by the Holy Ghost. They are not in possession of full victory in a risen and glorified CHRIST. They have doubts and fears, and are ever disposed to cry out "**O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?**"

But

- is not a Christian delivered?
- is he not saved?
- is he not accepted in the Beloved?
- is he not sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise?
- is he not united to CHRIST?
- ought he not to know and enjoy, and to confess all this?

Unquestionably.

Well then he is no longer, as to his standing, in the seventh of Romans. It is his privilege to sing the song of victory at Heaven's side of the empty tomb of JESUS, and to walk in the holy liberty wherewith CHRIST makes His people free. The seventh of Romans is not liberty at all, but bondage, except indeed at the very close, where the soul is able to say, "**I thank God.**"

No doubt, it may be a very wholesome exercise to pass through all that is here detailed for us with such marvellous vividness and power; and, furthermore, we must declare that we should vastly prefer being honestly in the seventh of Romans to being falsely in the eighth. But all this leaves wholly untouched the question as to the proper application of this profoundly interesting passage of Scripture.

We shall now glance, for a moment, at the conflict in Galatians 5:17 we shall quote the passage.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." *

* We ought, perhaps, to inform the reader that many able scholars render the last clause of Galatians 5:17 thus, "*In order that we may not do the things that we would.*" We assuredly believe this rendering to be in full keeping with the spirit of the context; though we are, each day, more convinced of the unrivalled excellence of our precious English Bible.

This passage is often quoted to account for continual defeat, whereas it really contains the secret of perpetual victory.

In verse 16 we read, "**This I say, then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.**" This makes it all so clear. The presence of the Holy Ghost secures power. We are assured that GOD is stronger than the flesh, and therefore, where He is in conflict the triumph is secured. And be it carefully noted that Galatians 5:17 does not speak of the conflict between the Two natures, the old and the new, but between the Holy Ghost and the flesh. This is the reason why it is added, "*in order that ye may not do the things that ye would.*" If the Holy Ghost were not dwelling in us, we should be sure to fulfil the lust of the flesh; but, inasmuch as He is in us to carry on the warfare, we are no longer obliged to do wrong, but blessedly enabled to do right.

Now this precisely marks the point of difference between Romans 7:14, 15 and Galatians 5.17. In the former we have the new nature, but not the power of the indwelling Spirit. In the latter, we have not only the new nature, but also the power of the Holy Ghost. we must ever bear in mind that the new nature in a believer is dependent. It is dependent upon the Spirit for power, and upon the Word for guidance. But, clearly, where GOD The Holy Ghost is, there must be power. He may be grieved and hindered; but Galatians 5:16 distinctly teaches that if we walk in the Spirit, we shall have sure and constant victory over the flesh. Hence, therefore, it would be a very serious mistake indeed to quote Galatians 5:17 as a reason for a low and carnal walk. Its teaching is designed to produce the direct opposite.

And now one word on Ephesians 6:10-17. where we have the conflict between the Christian and wicked spirits in heavenly places. The Church belongs to Heaven, and should ever maintain a heavenly walk and conversation. It should be our constant aim to make good our heavenly

standing - to plant the foot firmly upon our heavenly inheritance, and keep it there. This the devil seeks to hinder, in every possible way, and hence the conflict; hence too "**the whole armour of God,**" by which alone we can stand against our powerful spiritual foe.

It is not our purpose to dwell upon the armour, as we here merely called the reader's attention to the above three Scriptures in order that he may have the subject of conflict, in all its phases, fully before his mind, in connection with the opening lines of the Book of Numbers.

Nothing can be more interesting; nor can we possibly overestimate the importance of being clear as to the real nature and ground of Christian conflict. If we go forth to war without knowing what the war is about, and in a state of uncertainty as to whether our "**pedigree**" is all right, we shall not make much headway against the enemy.

But, as has been already remarked, there was another thing quite as necessary for the man of war as the clear declaration of his pedigree, and that was the distinct recognition of his standard. The two things were essential for the walk and warfare of the wilderness. Moreover, they were inseparable. If a man did not know his pedigree, he could not recognize his standard, and thus all would have been plunged in hopeless confusion. In place of keeping rank, and making steady progress, they would have been in each other's way, and treading one upon another. Each had to know his post and keep it - to know his standard and abide by it. Thus they moved on together; thus progress was made, work done, and warfare carried on. The Benjaminite had his post, and the Ephraimite had his, and neither was to interfere with, or cross the path of, the other. Thus with all the tribes, throughout the camp of the Israel of GOD. Each had his pedigree, and each had his post; and neither the one nor the other was according to their own thoughts; all was of GOD. He gave the pedigree, and He assigned the standard. Nor was there any need of comparing one with another, or any ground of jealousy one of another; each had his place to fill, and his work to do, and there was work enough and room enough for all. There was the greatest possible variety, and yet the most perfect unity.

"Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house." "and the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every one after their families, according to the house of their fathers" (Numbers 2:2, 34).

Thus, in the camp of old, as well as in the Church now, we learn that "**God is not the author of confusion.**" Nothing could be more exquisitely arranged than the four camps, of three tribes each, forming a perfect square, each side of the square exhibiting its own specific standard. "**Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: over against the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch.**"

The GOD of the armies of Israel knew how to marshal His hosts. It would be a great mistake to suppose that GOD's warriors were not ordered according to the most perfect system of military tactics. We may plume ourselves upon our progress in arts and sciences, and we may fancy that the host of Israel presented a spectacle of rude disorder and wild confusion, compared with what may be seen in modern times. But this would be an empty conceit. We may rest assured that the camp of Israel was ordered and furnished in the most perfect manner, for the simplest and most conclusive of all reasons, namely, that it was ordered and furnished by the hand of GOD. Grant

us but this, that GOD has done anything, and we argue, with the most perfect confidence, that it has been perfectly done.

This in a very simple, but a very blessed principle. Of course it would not satisfy an infidel or a skeptic; what would? It is the province and prerogative of a skeptic to doubt everything, to believe nothing. He measures everything by his own standard, and rejects whatever he cannot reconcile with his own notions. He lays down, with marvellous coolness, his own premises, and then proceeds to draw his own conclusions. But if the premises are false, the conclusions must be false likewise. And there is this invariable feature attaching to the premises of all skeptics, rationalists, and infidels, they always leave out GOD; and hence all their conclusion's must be fatally false. On the other hand, the humble believer starts with this great first principle, that GOD is; and not only that He is, but that He has to do with His creatures; that He interests Himself in, and occupies Himself about, the affairs of men.

What consolation for the Christian! But infidelity will not allow this at all. To bring GOD in is to upset all the reasonings of the skeptic, for they are based upon the thorough exclusion of GOD.

However, we are not now writing in order to meet infidels, but the edification of believers, and it is sometimes well to call attention to the thorough rottenness of the whole system of infidelity; and surely in no way can this be more clearly or forcibly shown than by the fact that it rests entirely upon the exclusion of GOD. Let this fact be seized, and the whole system crumbles into dust at our feet. If we believe that GOD is, then, assuredly, everything must be wicked in relation to Him. We must look at all from His point of view. Nor is this all. If we believe that GOD is, then we must see that man cannot judge Him. GOD must be the judge of right or wrong, of what is and what is not worthy of Himself. So also in reference to GOD's Word. If it be true that GOD is, and that He has spoken to us, He has given us a revelation, then, assuredly, that revelation is not to be judged by man's reason. It is above and beyond any such tribunal. Only think of measuring GOD's Word by the rules of human arithmetic! and yet this is precisely what has been done in our own day, with this blessed Book of Numbers with which we are now engaged, and with which we shall proceed, leaving infidelity and its arithmetic aside.

We feel it very needful, in our notes and reflections on this book, as well as on every other book, to remember two things, namely:

- first, the book; and
- secondly, the soul:

the book and its contents the soul and its necessities.

There is a danger of becoming so occupied with the former as to forget the latter. And, on the other hand, there is the danger of becoming so wholly engrossed with the latter as to forget the former. Both must be attended to. And we may say that what constitutes an efficient ministry, whether written or oral, is the proper adjustment of these two things. There are some ministers who study the word very diligently, and, it may be, very profoundly. They are well versed in biblical knowledge; they have drunk deeply at the fountain of inspiration. All this is of the utmost importance, and of the very highest value. A ministry without this will be barren indeed. If a man does not study his Bible diligently and prayerfully, he will have little to give to his readers or his hearers; at least little worth their having. Those who minister in the word must dig

for themselves, and dig deep.

But then the soul must be considered - its condition anticipated, and its necessities met. If this be lost sight of, the ministry will lack point, pungency, and power. It will be inefficient and unfruitful. In short, the two things must be combined and properly adjusted. A man who merely studies the book will be unpractical, a man who merely studies the soul will be unfurnished. A man who duly studies both will be a good minister of JESUS CHRIST.

Now, we desire, in our measure, to be this to the reader; and hence as we travel, in his company, through the marvellous book which lies open before us, we would not only seek to point out its moral beauties, and unfold its holy lessons, but we would also feel it to be our bounden duty to put an occasional question to him or her, as to how far those lessons are being learnt, and those beauties appreciated. We trust the reader will not object to this, and hence, ere we close this our first section, we would ask him a question or two thereon.

And first, then, dear friend, art thou clear and settled as to thy "**pedigree?**" Is it a settled thing that thou art on the Lord's side? Do not, we beseech thee, leave this grand question unsettled. We have asked it before, and we ask it again. Dost thou know - canst thou declare thy spiritual pedigree? It is the first thing for GOD's warrior. It is of no use to think of entering the militant host so long as you are unsettled as to this point. We say not that a man cannot be saved without this. Far be the thought. But he cannot take rank as a man of war. He cannot do battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, so long as he is filled with doubts and fears as to whether he belongs to the true spiritual stock. If there is to be any progress, if there is to be that decision, so essential to a spiritual warrior, we must be able to say, "**We know that we have passed from death unto life**" - "**We know that we are of God.**"

This is the proper language of a man of war. Not one of that mighty host that mustered "**over against the tabernacle of the congregation**" would have understood such a thing as a single doubt, or shadow of a doubt as to his own very pedigree. Doubtless, he would have smiled, had any one raised a question on the subject. Each one of the six hundred thousand knew well whence he had sprung, and, therefore, where he was to take his stand. And just so with GOD's militant host now. Each member thereof will need to possess the most unclouded confidence as to his relationship, else he will not be able to stand in the battle.

And then as to the "**standard.**" What is it?

- is it a doctrine? Nay.
- is it a theological system? Nay.
- is it an ecclesiastical polity? Nay.
- is it a system of ordinances, rites, or ceremonies. Nothing of the sort, GOD's warriors do not fight under any such banner.

What is the standard of GOD's militant host? Let us hear and remember.

It is CHRIST.

This is the only standard of GOD and the only standard of that warrior band which musters in

this wilderness world, to wage war with the hosts of evil, and fight the battles of the Lord. CHRIST is the standard for everything. To have any other would only unfit us for that spiritual conflict to which we are called. What have we, as Christians, to do with contending for any system of theology church organization? Of what account, is our estimation, are ordinances, ceremonies, or ritualistic observances? are we going to fight under such banners as these? GOD forbid! Our theology is the Bible. Our church organization is the one GOD, formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost, and united to the living and exalted Head in the heavens. To contend for anything less than these is entirely below the mark of a true spiritual warrior.

Alas! alas! that so many who profess to belong to the Church of GOD should so forget their proper standard, and be found fighting under another banner. we may rest assured it super-induces weakness, falsifies the testimony, and hinders progress. If we would stand in the day of battle, we must acknowledge no standard whatsoever but CHRIST and His Word - the living Word, and the written word. Here lies our security in the face of all our spiritual foes. The more closely we adhere to CHRIST and to Him alone the stronger and safer we shall be. To have Him as a perfect covering for our eyes - to keep close to Him - fast by His side, this is our grand moral safeguard.

"The Children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard throughout their hosts."

Oh! that thus it may be throughout all the host of the Church of GOD! May all be laid aside for CHRIST! may He be enough for our hearts. As we trace our "**pedigree**" up to Him, may His name be inscribed on the "**standard**" round which we encamp in this wilderness, through which we are passing home to our eternal rest above! Reader, see to it, we beseech thee, that there be not one jot or tittle inscribed on thy banner save JESUS CHRIST - that name which is above every name, and which shall yet be exalted for ever throughout the wide universe of GOD.

~ end of chapter 1, 2 ~

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