

II. The Prerequisites for Vivification

Scripture presents certain prerequisites for effective progress¹ in mortification and vivification. While God never ceases to work in a variety of ways in the lives of His people, the Christian's fulfillment of certain conditions prepares the way for much greater progress in holiness than they would otherwise experience. Effective use of the means of mortification and vivification require that the Christian is, first, right with God.

1.) Be Right With God

In important conjunction with the progressive and incomplete ethical eradication of indwelling sinfulness in the believer through progressive sanctification is the clear Biblical distinction between the believer who is right with God and the one who is backslidden. Progressive sanctification contains both an aspect of a continuum of growth and an aspect that is either entirely present or not. No believer on earth has reached the endpoint of the entire elimination of indwelling sin and perfect renewal of the image of Christ within him; the saints on earth are all at various stages of growth, having within them differing ethical elements of light and darkness. However, Scripture likewise teaches a clear distinction between those believers who are right with God and those who are not.

Every Christian . . . has a “pure” heart in [that he is regenerate and has the new heart that is the possession of all who enter heaven, Psalm 24:3-4; Matthew 5:8; Hebrews 8:8-12]. But every Christian does not have a “clean” heart (Psalm 51:10) [in another sense].² That which pollutes the heart of a Christian is *unjudged sin*. Whenever sin is *allowed* by us, communion with God is broken, and pollution can only be removed, and communion restored, by genuine repentance—a condemning of ourselves, a mourning over the sin, and unsparing confession of the same, accompanied by a fervent desire and sincere resolution not to be overtaken by it again. The willing allowance and indulgence of any known sin cannot exist with a clean heart. [Such] . . . repentance . . . is as necessary [to] the continuance of spiritual life, as faith itself[.] After the repentance and confession,

¹ Since, as is demonstrated in the section “The Certainty of Practical Sanctification For All The Regenerate,” God has ordained that He will sanctify all the justified, even in this life, all believers experience some degree of progress in the mortification of sin and growth in holiness. Since God ordains both His intended ends and the means to His ends (Ephesians 1:11), all Christians will, to some extent, embrace the prerequisites and means to vivification explicated in the following sections of this treatise.

² The distinction Pink affirms, that some believers are right with God and others are not, while all believers are righteous before the Lord in another sense, is certainly valid—however, an absolute distinction between the use of the English words “clean” and “pure” with reference to the heart is not consistently maintained in Scripture. Thus, the “clean heart” (**רָחֵל בַּת**) of only the repentant believer (Psalm 51:10) is also called “purity of heart” (**טְהֻרָּה**, Proverbs 22:11).

there must be a fresh (and constant) recourse unto that Fountain which has been “opened for sin and for uncleanness,” a fresh application by faith of the cleansing blood of Christ: pleading its merits and efficacy before God.³

The Biblical description of sanctification as “building up”⁴ illustrates both the aspects of continuity and of total possession or absence in spiritual life. A building that is progressively being built is not an all-or-nothing proposition—the edifice grows gradually. However, buildings may be built at a faster or slower rate, or even begin to decay or be actively dismantled. The believer who is right with God is being built up as a spiritual building—a growth that can happen at different rates—but the backslider, the believer who is not right with God, is contributing to the decay of his building through neglect or is actively taking his building down. Rather than achieving ever greater progress, he is sliding backwards, progressively falling away from God. While the completion of a building is a process, any particular structure is either in the process of being built up or being taken down—building, in this sense, is an all-or-nothing proposition. In this sense, particular believers are either making spiritual progress or they are in decline; they are either right with God or are backsiding. Either their new nature or their indwelling sin is growing stronger; they either have a clear conscience or they do not have one; they are either wilfully holding on to sin or they are not doing so. Progress in sanctification requires that the believer be right with God.

The distinction between the clean or pure-hearted⁵ Christian and the backslider is clear throughout the canon. The history of Israel demonstrates that the question “Is thine heart right[?]” could be put to the godly, with the appropriate answer being “It is” (2 Kings 10:15).⁶ A right or upright heart,⁷ which is a gift of grace given by God (1

³ Pg. 54, *Doctrine of Sanctification*, Arthur W. Pink. Pink helpfully further explicated the “right with God” distinction as follows:

It is not every man, nor even every Christian, who obtains definite answers to his prayers. Far from it! A “righteous man” [in one sense of the term] is one who is right with God in a practical way: one whose conduct is pleasing in His sight, one who keeps his garments unspotted from the world, who is in separation from religious evil . . . Such a one has the ear of Heaven, for there is no moral barrier between his soul and a sin hating God. (*Life of Elijah*, Chapter 3, “The Brook Cherith.”)

When we have sinned away our peace there is a strangeness and distance between the soul and the Holy One. When our inward monitor convicts and condemns us, the heart grows shy of God, so that we cannot so comfortably look Him in the face. It is only when everything is made right with God, by contrite confession and faith’s appropriation of the cleansing blood of Christ, that we can approach the throne of grace with boldness. (*Exposition of Hebrews*, vol. 3, Arthur Pink, Chapter 122, “Praying for Ministers.”)

⁴ See “Vivification as Building Up” above.

⁵ טהוֹר, Psalm 51:10; Proverbs 22:11.

⁶ יְשַׁׁעַת־לְבָבֶךָ יִשְׁרֵךְ . . . בַּשְׁרַׁנְךָ קָנָאָת לְיְהֻדָּה (2 Kings 10:16) The legitimacy of the question is not undermined by the fact that Jehu’s heart was not actually right when he spoke to Jonadab; Jonadab’s zeal or holy jealousy for Jehovah (קָנָאָת לְיְהֻדָּה 2 Kings 10:16) and hatred of the idolatrous Baal worship Jehu was extirpating was genuine—Jonadab’s heart was truly right, and he truly had the zeal that Jehu merely professed. Note that the Lord blessed Jonadab’s zeal for the Lord, rejection of worldliness, and abstinence from wine with a godly seed (Jeremiah 35).

Chronicles 29:19), was manifested in “zeal for the LORD” (2 Kings 10:16) and His worship and institutions (cf. 2 Kings 10:15-16, 27-28, 30; Psalm 111:1), and a heart that was conformed to God’s heart (10:30). The “upright in heart . . . follow . . . righteousness” (Psalm 94:15; cf. 97:11). Their “words [are of] the uprightness of [their] heart: and [their] lips . . . utter knowledge” (Job 33:3), as their “uprightness of heart” is a product of “hav[ing] learned [God’s] righteous judgments,” the content of Scripture (Psalm 119:7). Their worship is also in the “uprightness of [their] heart” as they “willingly offe[r]” to the Lord (1 Chronicles 29:17). “David, who kept [God’s] commandments, and who followed [Him] with all his heart, to do *that* only which was right in [His] eyes” (1 Kings 14:8), had such an upright heart. While David was no sinless man, but one who prayed: “Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*” (Psalm 19:12), nonetheless he did not willfully and deliberately turn away from God to iniquity, except in his adultery with Uriah’s wife Bathsheba and the events associated with it—hence Scripture states: “David did *that* which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:5). Thus, with the exception of “the matter of Uriah the Hittite,” the heart of “David . . . was . . . perfect⁸ with the LORD his God” (1 Kings 15:3). Having a right heart was not a matter of absolute sinlessness, but of “uprightness” (1 Kings 9:4), of not wilfully holding on to any sin—the right-hearted determine to follow God’s ways rather than willfully turning aside after iniquity, but it would still be appropriate for them to say, in every prayer they make, “forgive us our sins” (Luke 11:4; Matthew 6:12). The believer who is right with God can state: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*: But verily God hath heard *me*; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer” (Psalm 66:18-19). A necessary condition to the answer of prayer is being right with God, not regarding iniquity in one’s heart, that is, not seeing iniquity with pleasure, or aiming at, designing, or having iniquity in one’s eye⁹—nonetheless, the saint who is right with God still receives answers

⁷ (cf. יְשָׁר/yeshar (יְשָׁר) לְבָב/lab

⁸ בָּלֶשׁ, a word discussed in more depth in the next paragraph—the reference is placed here because of the insight to the nature of an upright or perfect heart manifested by David's life. A right heart is upright, honest, and straight rather than crooked (**רַשֵּׁשׁ**), and is also well-rounded, complete, and under God's authority in every area of life (**כָּלֶשׁ**).

⁹ The condition in Psalm 66:18 is: אָנוּ אַמְּדָרִיתִי בְּלֹבִי לֹא יִשְׁמַע אֲדֹנֵינוּ. Compare the sense of הָרָה in Psalm 37:37, “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of *that man is peace*,” שְׂמָרֶתֶם וְרָאָה יִשְׁרָאֵל קְיָאָתָרָה לְאַשְׁלָׁוֹם: מִנָּה רָאוּתָה, and Genesis 20:10, ἀδικίαν εἰ ἐθεώρουν ἐν καρδίᾳ μου μη εἰσακούσατω κύριος. Iniquitatem si aspexi in corde meo, non exaudiet Dominus (LXX & Vulgate). Declarations similar in idea to Psalm 66:18 occur in Psalm 17:1-7; 18:20-27; 26:1-7. John Gill commented: “There was iniquity in [David’s] heart, as there is in every good man’s heart, and a

to prayer only because of “mercy” (Psalm 66:20), not merit. In contrast to David’s determination in every inward and outward area to obey God, one could do “*that which was* right in the sight of the LORD” in an outward way, “but not with a perfect heart” (2 Chronicles 25:2), and certain people could be “more upright in heart to sanctify themselves”¹⁰ (2 Chronicles 29:34) than others. Although they are not free from indwelling sin (cf. Deuteronomy 9:5), those who are “upright in heart” (Psalm 11:2; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10) are “good” (Psalm 125:4) in that they are walking uprightly and with a godly understanding (Proverbs 15:21), not willfully clinging to sin. They trust in the Lord and have no “iniquity in [their] hands,” so they can pray: “judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity *that is* in me” (Psalm 7:10, 1, 3-4, 8; cf. Psalm 26:1).

Similarly, those with a “perfect heart”¹¹ “walk in [the LORD’s] statutes, and . . . keep his commandments” (1 Kings 8:61). “Asa’s heart was perfect with the LORD all his days” (1 Kings 15:14), in that his life was characterized by well-rounded¹² and sincere obedience,¹³ although he certainly sinned, indeed, on particular occasions seriously (2 Chronicles 16). Hezekiah could honestly pray: “I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked¹⁴ before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight” (2 Kings 20:3; Isaiah 38:3). The service of a “perfect heart

great deal too; it is full of it; and it should be regarded in some sense, so as to guard against it, and pray to be kept from it, that it may not break forth into action; and so as to loath it, abhor it, and be humbled for it; but not so as to nourish and cherish it, to take delight and pleasure in it: [thus, the passage could be rendered] ‘if I look upon it’ . . . that is, with approbation of it, and satisfaction in it, and ordered his conversation according to it; or acted the deceitful and hypocritical part in prayer; or had any evil intention in his petitions, to consume on his lusts what he asked for[.]”

¹⁰ The situation of the Levites rather than the priests in the text—*לְבָב לְהַתְקִדֵּשׁ מִתְהַבְּנִים*—*הֲלוֹויִם יִשְׂרָאֵל*.

¹¹ *לְבָב/לְבָב שָׁלָם*

¹² Compare the idea of *םְלֻשָּׁה* as *completeness* or *intactness* (KB).

¹³ Note that the “high places” of 1 Kings 15:14a refer to unauthorized altars to Jehovah, not to places where false gods were worshipped; cf. 1 Kings 22:43 (Heb. 22:44); 2 Kings 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35; 2 Chronicles 15:17; 20:33. Asa did destroy the places where idols were worshipped (2 Chronicles 14:3-5; cf. 17:6).

¹⁴ *לְלַכְּדָה* in the Hithpael, the conjugation regularly employed for believers who walk with God, and indicating that they walked about, went to and fro, with Him in an iterative way (cf. Genesis 13:17; Exodus 21:19; Joshua 18:4, 8; Judges 21:24; 1 Samuel 12:2; 23:13; 30:31; 2 Samuel 11:2; 1 Chronicles 16:20; 21:4; Esther 2:11; Job 1:7; 2:2; 18:8; 22:14; 38:16; Psalm 12:8; 35:14; 39:6; 43:2; 58:7; 68:21; 77:17; 82:5; 101:2; 105:13; 119:45; Proverbs 6:22; 20:7; 23:31; 24:34 Ezekiel 1:13; 19:6; 28:14; Zechariah 1:10, 11; 6:7; 10:12), that is, they communed with Him and fellowshiped with Him (Genesis 3:8; 5:22, 24; 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15; Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 23:15; 1 Samuel 2:30, 35; 2 Samuel 7:6-7; 2 Kings 20:3; 1 Chronicles 17:6; Psalm 56:14; 116:9; Isaiah 38:3; also see KB & BDB, and the references to human fellowship in 1 Samuel 25:15, 27; also see Psalm 26:3).

and . . . a willing mind”¹⁵ (1 Chronicles 28:9) were associated, for a “perfect heart” was one of sincerity—thus, when the “men of war . . . came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel” (1 Chronicles 12:38), they were not sinless, but they were free from duplicity in their intention to set up David as king. Worship with “a perfect heart” is associated with “offer[ing] willingly”¹⁶ (1 Chronicles 29:9). A believer can have a perfect heart during one period of his life but not in another; “Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father” (1 Kings 3:3) in the early part of his reign, walking humbly (1 Kings 3:6-10; 8:22-66) before Jehovah his God (1 Kings 5:4-5), so that the Lord gave him “wise and an understanding heart” (3:12; cf. 4:29-34; 10:23-24) above all other men and used the king to inspire portions of the canon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes); however, “when Solomon was old . . . his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as *did* David his father. . . . And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel . . . [and he no longer] kept [the LORD’s] covenant and . . . statutes” (1 Kings 11:4-11).¹⁷ Instead of his heart being “incline[d]”¹⁸ to the LORD (1 Kings 8:58), his heart was now “turned away” (1 Kings 11:2, 4) after other supreme loves and thus “his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel” (1 Kings 11:9), to do evil (1 Kings 11:6-7) and no longer go fully after Him (1 Kings 11:6). Thus, while sometimes the upright or perfect in heart are all those who “trust . . . in the LORD” and are “righteous” by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness as their legal standing and the impartation of inward holiness, and as such are contrasted with the “wicked” who will dwell eternally in “fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest” (Psalm 11; cf. Psalm 32:11, 1-10; 36:10; 125:1-5), and so in one sense all the people of God have upright hearts, in another sense believers can fall into sin and lose their upright hearts.¹⁹

¹⁵ תַּפְנִית שׁ: service with willingness and desire (cf. 1 Kings 13:33; 21:6; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Nehemiah 1:11; Micah 7:18; Malachi 3:1; Psalm 5:5; 34:13; 35:27; 40:15; 70:3; 111:2) from the soul.

¹⁶ The Hithpael of בָּרֵךְ: “to make a voluntary decision . . . a voluntary contribution” (KB).

¹⁷ Note that the warning that marriages to pagan women “will turn away your heart after their gods” (2 Kings 11:2) refers to the Deuteronomic warning “they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods” (Deuteronomy 7:4), closely connecting the direction of the heart and the act of following.

¹⁸ נִטְרָה in the Hiphil, as is “turn away” in 1 Kings 11:2, 4; 11:9 contains the Qal.

¹⁹ In certain texts it is not immediately obvious whether the upright in heart are saints who are walking in integrity or the entire body of the saints; nonetheless, the Scriptural evidence for both sorts of uprightness is clear. Texts that are less immediately clear, as well as verses that clearly speak of the one sort of uprightness of heart or the other, nonetheless can illuminate characteristics of the uprightness both of all the elect and of those believers who are not holding on to known sin.

Job was by no means sinless and perfect like God his Father was (Job 40:4; 42:6), yet he was “perfect” in that he was “upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1; cf. 1:8-9),²⁰ one who in spite of exceedingly difficult trials “sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (1:22) but, as concerning His tribulations, “did not . . . sin with his lips” (2:10), but instead “retain[ed] [his] integrity” (2:9).²¹ His relationship to God, his heart, and his life were characterized by completeness, soundness, and wholeness towards holiness and the Holy One, by sincerity, integrity, and honesty, by freedom from sinful blemishes²² in heart towards Him²³—Job was not intentionally acting in wilful disobedience in any area. Consequently, Job’s prayers and worship were acceptable to God (42:9-10), and the Lord blessed him (42:12). Had Job given in to temptation, he would have fallen from his state of uprightness and integrity to no longer be right with God. He who has a right or “perfect” heart is “undefiled” (Song 5:2), walks in “integrity of heart, and in uprightness” (1 Kings 9:4; Psalm 78:72), in “the integrity of [his] heart and innocence of [his] hands” (Genesis 20:5-6), free from intentional and wilful sin, although not sinless (Genesis 20:3-9). He behaves wisely, desires communion with Jehovah, and maintains purity in his household so he can maintain a perfect heart there (Psalm 101:2). He sets or deliberately places before him no wicked thing, but hates wickedness and the wicked and is determined that they will be separated from him (101:3-5, 7-8), especially in what pertains to the worship of the Lord (101:8), choosing rather as his companions the faithful who walk “in a perfect way” (101:6). His heart is not foward, crooked, or twisted, but he is upright in his way (Proverbs 11:20). His “heart [is] sound in [God’s] statutes” (Psalm 119:80). His walk is upright, his heart is truthful, and his actions righteous (Psalm 15:2; cf. 15:3-5). His all-around sincerity and desire for the literal perfection of the holy character of God is his submissive response to the command: “Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God” (Deuteronomy 15:13).

The heart that is right with God is also “prepare[d] . . . unto the LORD” (1 Samuel 7:3).²⁴ Sinning believers must turn from whatever they idolatrously regard as more

²⁰ The LXX states that Ιωβ . . . ἦν ὁ ἀνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ἀληθινός ἀμεμπτος δίκαιος θεοσεβής ἀπεχόμενος ἀπὸ παντὸς πονηροῦ πράγματος (1:1; “Job . . . was true, blameless, righteous, and godly, abstaining from everything evil.”). The Targum states that Job was : וְעַד כֵּן בִּישׁוּן מִנְקָרָם יְיָ שׁוֹלְלִים וְתִרְיֵץ דָחֵיל מִנְקָרָם יְיָ.

For the idea in the description of sinful earthly saints as “perfect,” see the section “Vivification as Perfecting” above.

²¹ מִנְחָנִיק בְּחַטָּאת; Job kept hold of, seized, or grasped his perfectness.

²² Compare the use of בְּמִימָה for blemish-free sacrificial animals, Exodus 12:5; 29:1; etc.

²³ Thus, by בְּמִימָה/תְּמִימָה/תְּמִימָה.

²⁴ כְּוֹן לְבָב/לְבָב and כְּוֹן. A distinction is present between כְּוֹן in the Niphal and Hiphil; the heart is established or steadfast and caused to be established or steadfast, that is, prepared or fixed. Also, as with

important than God, “return unto the LORD with all [their] hearts . . . prepare [their] hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only” (1 Samuel 7:3). Job 11:13-14 describes repentance as preparing of the heart: “If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward [God]; if iniquity *be* in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.” Such a preparation or establishment of the heart is a gift of Divine grace; thus, the desire and prayer of the humble is that Jehovah would prepare and perfect their heart and the heart of others (1 Chronicles 29:18-19; Psalm 10:17), for a “clean heart” and a “right spirit,” prepared for fellowship with the Lord, are the product of a supernatural creative act²⁵ of God in His people (Psalm 51:10).²⁶ If God does not sustain His people by His grace, their indwelling sin will lead them to fall (2 Chronicles 32:31), with terrible consequences (2 Chronicles 32:25-26; 2 Kings 20:12-18). The “fixed” or established heart “will sing and give praise” (Psalm 57:7; 108:1). One who “is established . . . cannot be moved” easily into rebellion and sin (cf. Psalm 93:1; 112:6-8); “his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD” (Psalm 112:7). He can have God powerfully working in his life and ministry, as Ezra had “the good hand of his God upon him[,] [f]or [he] had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:9-10; cf. 2 Chronicles 19:13). Indeed, while outward nonconformity to Divine standards are sinful and in need of pardon (2 Chronicles 30:18-20), the Lord is merciful to “every one *that* prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though *he be* not *cleansed*” outwardly as he ought (2 Chronicles 30:19), indicating that one can have a heart that is right with God and sincere before Him while he yet lacks a great deal of knowledge of Biblical precepts and is not outwardly obedient because of a lack of instruction. On the other hand, a man will do “evil, because he prepare[s] not his heart to seek the LORD” (2 Chronicles 12:14), and righteous deeds are hindered (2 Chronicles 20:33a) because “people ha[ve] not prepared

other combinations of words for the right with God, the “prepared heart” is both spoken of as the possession of the believer who is in fellowship with the Lord and, at times, as a description of all the people of God in general as distinguished from the wicked and hell-bound and in settings where those who were heaven-bound but backslidden and those who were still hell-bound are grouped together (cf. Psalm 11:2; 78:8, 37), although in general the “prepared heart” is descriptive of the progressing believer in contrast with one who is regressing.

²⁵ Thus, Psalm 51:10 employs נָתַן.

²⁶ Psalm 51 is a model for the type of prayer of repentance that is appropriate for a backslidden saint who wishes to again be right with God. Note that David knew that he did not lose his salvation as a result of his sin; his prayer in 51:11b, “take not thy holy spirit from me,” refers to his desire not to lose the theocratic endowment with the Holy Spirit that he had received as the king over Israel, an empowerment he had received upon being anointed to his office (1 Samuel 16:13), as Saul had received it upon his anointing (1 Samuel 10:1-11). Saul had lost this theocratic endowment when he was rejected as king for his disobedience and David was anointed (1 Samuel 16:1-14). This sort of theocratic rejection was what David prayed to be spared from in Psalm 51:11.

their hearts unto the God of their fathers” (2 Chronicles 20:33b). Those who do not establish their hearts, who “set not their heart aright, and whose spirit [is] not stedfast with God,” are “stubborn and rebellious,” and “their heart [is] not right with [God]” (Psalm 78:8, 37). The Lord blesses²⁷ those among His people who have upright, clean, and prepared hearts for Him, and withholds His full blessing from those of His own who do not.

Those among the people of God who are not right with God are “backsliding”,²⁸ (Hosea 4:16)—they are in wilful and deliberate sin, stubbornly and rebelliously²⁹ holding on to iniquity, and consequently those who “set not their heart aright” (Psalm 78:8),³⁰ and are spiritually decaying and becoming weaker. Backsliding³¹ is refusing to hearken to God as He speaks in His Word, instead acting like a stubborn ox that will not allow a yoke on its neck and obey its master (Nehemiah 9:29; Hosea 4:16; Zechariah 7:11). Since such rebellion against God is characteristic of the unconverted, the “backsliding” are regularly lost people (Isaiah 65:2),³² those who “believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation” (Psalm 78:8, 22) and are in need of saving conversion (Psalm 78:7a)

²⁷ A phrase used for Jehovah’s blessing in Ezra and Nehemiah is to have God’s hand upon one who belongs to Him or to have His good hand upon a believer or group of His people for good (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; Nehemiah 2:8, 18; note that God is specified in these texts as “my” God, “our” God, or “his” God, the God of the person or group who have His hand upon him or them, and the phrase is often employed in association with the covenant name *Jehovah*). Only those believers who are right with God can have His hand upon them for good in the way Ezra and Nehemiah did.

²⁸ סְרֵךְ.

²⁹ Thus, the verb סְרֵךְ, which is the “backsliding” of Hosea 4:16, means “to be stubborn” (KB), a way the verb is translated in Deuteronomy 21:18, 20; Psalm 78:8; Proverbs 7:11. The verb is rendered as “rebellious” in Psalm 66:7; 68:6, 19; Isaiah 1:23; 30:1; 65:2, and as “revolting,” in a state of revolt, in Jeremiah 5:23; 6:28; Hosea 9:15. It “lays stress on attitude, whereas the synonymous *mārad* emphasizes rebellious actions” (*TWOT*, סְרֵךְ).

³⁰ Thus, those who are backsliding, a דָזֵר סְזִיר וַיְמַרְתָּה דָזֵר, are those who are not upright in heart, לֹא־הָכִין לְפָנֶיךָ.

³¹ The complete list of references to the English “backsliding” are: Proverbs 14:14; Jeremiah 2:19; 3:6, 8, 11–12, 14, 22; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7; 31:22; 49:4; Hosea 4:16; 11:7; 14:4; the Hebrew words involved are: שׁוֹבֵב מִשְׁׁוֹבֵב סְגִּיר, and סְגִּיר.

³² Thus, Isaiah 65:2 does not just contextually refer to idolatrous and unconverted Israelites (65:2–7), but is employed by Paul of the unregenerate Jews who reject the gospel (Romans 10:21), in contrast with those Gentiles who believe it (Isaiah 65:1; Romans 10:20). Note that it is clearly erroneous to assume that because Israel was, in a national sense, the people of God, that therefore every passage in which the Lord addresses His chosen nation refers to those who truly belong to Him, and that consequently texts warning sinning Israel must refer to the saved who are not living as they ought instead of to the unconverted (cf. Romans 9). Many of the texts employing the verb for “backsliding” in Hosea 4:16 refer to the lost (note the complete list of texts: Deuteronomy 21:18, 20; Nehemiah 9:29; Psalm 66:7; 68:7, 19; 78:8; Proverbs 7:11; Isaiah 1:23; 30:1; 65:2; Jeremiah 5:23; 6:28; Hosea 4:16; 9:15; Zechariah 7:11); indeed, none of the passages with סְרֵךְ clearly and definitively refer to a disobedient saved person, although a reference to both the lost and disobedient saved is possible in several references.

even if they are outwardly identified with the Lord (Psalm 78:35).³³ However, as Scripture both speaks of all the saints as those who are right with God, and identifies only those who are walking uprightly among His own as right with God in another sense, so while the backsliding or rebellious are regularly the unsaved, at times those who are truly converted are spoken of as backsliding.³⁴ Thus, while the unsaved will backslide or “go back” from God (Psalm 53:3; Zephaniah 1:6),³⁵ and will reap the evil eternal consequences of their sin, since “the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways” (Proverbs 14:14),³⁶ nonetheless believers can likewise backslide (Psalm 80:18).³⁷

³³ Compare the Psalm 78 texts and the status of Israel in the wilderness to “Excursus IV: Hebrews 3-4 As An Alleged Evidence For Perpetually Sinning Christians” below. **Verify that this excursus # is still correct.**

³⁴ The description of those who “seek” (**שׁוֹבֵךְ**) Jehovah is comparable. In addition to seeking the Lord in relation to specific requests (2 Samuel 12:16; 21:1; Ezra 8:21-23; Daniel 8:15; 9:3), some texts indicate that all believers seek Him (Zephaniah 1:4-6; Psalm 83:16—cf. the specific seeking after the Messiah, Malachi 3:1), other texts identify believers who are right with God, rather than backslidden believers, as those who seek Him (2 Chronicles 7:14; 15:2-4), and in many instances both the conversion of unsaved individuals and the restoration of those who already are the spiritual people of God can be in view (cf. the complete list of relevant verses: Exodus 10:11; 33:7; Deuteronomy 4:29; 2 Samuel 12:16; 21:1; 1 Chronicles 16:10-11; 2 Chronicles 7:14; 15:4, 15; 20:4; 22:9; Ezra 8:21-23; Psalm 27:8; 40:16; 69:6; 83:16; 105:3-4; Proverbs 2:4; 14:6; 15:14; 28:5; Isaiah 45:19; 51:1; 65:1; Jeremiah 29:13; 50:4; Daniel 8:15; 9:3; Hosea 3:5; 5:6, 15; 7:10; Zephaniah 1:6; 2:3; Zechariah 8:21-22; Malachi 3:1).

While a higher percentage of texts where people “seek” (**שׁוֹבֵךְ**) Jehovah refer to specific tasks (Genesis 25:22; Exodus 18:15, etc.) than do the references with the verb **שׁוּבָה**, with **שׁוּבָה** also certain texts indicate that all those who are saved seek God (Psalm 10:4; 14:2; 53:2; Isaiah 55:6; 65:1, 10; note also saved Gentiles seeking the Messiah, Isaiah 11:10), while others demonstrate that not all the redeemed seek after the Lord as they ought to (1 Chronicles 15:13; 2 Chronicles 16:12; 26:5). Note the complete list of relevant texts: Genesis 25:22; Exodus 18:15; Deuteronomy 4:29; 12:5; 1 Kings 22:5, 7-8; 2 Kings 1:3, 6, 16; 3:11; 8:8; 22:13, 18; 1 Chronicles 10:14; 13:3; 15:13; 16:11; 21:30; 22:19; 28:8-9; 2 Chronicles 1:5; 12:14; 14:4, 7; 15:2, 12-13; 16:12; 17:3-4; 18:4, 6-7; 19:3; 20:3; 22:9; 30:19; 31:21; 32:31; 34:3, 21, 26; Ezra 4:2; 6:21; 7:10; Job 5:8; Psalm 9:10; 10:4; 14:2; 22:26; 34:4, 10; 53:2; 69:32; 77:2; 78:34; 105:4; 119:2, 10; Is 8:19; 9:13; 11:10; 31:1; 55:6; 58:2; 65:1, 10; Jerermiah 10:21; 21:2; 29:13; 37:7; Lamentations 3:25; Ezekiel 14:3, 7, 10; 20:1, 3, 31; 36:37; Hosea 10:12; Amos 5:4-6, 14; Zephaniah 1:6. Note also the verses that employ both **שׁוֹבֵךְ** and **שׁוּבָה**, often in parallelism: Deuteronomy 4:29; Judges 6:29; 1 Samuel 28:7; Isaiah 65:1; Jerermiah 29:13; Ezekiel 34:6; Zephaniah 1:6; Psalm 24:6; 38:13; 105:4; Job 10:6; Proverbs 11:27; 1 Chronicles 16:11; 2 Chronicles 22:9.

³⁵ The verb **סָוַג** is employed. The immediate context of both Psalm 53:3 and Zephaniah 1:6 make it clear that the backslider is unconverted in these passages (cf. also Romans 3:12). The complete list of **סָוַג** texts is: Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17; 2 Samuel 1:22; Psalm 35:4; 40:14; 44:18; 53:3; 70:2; 78:57; 80:18; 129:5; Proverbs 14:14; 22:28; 23:10; Isaiah 42:17; 50:5; 59:13-14; Jeremiah 38:22; 46:5; Hosea 5:10; Micah 2:6; 6:14; Zephaniah 1:6. The verb is related to **יִתְשַׁׁרְבֶּן**, “dross” (Psalm 119:119; Proverbs 25:4; 26:23; Isaiah 1:22, 25; Ezekiel 22:18-19), as dross is that which is turned away or cast aside in the process of refining metal; cf. **כִּידְשֵׁנָה**, 1 Kings 18:27.

³⁶ **מִדְרְכֵיכְיוֹ יִשְׁבַּע סָוַג לְבָבְךָ אֲמֻלְלִיו אַרְשֵׁת טוֹב :**

³⁷ The verb **סָוַג** is also employed here; it is in the Qal both in Psalm 80:18 and in Psalm 53:3. The Qal also appears in Proverbs 14:14, where the passive participle **סָוִג** is translated “the backslider.” In the Hiphil the verb means “to cause something to go back” or “to remove” (Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:27; Proverbs 22:28; 23:10; Hosea 5:10; Micah 6:14); compare the Hophal in Isaiah 59:14.

Indeed, the saints, because of their indwelling sin, would certainly be turned back³⁸ were they not the recipients of sustaining grace from Jehovah; their flesh is bent to backsliding (Hosea 11:7; Isaiah 57:17), so they appropriately pray, “quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved” (Psalm 80:18b-19). Because God quickens them, turns them, and causes His face to shine upon them, they can say, “so will not we go back from thee” (Psalm 80:18a). Further, all of the supernatural power of God exerted upon His people to keep them from backsliding is only bestowed upon the saints for Christ’s sake—thus, they pray: “Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man³⁹ *whom* thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee” (Psalm 80:17-18a). As God quickens His own for the sake of Christ, they also can follow the example of the incarnate Messiah, who said: “The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back” (Isaiah 50:5).⁴⁰ Strengthened by God to remain right with Him, His obedient people consequently say: “[W]e [have] not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back,⁴¹ neither have our steps declined from thy way” (Psalm 44:17-18).

Those without spiritual strength backslide⁴² (Proverbs 1:32). Backsliding can increase (Jeremiah 5:6) in degree, becoming worse and worse (Jeremiah 14:7) as one slides backwards further and further, until it is “perpetual” as one continually “refuse[s] to return” (Jeremiah 8:5). Israel’s backsliding was “wickedness . . . an evil *thing* and bitter,” a result of having “forsaken the LORD thy God” and of not having His “fear . . . in thee” (Jeremiah 2:19). It is a rejection of God’s call and a refusal to exalt Him (Hosea

³⁸ Compare נִזְבָּן in the Niphal in 2 Samuel 1:22; Psalm 35:4; 40:14; 44:18; 70:2; 78:57; 129:5; Isaiah 42:17; 59:13; Jeremiah 38:22; 46:5; Micah 2:6; Zephaniah 1:6. Note that in Jeremiah 38:22; 46:5 a literal turning back is in view (cf. also Psalm 35:4; 40:14; 70:2; 78:57; 129:5).

³⁹ The mediatorial Son of Man (בֶּן־אָדָם) of Psalm 80:17 is God’s Anointed, His Messiah, the מֶשֶׁיחַ of Psalm 20:6, who is the “man of Thy right hand” (מֵשֶׁת יָמִינְךָ) in Psalm 80:17 in that He is the One who sits at Jehovah’s right hand as Prophet, Priest, and King (cf. Psalm 110:1), and He is that Son of Man, the בֶּן־אָדָם, the second Adam through whom the dominion of man over the earth will be restored according to Psalm 8:4 (cf. Hebrews 2:6-9), and the One foreseen in Daniel 7:13: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man [כֹּבֶד אָנָּשָׁן] came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.”

⁴⁰ אֶרְאָנִי יְהוָה פָּתַח־לִי אֶنְן וְאֶנְכֶּן לֹא פָּרָה תִּאְחֹור לֹא נִסְתְּחַי: Jehovah is the Speaker in v. 5 (cf. Isaiah 50:1), yet He is sent by a distinct Person who is also Jehovah (v. 4-5) and becomes incarnate to suffer the scorn of men and bring them salvation (v. 6-9) as the servant of Jehovah (v. 10; cf. Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

⁴¹ לֹא־נִסְתְּגֵר אֲחֹור לְבָנָנו

⁴² The texts examined below generally speak of backsliding with the word מִשְׁׁוֹבָה (Proverbs 1:32; Jeremiah 2:19; 3:6, 8, 11-12, 22; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7; Hosea 11:7; 14:5).

11:7), holding fast to deceit instead of to the Lord (Jeremiah 8:5). Backsliding is spiritual infidelity (Jeremiah 3:6) that leads to the commission of outward wickedness. It contains within itself the seeds of judgment and evil for the one or the group that engages in it (Jeremiah 2:19). The backslidden saint will lose his closeness and communion with his God, the backsliding professor without Christ is in danger of having his rejection of grace eternally confirmed to him, and the backsliding church is in danger of ceasing to be the place of the special presence of God (Revelation 2:5), as the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah were rejected by God, and finally, in connection with the inauguration of the dispensation of grace, Israel as a whole was rejected for the church (Jeremiah 3:8-11; Romans 11). Backsliding brings the unstable believer chastisement and the lost destruction (Proverbs 1:32).

The backsliding of the nation of Israel presents a pattern for the nature of backsliding and restoration into a state of being right with God.⁴³ Backsliding requires that one fall from a previously present condition of some sort of unity with Jehovah, whether from the state of genuine fellowship with the Lord possessed by the justified who are right with God, or from the state of outward or civil union with God that the unconverted but formally obedient Israelite possessed through his circumcision and formal conformity to his national covenant, or from some other state of connection with God that is renounced.⁴⁴ Israel was restored from a backslidden condition by the repentance of the true people of God within the nation and the evangelical conversion or at least the restored civil conformity to the Law by the unsaved in Israel. Restoration from a backslidden state is a gift of God's grace, given to the people of God for His name's sake, not because they deserve restoration (Jeremiah 14:7). God determines, "I will heal their backsliding," not because of their merit, but because "I will love them freely" (Hosea 14:4). He "heals their backsliding" because His "anger is turned away" (Hosea 14:4) from them—free love and a removal of Divine anger is the cause of the gracious work of the Lord to heal the backsliding of His own. Jehovah says, "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger . . . for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee," and therefore He says of His own, "They shall walk after the LORD"

⁴³ Texts speaking of the backsliding of Israel also illustrate that not individuals alone, but also the entirety of God's institution of public worship may be backslidden (cf. Jeremiah 2:19); thus, one can appropriately speak of the entire nation of Israel as backslidden at various times in the Old Testament and as right with God at other times (cf. Judges 10:6-16, etc.); likewise one can appropriately refer to a church in the dispensation of grace as right with God (Revelation 2:8-11; 3:7-13) or as backslidden (Revelation 2:1-7).

⁴⁴ Psalm 53:3 is an instance in which all men, by virtue of their fall in Adam, have backslidden (בָּשָׁר) from their former state of rectitude in the loins of their progenitor, racial representative, and federal head.

(Hosea 11:9-10; cf. Jeremiah 3:19). The saints do not first return to God, and then have Him love them, but their return is the result of sovereign and free love that draws them to repentance while they are yet in their rebellious and backslidden state. They hear the Lord call to them: “[T]hou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 3:1). They recognize the magnitude of their sin and the justice of their God’s chastisement of them (Jeremiah 3:2-3, 6ff.). They turn to God, not “feignedly,” but “with [their] whole heart” (Jeremiah 3:10); the fact of God’s continuing love for and goodness towards them while in their sin overwhelms them with shame at their iniquity and draws them to return to Him, in accordance with God’s supernaturally working within them to lead them to freely and wholeheartedly turn to Him. Jehovah calls, “Turn, O backsliding⁴⁵ children . . . for I am married unto you. . . . Return, ye backsliding children, *and I will heal your backslidings*,” and they respond, “Behold, we come unto thee; for thou *art* the LORD our God” (Jeremiah 3:14, 22).

The New Testament maintains the distinction between the believer who is right with God and the one who is backsliding⁴⁶ that is taught in the Old Testament, while also following the Old Testament in affirming that, in another sense, all believers are right with God, while those who are not right are unconverted. Peter warned Simon the sorceror, “thy heart is not right in the sight of God,”⁴⁷ and consequently Simon was going to “perish . . . in the bond of iniquity” unless he repented and was truly converted (Acts 8:20-23). Simon, and all the unregenerate, are warned that they are not right with God and are set in contrast to all who are born again. On the other hand, all believers are “washed” and “clean every whit,” but they still need to wash their feet (John 13:10). All believers are pure in heart⁴⁸ and will see God (Matthew 5:8; Titus 1:15) and all have “good”⁴⁹ hearts because they are “good men” (Matthew 12:35; Luke 6:45), for God

⁴⁵ שׁוֹבֵב; בְּנִים שׁוֹבָבִים is also employed for backsliding in Jeremiah 3:22; 50:6; Isaiah 57:17.

⁴⁶ Compare, for a New Testament doctrine of backsliding, the discussion of terms relating to spiritual weakness in the section “Vivification as Strengthening” above.

⁴⁷ ἡ γὰρ καρδία σου οὐκ ἔστιν εὐθεῖα ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ; Simon’s heart was not “straight, direct . . . in moral sense, *straightforward . . . opp[osite] σκολιός*” (LSJ), that is, his heart was not “proper, right” but “morally bent or twisted” (BDAG, εὐθύς, σκολιός). The εὐθύς/σκολιός contrast is only employed in the New Testament of the contrast between the regenerate and the unregenerate (cf. Acts 13:10; 2 Peter 2:15 with Acts 2:40; Philippians 2:15; 1 Peter 2:18; the literal references to the words appear in Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4–5 (εὐθύς) and Luke 3:5, σκολιός). Compare also εὐθύνω (John 1:23; James 3:4). On the other hand, not all believers faithfully make “straight paths” for their feet (τροχιὰς ὄρθας, Hebrews 12:13; cf. Acts 14:10 for the only other use of ὄρθος).

⁴⁸ καθαρός.

⁴⁹ ἀγαθός.

purified their hearts at the moment of their faith and regeneration (Acts 15:9).⁵⁰ Nevertheless, not all, in another sense, have a pure heart (1 Timothy 1:5; cf. 1 Peter 1:22⁵¹). A believer's heart can be "hardened," hindering his spiritual understanding (Mark 6:52; 8:17),⁵² so that he is "slow of heart" to believe and receive truth (Luke 24:25),⁵³ but a strong believer can be a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), one who has greatly set apart or sanctified the Lord in his heart (1 Peter 3:15). The believer's heart can either convict him as guilty or not condemn him (1 John 3:20-21),⁵⁴ based on

⁵⁰ Acts 15:7-9 reads: And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. πολλῆς δὲ συζητήσεως γενομένης ἀναστὰς Πέτρος εἶπε πρὸς αὐτούς, "Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, ὑμεῖς ἐπίστασθε ὅτι ἀρ' ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων ὁ Θεός ἐν ἡμῖν ἔξελέξατο, διὰ τοῦ στόματός μου ἀκούσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὸν λόγον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, καὶ πιστεῦσαι. καὶ ὁ καρδιογνώστης Θεός ἐμαρτύρησεν αὐτοῖς, δοὺς αὐτοῖς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἀγιον, καθὼς καὶ ἡμῖν καὶ οὐδὲν διέκρινε μεταξὺ ἡμῶν τε καὶ αὐτῶν, τῇ πίστει καθαρίσας τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν. The passage clearly refers in context to the definitive cleansing that takes place at the moment of faith and regeneration, not to progressive sanctification (as erroneously affirmed, among others, by Robert Pearsall Smith; see, e. g., pg. 92, "The Brighton Convention and Its Opponents." *London Quarterly Review*, October 1875; also, pg. 71, *The Keswick Convention: Its Message, its Method, and its Men*, ed. Charles Harford: "Faith in sanctification . . . is precisely the same faculty as that exercised in receiving remission, and its exercise is quite as simple as then; but it now takes another direction. And this direction figures very largely in the Scriptures in the matter of the Christian's victory over sin, or deliverance from it . . . see e.g. Acts xv. 9[.]"). At the same moment, the Gentiles heard (ἀκούσαι), believed (πιστεῦσαι), were witnessed to or attested to by God (ἐμαρτύρησεν) by being given (δοὺς) the Holy Ghost, had no difference put (διέκρινε) between them and the Jews, and had their hearts purified (καθαρίσας), namely, at the moment of faith, the faith whereby they came to trust in Christ, not faith wherein they were to live their Christian lives. Note the aorist tense of all the verbs. The Gentiles received an inward evangelical purification at the time of their conversion, a purification which the Old Testament ceremony of circumcision could only symbolize and point towards.

⁵¹ One could paraphrase the verse: "Since you have purified your soul by being born again, love with a pure heart." τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας διὰ Πνεύματος εἰς φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον, ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας ἀλλήλους ἀγαπήσατε ἐκτενῶς.

⁵² πωρόω is employed both for the hardness of the believer's heart as a result of his remaining indwelling sin and for the unchangeably dominant (although it can grow stronger through more active rebellion to God) inclination of the unregenerate man's heart; note the complete list of New Testament texts: Mark 6:52; 8:17; John 12:40; Romans 11:7; 2 Corinthians 3:14. In contrast, the verb σκληρύνω is employed only of the hard-heartedness of the unregenerate in the New Testament (Acts 19:9; Romans 9:18; Hebrews 3:8, 13, 15; 4:7; however, note the uses of σκληροκαρδία, Matthew 19:8; Mark 10:5; 16:14).

⁵³ While a definite right with God/not right with God distinction is taught in many passages that speak about the heart (καρδία), there are likewise many texts that associate the "heart" with the progressive aspect of sanctification; for example, while Christ is already in all believer's hearts (Romans 8:10; 2 Corinthians 13:5), progressive sanctification results in an increase in His special presence in the heart (Ephesians 3:17), just as it results in a greater measure of grace in the heart (Colossians 3:16) and progressive establishment of the believer's heart in unblameable holiness (1 Thessalonians 3:13; cf. Hebrews 13:9).

⁵⁴ ὅτι ἐὰν καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι μείζων ἐστίν ὁ Θεός τῆς καρδίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γινώσκει πάντα. ἀγαπητοί, ἐὰν ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν μὴ καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν, παρρησίαν ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. The verb καταγινώσκω, to "lay a charge against, convict, condemn" (see

his manifestation of inward and outward Christlikeness (1 John 3:18-22). Double-minded and sinning believers are consequently commanded to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts (James 4:8), and walk in the light in order to experience continued cleansing from the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7).⁵⁵ Some believers are filled with the Spirit, others are not (Ephesians 5:18). The Old Testament doctrine that backsliders may be either unconverted persons or sinning believers appears in the New Testament fact that he who is placed under church discipline is treated as a heathen man and a publican (Matthew 18:15-20), that is, he is treated like an unregenerate person, although he may not in fact be unconverted, so that repentance and restoration can restore a disciplined member to the church body without a second call to new birth (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8). Some believers can fail to be right with God, partake of the Lord's Supper "unworthily"⁵⁶ (1 Corinthians 11:27, 29) and so bring judgment and chastisement upon themselves (1 Corinthians 11:29-32), having failed to properly examine⁵⁷ themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28) and act upon what they were enabled to discover, while other believers, those who are right with God, are, through Divine grace, worthy partakers. Some believers are counted worthy⁵⁸ (2 Thessalonians 1:11) in certain areas of

LSJ), is employed only in 1 John 3:20-21 and Galatians 2:11, where κατεγνωσμένος ἦν is translated "he was to be blamed."

⁵⁵ **I think the statement above about 1 John 1:7 may be wrong. I wrote:** Note the distinction between the present tense of καθαρίζω for the cleansing that accompanies a continued walk in the light in 1 John 1:7 (καθαρίζει) and the aorist tense of in 1 John 1:9 (καθαρίσῃ) for the cleansing of sins that are in particular confessed. **But note the commentaries, articles, etc. on 1 John, and also, critiquing the Keswick theology:** "[W]e would advert to a flagrant misapplication of a text in [1 John], which occurs in almost every [of the Keswick and Higher Life] books before us: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." We have often of late been pained to hear this precious text misquoted and misapplied by a different class of men from those with whom we are now dealing. The contextual condition being overlooked, and the all-important personal pronoun *us* being omitted, the text is frequently used by evangelists as if it taught the immediate pardon of all the sins of the sinner, on his acceptance of Christ as his Saviour. This is a wrong use of the text, but still a use of it in support of a great truth of which the Bible is full. But the [Higher Life] writers . . . pervert it utterly when they make it refer to their perfection of sanctification, or to sanctification at all. It does not teach the justification of the sinner, neither does it teach the sanctification of the believer, but it teaches the continuous acceptance of the saint, notwithstanding the imperfection of his holiness. Instead of teaching the [Keswick] doctrine in support of which it is so often quoted, it so distinctly implies the opposite, that it would have no meaning if that doctrine were true, unless, indeed, there be meaning in cleansing the clean" (pg. 274, "Means and Measure of Holiness," Thomas Smith. *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review* (April 1876) 251-280).

⁵⁶ ἀναξίως. Compare 1 Corinthians 6:2, ἀνάξιος.

⁵⁷ δοκιμάζω. Such examination should be done with reference to an upright Christian walk, and being right with God in such a sense (1 Corinthians 11:28), and with reference to one's particular works as a believer (Galatians 6:4; Ephesians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). Examination should also be undertaken with reference to one's state as regenerate or unregenerate, and thus to being right with God as opposed to being an object of His wrath (2 Corinthians 13:5), and to the claims of spiritual leaders (1 John 4:1).

⁵⁸ ἀξιώς. Compare the other references to the verb in the NT in Luke 7:7; Acts 15:38; 28:22; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 3:3; 10:29. All believers, in a different sense, are worthy (καταξιώς); see Luke 20:35; 21:36; this sense also likely appears in Acts 5:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:5.

spiritual life, and others are not. Not all the saints “walk worthy”⁵⁹ of their heavenly vocation to the same degree (Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12), or conduct their lifestyle in a worthy way (Philippians 1:27) even though God has foreordained that all believers have a holy walk (Ephesians 2:10), so some degree of the worthiness that is appropriate to the saints of God (Romans 16:2; 3 John 6) will appear in the lives of all the elect. Believers who are wilfully allowing inward or outward sin⁶⁰ to fester do not have the “true heart” that is required for acceptable worship (Hebrews 10:22),⁶¹ unlike believers who are upright and sincere before God in all areas of life and strive after the universal mortification of their sin. Furthermore, as in the Old Testament restoration from backsliding is a fruit of supernatural, preceding, sovereign grace, not a mere self-creation of the human will, so in the New Testament the restoration of saints from a backsliding condition, as their wider preservation and perseverance, is a fruit of the preceding, unmerited, free love and grace of Jesus Christ, their High Priest and effectual Mediator (John 17; Luke 22:32⁶²).

While all unregenerate men have a defiled conscience⁶³ (Titus 1:15), they can nonetheless either be condemned (John 8:9) or acquitted by their conscience (Acts 23:1; Romans 2:15; 2 Timothy 1:3) as they either meet or fall short of its standard, something they can do to the point that they cauterize their conscience (1 Timothy 4:2). Comparably, while believers cannot sear their consciences, and they all have a conscience that has been cleansed by Christ (Titus 1:15), they can nonetheless either have a clear (Acts 23:1; 24:16; Romans 9:1; 2 Timothy 1:3) or a condemning conscience (1

⁵⁹ ἀξίως, here with περιπατέω, as in Ephesians 2:10. Exhortations with περιπατέω (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15) form the divisions of the half of Ephesians devoted to application, chapters 4-6, and they build from the statement in 2:10, which itself is placed in contrast with the περιπατέω of the unregenerate in 2:2. Compare Colossians 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5.

⁶⁰ That is, in terms of Hebrews 10:22, when their hearts are not sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed in pure water.

⁶¹ Cf. *Exposition of Hebrews*, John Owen, on Hebrews 10:22.

⁶² In Luke 22:31-32, Christ says: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Σίμων, Σίμων, ὁ Σατανᾶς ἔξητήσατο ύμᾶς, τοῦ σινιάσαι ώς τὸν σίτον ἐγώ δὲ ἐδεήθην περὶ σού, ἵνα μὴ ἐκλείπῃ ἡ πίστις σου καὶ σύ ποτε ἐπιστρέψας στήριξον τοὺς ἀδελφούς σου.). The fact that Peter’s faith would not fail was due to the intercession of Christ, and his turning again from a backslidden state was not an “if,” but a “when,” also as a result of the intercession of his Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1). Compare Christ’s intercession for those who literally placed Him on the cross (Luke 23:34) and their coming to faith (Luke 23:47; Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39).

⁶³ συνείδησις; see John 8:9; Acts 23:1; 24:16; Romans 2:15; 9:1; 13:5; 1 Corinthians 8:7, 10, 12; 10:25, 27-29; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 4:2; 5:11; 1 Timothy 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:15; Hebrews 9:9, 14; 10:2, 22; 13:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 3:16, 21.

Corinthians 8:7-12;⁶⁴ Romans 14:20-23) for either specific acts (Romans 9:1; 13:5; 1 Corinthians 8:7-12; 10:25-29; 1 Peter 2:19) or for their overall state (Acts 24:16) as being upright before God or backsliding. Thus, all believers have a “good” or “pure” conscience in the same sense that all believers are right with God, but all the saints do not all have a “good” or “pure” conscience in that some believers are growing and others are backsliding (1 Timothy 1:5, 19; 3:9; 2 Timothy 1:3; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16, 21). A pure conscience marks all believers who are right with God; all upright Christians, all who seek for a universal, unexceptioned mortification of their sin, possess such a clean conscience, while all who are willfully holding on to or permitting sin in their lives have lost their clear conscience and have fallen from the state of being right with God. Believers who are right with God, and therefore have a clear conscience, can “rejoic[e] [in] . . . the testimony of [their] conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, [they] have had [their] conversation in the world, and more abundantly” towards other believers (2 Corinthians 1:12). In that they are not consciously and wilfully holding on to sin, they have “no more conscience of sins” as none come to their “remembrance”; their conscience is “clean”⁶⁵ rather than being an “evil conscience” (Hebrews 9:9, 14; 10:2-3; 22).⁶⁶

Baptists have historically accepted the existence of both the Biblical distinction between believers who are right with God and those who are not and the distinction between those who, as God’s people, are eternally right with God, in contrast to the unregenerate, who abide in death.⁶⁷ In the recognition that only believers who are free

⁶⁴ The “brother” of 1 Corinthians 8:7-12 could either be a genuine Christian or a mere professing “brother” (cf. Acts 1:16; 2:29, 37; 3:17; 13:26; Hebrews 3:12, etc. for “brethren” referring to fellow Jews, or mere professors, rather than specifically to true believers), as evidenced by 8:11.

⁶⁵ καθαρίζω, Hebrews 9:14; cf. 1 John 1:7, 9.

⁶⁶ While Hebrews 9-10 specifically contrasts the conscience of those in the Mosaic dispensation with those in the dispensation of grace, so that the repeated animal sacrifices constantly brought sin to remembrance for those in the Old Testament, unlike those who have their sin removed once and for all through the sacrifice of Christ, the point about the individual conscience of the New Testament saint who is right with God being clean, free from the remembrance of sin, is still valid, although one could well say that all believers in the New Testament have had their conscience purged by the blood of Christ in the sense that they have all been justified, positionally sanctified, and legally “perfected forever” (Hebrews 10:10-14).

⁶⁷ For example, Jesse Mercer, in an 1806 Circular for the Georgia Baptist Association, spoke of “[t]hat restraint which a Christian[,] when right with God, places on the passions and propensities of the carnal heart, by which he subdues and maintains the victory over them; and secondly, that government which he exercises over the members of his body, by which he sanctifies them for, and employs them[,] in the service of God.” (*History of the Georgia Baptist Association*, by Jesse Mercer, Part 3, “Circular Letters,” Circular #10. Elec. acc. *Baptist History Collection CD*). In the seventeenth century, Baptist preacher Thomas Patient prayed that his fellow Christian (Oliver Cromwell here in particular) would continue in a state of uprightness or rightness before God:

from allowed and willful sin are, in one sense, right with God, they are generally followed⁶⁸ by advocates of Keswick theology and certain other Higher Life theologies of sanctification,⁶⁹ whose proponents typically emphasize the Scriptural fact of the difference between believers who are walking in fellowship with the Lord and those who are not, as well as the necessity of calling the backsliding to a crisis of repentance and restoration of conscious and close fellowship with God. Unfortunately, Higher Life

My constant prayers are at the throne of grace for you, that you may be kept upright with God, and in nothing left to sin and dishonour God; his name being so much concerned in it. Therefore, as God hath formerly given you the experience of the benefit of a humble walking with God, I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, still keep a close watch over your own heart, and labour to walk under the sense of that body of death and your daily infirmities, and to see a need of godly repentance daily, and humiliation, and fresh strength from Christ by faith, by which you may be kept and preserved in a fresh, sweet, and comfortable communion with God; for his presence will be all your happiness. Be sure to prize God's holy word, and all the rest of God's holy ordinances, and in so much as may be, neglect not to practise them, that you by your constant godly example may provoke others to holiness and to the fear of the Lord. And remember that the apostle bids, "*Exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfullness of sin.*" Though you have ancient acquaintance with God and with your own heart, yet, say as David saith; *Lord, leave me not when I am old and grey headed.* Rest not in grace received, nor too much on former experiences, so as to neglect your future growth and progress in the ways of God. Apply that promise in Job 17; where God saith; *The righteous shall grow stronger and stronger, and he that hath clear hands shall hold on his way.* And know, it must be a special power of God that must keep you up to the will of God, to his honour and your comfort. And this, in the simplicity of my very heart, I desire may be in my own heart, and yours, and all that love God in sincerity and truth. ("Thomas Patient to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Chief General if the Parliament's forces in Scotland, From Kilkenny, April 15, 1650, in *Confessions of Faith and Other Public Documents*, Underhill, Elec. acc. *Baptist History Collection CD*; cf. J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History*, Chapter 4, "The Troublous Period," (1567-1688).)

John Bunyan, in his 1675 Catechism, wrote: "Is there any other whose prayer God refuseth?-A. Yes; 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me' (Psa 66:18)" (pg. 687, *Instructions for the Ignorant*, John Bunyan, vol. 2) to which Bunyan's editor correctly noted, "That our prayers may be heard, the heart should be right with God, and our souls at peace with him through the Son of his love" (footnote #18, *ibid*).

Baptists likewise employed "right with God" terminology to contrast the regenerate and the unregenerate, a different sort of distinction from that between the upright and backslidden believer, but certainly a legitimate one. For instance, the famous nineteenth century Baptist pastor Charles Spurgeon preached: "Get right with God; confess thy sin; believe in Jesus Christ, the appointed Savior; be reconciled to God by the death of his Son; then all will be right between thee and the Father in heaven. We cannot bring men to this, apart from the Spirit of God" ("Is God In The Camp?" Sermon #2239, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, April 9, 1891). While Spurgeon usually spoke of being right with God as a result of conversion, he also declared: "Brethren, let us look well to our own steadfastness in the faith, our own holy walking with God. . . [A] sane and practical love of others . . . leads us to be mindful of our own spiritual state. Desiring to do its level best, and to use its own self in the highest degree to God's glory, the true heart seeks to be in all things right with God" (*An All-Around Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students*, section "What Would We Be?" elec. acc. *Charles Spurgeon Collection CD Library*, AGES Digital Software).

⁶⁸ The language itself is employed historically all the way back to the Ante-Nicene period, so that, for example, in the early third century, Hippolytus could write: "He who knows the wisdom of God, receives from Him also instruction, and learns by it the mysteries of the Word; and they who know the true heavenly wisdom will easily understand the words of these mysteries . . . for things spoken in strange language by the Holy Spirit become intelligible to those who have their hearts right with God" (*On Proverbs*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, ed. Schaff).

⁶⁹ For example, Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote: "Spirituality is not a future ideal; it is to be experienced now. The vital question is, 'Am I walking in the Spirit now?' . . . Much of everyone's life will be lived in the uneventful commonplace; but even there the believer should have conviction that he is right with God and in His unbroken fellowship" (*Systematic Theology*, vol. 6, pg. 295).

advocates tend to emphasize the contrast between the believer who is right with God and the one who is not but minimize the progressive transformation of the entire person of the Christian through progressive sanctification. In contrast, many proponents of Reformed theology, especially paedobaptists, tend to emphasize the progressive transformation involved in sanctification but restrict the term “right with God” to a contrast between the saved and the lost,⁷⁰ neglecting the clearly Biblical distinction between the upright and backslidden believer and thus seriously hindering spiritual growth. Sound Baptist theology has recognized the Biblical fact emphasized by the Reformed that all the justified are legally and perfectly right with God because of the imputed righteousness of Christ, while all are at different stages in the progressive transformation of their entire person into the moral likeness of Christ. Baptists have also recognized the Biblical fact that, as emphasized by Keswick and some other Higher Life theology, in another sense only some believers are right with God, walking before Him in uprightness and free from presumptuous and wilful disobedience.

However, the Biblical and Baptist doctrine of being right with God differs from the Keswick doctrine of full surrender, for both the requirement for and the results promised for those right with God in Scripture differ from those affirmed by the Keswick theology.⁷¹ The Biblical requirement for being right with God is a sincere, universal, unexceptioned seeking after the mortification of all sin, so that the believer is not deliberately allowing or holding on to sin in his life. The results of being right with God are the Spirit’s work of continued progress in the eradication of indwelling sin and strengthening of inner holiness, resulting in progressively greater closeness to, fellowship with, and likeness to the Lord. Nonetheless, within the believer who is right with God,

⁷⁰ For example, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q/A 21, states: “True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true. It is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace, earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation.” At the moment of regeneration, the *Catechism* affirms that the believer is made “forever right with God.” A reference to this catechetical statement is the only reference to being “right with God” in a theology such as Herman Bavinck’s massive *Reformed Dogmatics* (see vol. 4, *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, pg. 114, footnote #45). Andrew Naselli, in his doctoral dissertation *Keswick Theology: A Historical and Theological Survey and Analysis of the Doctrine of Sanctification in the Early Keswick Movement, 1875-1920* (Bob Jones University, 1996), attacking the Keswick theology from within a Reformed theological trajectory, never affirms the existence of the “right with God” distinction, and even goes so far as to claim that Keswick “errs primarily by emphasizing a crisis of consecration and Spirit-filling” (pg. 240, *ibid*), when the fact that not all believers are filled with the Spirit and backslidden believers need to consecrate themselves anew to God are clearly Scriptural, and Naselli errs when he claims that the preaching of consecration and of Spirit-filling requires “a theologically errant premise that chronologically separates justification and sanctification” (pg. 240, *ibid*).

⁷¹ See “Excursus VIII: An Analysis of Keswick Theology as Set Forth In *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention*, by Steven Barabas” below.

the flesh still continually lusts after the Spirit, as the Spirit does against the flesh, and the believer recognizes that he has not yet reached the perfect and absolute holiness that he desires and is seeking after (Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:14-25). He humbly recognizes that even his best and most holy actions and desires are defiled by his remaining indwelling sin and require cleansing by the great High Priest who bears the iniquity of even the holy things of His people (Exodus 28:38). He maintains a continued watchfulness against his indwelling sin, humbles himself for it, and strives ever the more to put it to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5). The Keswick doctrine affirms that after a full surrender, one enters into a higher life that has moved beyond the state described by the Apostle Paul of his Christian life in Romans 7:14-25, so that all struggle with sin is over. Indeed, striving against sin is spiritually dangerous. Being right with God, in the Higher Life theology, brings with it a complete counteraction of the motions of indwelling sin. One must no longer be conscious of any sin within his heart⁷²—indeed, one who still feels an inward struggle with sin has not fully surrendered or entered into the blessing of the victorious life. While king David said, “my sin is ever before me” (Psalm 51:3), the Higher Life doctrine frowns upon and seeks to deny the existence of the struggle against indwelling sin that, Scripturally, one grows the more aware of the more like the Lord he grows.⁷³ The faith-based, Christ-dependent strife against sin which characterizes the believer who is Biblically right with God is replaced with a eudaemonic “perfect rest”⁷⁴ that, by discouraging active mortification and striving against sin, seriously harms spiritual progress in the saints by ignoring the activity of the indwelling enemy within and makes their spiritual life shallow. Furthermore, it contributes to

⁷² E. g., for the Keswick leader Evan Hopkins, “what Scripture denominates *the perfect heart* [is] the heart entirely loyal, so far as it understands itself and apprehends the requirements of the Lord” (pg. 70, *Evan Harry Hopkins: A Memoir*, Alexander Smellie). “The Smiths [Hannah W. & Robert P.] . . . hold that every Christian who takes Christ as his sanctification is kept from all consciousness of sin” (pg. 269, “Means and Measure of Holiness,” Thomas Smith. *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review* (April 1876) 251-280; see pgs. 39-40, 65-66 of *Holiness by Faith* by Robert P. Smith, and Thomas Smith’s critique on pgs. 269-274 of “Means and Measure of Holiness.”).

⁷³ John Owen, speaking of communion with Christ, properly noted:

[Believers must] continually keep alive upon their hearts a *sense of the guilt* and evil of sin; even then when they are under some comfortable persuasions of their personal acceptance with God. Sense of pardon takes away the horror and fear, but not a due sense of the guilt of sin. It is the daily exercise of the saints of God, to consider the great provocation that is in sin,—their sins, the sin of their nature and lives; to render themselves vile in their own hearts and thoughts on that account; to compare it with the terror of the Lord; and to judge themselves continually. This they do in general. “My sin is ever before me,” says David. They set sin before them, not to terrify and affright their souls with it, but that a due sense of the evil of it may be kept alive upon their hearts. (“How the saints hold communion with Christ as to their acceptation with God,” Chapter 8 in *Of Communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, John Owen)

⁷⁴ E. g., “[H]e abides in utter unconcern and perfect rest . . . perfect abandonment of ease and comfort . . . the Higher Christian Life” (Chapter 3, *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*, Hannah W. Smith).

spiritual confusion. The believer who adopts the Higher Life doctrine, yet recognizes that Galatians 5:17 is still characteristic of his state after his sincere surrender to the Lord, is made to think that he is not really right with God, forcing him into a morbid introspection to see what he has not truly surrendered. Since he never will, in this life, enter a state when Romans 7:14-25 and Galatians 5:17 become things of the past, he is in great danger of growing spiritually frustrated and hopeless as his repeated attempts at “full surrender” never bring him into the promised state of freedom from all the workings of indwelling sin. On the other hand, a believer who convinces himself that he has truly entered into a state where indwelling sin is entirely counteracted must ignore the reality and effects of his sinful flesh, which continue to lust against the Spirit despite his erroneous affirmation to the contrary, which both gives the flesh greater opportunity to work and lends itself to a sinful pride. Thankfully, the believer who has met the Biblical requirements can have confidence that he is indeed right with God, rejoice in the Biblical promise of progressive victory over indwelling corruption and all its manifestations, and not trouble himself about the chimera of the Higher Life. The Bible-believing Baptist should reject both the Reformed and Higher Life errors on being right with God, and wholeheartedly embrace the Biblical truth that the upright and sincere Christian, one who is not willfully allowing and tolerating sin, is right with God and can make tremendous progress spiritually as the Holy Spirit supernaturally produces spiritual growth within him as he walks with the Lord and strives against sin.

Application of the Doctrine of Being Right with God

The question, then, arises: are you right with God? “[T]hus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways” (Haggai 1:5, 7).⁷⁵ Consider closely your way in general. Are you allowing sin to flourish in your life? Consider your particular courses of action. Do you live an upright Christian life at home, at work, at church, in your family, and in all other relations? Would those who know you best say you are right with God, or not? Have you chosen sin over righteousness, the way of the devil instead of the way of God? Is sin a pleasant thing to you, or do you love and desire pureness of heart?

If you are not right with God, but are backsliding, why do you persist in such vile rebellion? Why will you allow sin to fester and grow in your life? Will you deliberately set your affection upon that which is the greatest evil in the world, sin, rather than upon what is the greatest good in the universe, God, and what is of the greatest value to you,

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שׁוּמוּ לְבָבְכֶם עַל־דְּרֵכֵיכֶם : That is, “Set your heart on your ways” (KJV margin;).

holiness? Will you prefer the image of the devil to the image of God? What sort of idolatry is this? Will you be doubleminded, and halt between two opinions, about whether you prefer to grow in wickedness or Christlikeness? Do you not see how vile and abominable is anything less than wholehearted, devoted, entire consecration to God? Why will you hesitate?

Consider some of the evils that will come on you for your refusal to be right with God.

1.) Such rebellion brings upon you severe chastisement. Physical scourging is a very painful and awful experience; will you, then, bring upon yourself a terrible scourging by the Omnipotent Holy One (Hebrews 12:6)?

2.) Sin has its own awful consequences built into it. Its pleasures are but for a short season, while the sorrow and regret it brings are eternal.

3.) Allowing sin to control your life is utterly foolish. People do many things that evidence a serious lack of intelligence. Tolerating and choosing sin, however, makes you a greater fool than all the people who manifest their lack of intelligence in the affairs of this life. Esau was a fool when he traded the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant for a bowl of soup (Genesis 25:29-34), a fact he recognized later with bitter tears, to no avail (Hebrews 12:17). When you choose to forsake eternal, ineffably great blessings from the God of heaven to hold onto your sin, you place yourself among the greatest of all fools.

4.) Your toleration of sin brings you into a terrible blindness, as you do not recognize what awful evil and terrible defilement you are bringing yourself into.

5.) Your rejection of being right with God eliminates your fellowship with God and your ability to pray and have your prayers answered. God wishes to give you more good things than you can ask or think in answer to prayer, but you will refuse all of your Father's good gifts, considering, instead, your sin the greater value. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15). Will you persist in your pride and ungodliness, or humble yourself and return to fellowship with that Holy One who has placed a love for and desire to seek for Himself within you?

6.) Your backsliding harms others as well. You are not able to minister to others spiritually. You will be accountable at Christ's judgment seat for the blood of the souls you did not win because you were not right with God. You will be accountable for the spiritual shipwreck in the lives of many of God's dear children who were influenced by your hypocrisy and bad example. You should expect an ungodly seed, since you cannot,

like Jonadab, trust the Lord for a godly seed that will be a joy to you in later years (2 Kings 10:15; Jeremiah 35:19; Proverbs 22:6).

7.) In summary, your backsliding brings upon you everything that is evil, and withdraws from you everything that is good.

It is unnatural for a believer not to be right with God; that is the natural state of the enemies of God, and those who fall back are to be treated like unconverted persons. God has established a covenant with you, to give you a new heart and a new spirit. He has chosen you out of the world that you might be like His Son. Why should an heir of heaven act like an heir of hell? If you abide for some time in this state, you should fear your Father's chastisement. If you can persistently abide in a state of rebellion, unchastised, you are an empty professor, not one of the Father's children. Fear, then, fear greatly, the avenging Justice of God, who will destroy both your soul and your body in hell. The worst for you, worst by far, is yet to come, for the smoke of your torment will ascend for ever and ever, and you will have no rest day or night, but experience the full weight of the fierceness and fury of your Almighty enemy. Repent, and believe the gospel! Do not delay, for you do not have inherent ability to respond favorably to the Lord. Yes, you will only come to Christ if God permits (Hebrews 6:3).

Indeed, just as an unregenerate person can only come to Christ if the Father draws him (John 6:44), so for the backsliding believer the restoration of a right heart is a supernatural product of God's Almighty grace (Psalm 51:10). Therefore, the time for you to get right with God is *now*, not later. Do not presume upon the grace of God, for ability to get right is from Him, comes from His supernatural energy working in you. If He leaves you to yourself, you will fall, 2 Chronicles 32:31. If even a righteous man like Hezekiah, when not right with God, had as his punishment that his sons would be eunuchs and all that he and his fathers had stored up would be taken away, what will happen to you if you are not right with God?

Learn also from Hezekiah's example, oh Christian who is right with God, how much you must beware of pride when God especially manifests His grace to you or uses you, for Hezekiah's pride and fall took place after an astonishing Divine miracle in response to his prayer, where not only was marvelously healed from a deadly sickness, but the day itself was lengthened. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41), especially when God has in a particular way manifested Himself to

you. Do not let pride well up within your heart. Remember that it is a law that, when you would in particular seek to do good, then evil is present with you (Romans 7:21).⁷⁶

Most importantly, oh backsliding Christian, meditate upon the fact that not having a right heart greatly dishonors your Redeemer. The Father has had your holiness on His heart from eternity, predestinating you to it; He sent His Son to die for you; He has given you His Spirit to sanctify you. Why will you resist Him? Will you sin, and thus identify yourself with those who crucified Christ, since sin is the reason for His death? When the Father has been so gracious as to adopt you into His family; when Christ has condescended to such an extent that He would leave His everlasting glory and unite His Divine Person to a human nature identical to yours, sin only excepted, and then drink to the dregs the cup of wrath that you had earned at the hand of Divine Justice; when the Holy Spirit has made you, a poor wretched sinner, into His holy temple, so that your body is as the holy inner sanctum of the Old Testament tabernacle, how can you permit sin to grow unresisted in your members? What wretched ingratitude is this! Will not the goodness of God move you to repentance? Will you not humble yourself greatly before God, and in tears turn from your backsliding? Consider that your Father, from whom you are running, loves you with an infinite, eternal, unchangeable, love still—yes, that He loves you, unholy as you are, as He loves His spotlessly holy incarnate Son (John 17:23).⁷⁷ Rather than casting you off for your crimes—*infinite* crimes, the least of which merits ineffably awful wrath in the eyes of the Holy One—Jehovah calls to you, “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you. . . . Return, ye backsliding children, *and I will heal your backslidings.*” (Jeremiah 3:14, 22a). Respond, then, and say, “Behold, we come unto thee; for thou *art* the LORD our God” (Jeremiah 3:22b). Consider Christ’s high priestly ministry—at that very time when you reject Him and sin, He intercedes for you, acts as your Advocate before the Father, and points to His infinitely valuable work on the cross—a cross that you are at that moment justifying—not for your condemnation, but for your pardon (1 John 2:1). You have in Christ One who is infinitely tender, sympathetic to your weaknesses, ready and able to succor you. Oh, what love is this! Will you not come to Him, resolving never to stray any more?

Furthermore, believer who is right with God, magnify the mercy and goodness of Christ, your Redeemer, for only because of the grace He purchased for you at the cost of

⁷⁶ See *The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers*, John Owen.

⁷⁷ The love of John 17:23 is specifically for Christ as the *Theanthropos*, rather than for the eternal Son considered simply as the eternally begotten One in the Godhead. The Father loves the elect as He does that truly human Mediator to whom they have been gloriously united.

His life's blood, and because of continual sustainance from Him, can you be right with God. All your strength, support, and ability to walk with God and have an upright heart before Him is only yours for Christ's sake. "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake" (Psalm 115:1). Be on guard against the sin which can so easily beset you. Strive to grow faster than you are already growing. You are in fellowship with God—so seek Him all the more. Out of love for His appearing, purify yourself, even as He is pure (1 John 3:3), yet do not rest in your progress, but keep your eye fixed on Christ, the Author and Finisher of your faith, and fight the good fight of faith, depending on Him alone, until the day comes when, at either His coming for all His saints or the end of your own personal race, your battle will be over, and you can sing, forever freed from sin, with the redeemed, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. . . . Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 5:12; 7:12).