

Pass Under the Rod

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"I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant" – Ezekiel 20:37.

How manifold are the similitudes employed by the Holy Spirit in declaring the dealings of the Holy One of Israel with his people! The form of the language in the above text of Scripture is drawn from a typical observance, and a custom also in the domestic lives of many in Israel. In the gathering of tithes from the people the tenth was the Lord's. "And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it; and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy: it shall not be redeemed" (Lev. 27:32-33). You see the picture: there passes the herd, or the flock, before him who holds the rod, and the rod is laid upon the tenth; this claims it, separates it from its fellows, it is the Lord's. Now read with me the following Scriptures, and then I will tell you some of my thoughts upon the text first mentioned: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 33:12-13). "Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old" (Micah 7:14). The shepherd knoweth his sheep, he knows how many he has, and as they

enter the sheepfold he telleth them (counteth) with his rod. He will know if all are there, if any are missing. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there" (Psalm 87:6). And in that last day, the resurrection day, not one will be missing (John 6:39; 44:54). All the chosen flock shall be presented by Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, redeemed, regenerated, immortal, incorruptible, faultless before the Majesty in the heavens with exceeding joy.

"I will cause you to pass under the rod." The rod here is significant of the rule, the authority, the government of the Lord, who is the Shepherd, Priest and King of his people; and we may assure our hearts that the scepter of his kingdom is a right scepter (Psalm 45:6; Heb. 1:6). Have you entered into the depths of the riches of God's grace that was manifested toward you in causing you to pass under the rod? I mean that first time when you were brought in a vital, experimental manner beneath the rod of Jesus, our Shepherd, Priest and King. The presentation of the subject in the language of Ezekiel is the bringing back again of God's backsliding children from all the dark, dismal, shameful places where they have wandered, and once more causing them to pass under his divine rule, and that they may be safely folded in the sanctuary of the covenant. But let us consider awhile the Holy Ghost's first dealings with us. Before the Lord called us by his grace we were without God, without Christ and without hope in the world; we loved not the light, holiness and truth, we were estranged from God, enslaved to our carnal mind, which is enmity against God, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Such we were, justly exposed to the curse of the law, fit subjects for the damnation of hell (Matt. 23:33). And do we not acknowledge that had God pronounced sentence upon us, saying, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," he would have been just? But instead of this, what hath he done? "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we

were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." A wondrous story, surpassing in its depths and heights and glories all the fictions conceived in the minds of men and published to the world. The experience of a sinner called by grace is a divine reality to the everlasting praise of God. The descriptions given in the Holy Scriptures of the transactions of God with his chosen ones are not fairy stories; they are not mere petrified theories to which we give our assent, but they are testimonies of the vital, animating, transforming revelations wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost in the souls of the redeemed of the Lord. "Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God." Our souls quickened into divine life, we found ourselves, in our Adamic life, sinners, vile transgressors, exposed to the wrath of the broken law of God; we felt we were justly condemned for our sins, we felt we were not fit to die, for how could we come into the presence of the holy and just God after death? Yes, we believed in the hereafter. The experience of every quickened sinner refutes the fleshly-pleasing fallacy of the nonentity of human being at death; for every conscious, quickened sinner has had thoughts of after death, and has felt, I am not fit in myself to come at death into the presence of God. And these heart exercises of those who are born of God are in accord with the Scriptures: "The wrath to come" (Thess. 1:10). "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, * * * these shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:41, 46). "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," (2 Thess. 1:9). Also see Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:5. "The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments" (Luke 16:22-23). This is not a fiction, but these things declared by the lips of Jesus, the incarnate Word, are solemn, awful realities, and they are believed by those who are of God. O, it is well for us to believe the plain testimony of the Scriptures, to believe God's truth, though the

severity of God (Rom. 11:22), be dreadful indeed. What tongue can tell the sufferings of Jesus when he redeemed us from the curse of the law? He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. The sorrows of death compassed him, he poured out his soul unto death. Thus Jesus, our Surety, was bruised, he was put to grief, his soul was made an offering for sin. The travail of his soul to redeem us from the curse is more than mortal tongues can tell. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11). But with our apprehensions of Jehovah's everlasting wrath against sin there is very sacredly wrought in the called of God a humble and contrite heart that mourns before the Lord over sin. This is the fruit of the sovereign, conquering grace of God. The Lord, according to his purpose and grace, in due times quickens elect sinners, discovers to them their sins, causes them to feel their just condemnation, and brings them to know that they should not be able to stand before God when the great day of his wrath is come (Rev. 6:17). And then how very gracious is our God that he bows down the spirit of the vile transgressor to fall at the feet of the Lord. Yes, our God melts the heart in sorrow and sighing over its iniquities, and moves us with fervent longings for mercy and salvation. The Scriptures tell the story of the believer in Jesus. Look at the following; how divinely true the narrative: "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (I Peter 2:25). Before they are called by grace, the elect, like the rest of the human family, are found pursuing their way according to the course of this world (Eph. 2:2). They are by nature the children of wrath even as others. Go where they may they are going astray; every one is turned to his own way, and that way is never otherwise than a path of alienation from the life of God, through the ignorance

that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts. In paths of sin and ignorance, or fleshly religion, in them all we are only going astray; our own way is not God's way. The sinner's own way, though it seemeth right unto him (Prov. 14:12), will never bring him from under the curse of the law, never bring him into friendship with God, and can only lead to the regions of woe. O we can never admire and be grateful too much for that grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; that rich and sovereign kindness so blessedly discovered in the time when it pleased God, who sought us out, to take hold of us, and who brought us at length to know and to love himself. He caused us, divinely constrained us, to pass under the rod of Christ, our Shepherd, Priest and King. As the great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13:20), Christ Jesus has his rod. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). As the High Priest of the house of God his rod, as the typical rod of Aaron, both buds and blossoms and bears fruit (Num. 17:8-10), in behalf of all that obey him (Heb. 5:9). And as King, his people are brought to acknowledge his scepter, and very cheerfully confess, "The scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter" (Psalm 45:6). The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Psalm 110:2).

"I will cause you to pass under the rod." This power of God that lays hold of sinners and brings them under the rod is very gracious. The apostle Paul tells us of his being apprehended of Christ Jesus, and how being taken hold of by Christ it had a gracious and powerful effect upon him (Phil. 3:10-14). The ardor with which the heart of the quickened sinner is animated to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, is far removed and far above that fleshly inquisitiveness with which men enter into the mazes of philosophical speculations. Men may smile upon themselves, yes, become hilarious over the visions of their own hearts (Jer. 23:16), and sport themselves with their own deceivings (2 Peter 2:13), but nothing yields true blessedness unto any poor sinner but God's truth,

testified of in the Scriptures, and graciously revealed with living power in our hearts by the Spirit of truth. "He will guide you into all truth: * * * he shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-14). The psalmist exclaims, "God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth", and that salvation so gloriously wrought by the life, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ to glory is very comfortingly revealed by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the chosen of God. These things wrought in our hearts are not fairy stories that we invent and picture to ourselves, but I am telling of the experiences of the children of God, which are the fruits of the workings of God's mighty power (Eph. 1:19), even as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:3). Taught and led by the Spirit, we come to Jesus. Our steps in this spiritual pathway have been with sore travail, guilt and fears, sighs and tears; our sin-laden, law-condemned, broken and contrite heart has prayed, God, be merciful to me, a sinner, and as we have been coming to Jesus we have been stripped of all self-confidence and self-righteousness, and poor and desolate and helpless was our condition. We were brought to Jesus. What a mercy! We were brought to the revelation of his gospel in our hearts, brought to submission to him, to pass under the rod, to take the yoke of his doctrine upon us. We became affectionately subject to Christ (Eph. 5:24). His law was our delight, and we looked, and looked with loving, delighted eyes into his gospel (and to this day we are still looking), and we know it to be the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25). All the humbling discipline of divine teaching was needful to bring us to a living consciousness of being poor, needy, hell-deserving sinners, and to put forth in our soul, those spiritual longings for righteousness, forgiveness and salvation. God caused us to pass under the rod. In faith and love we came under the scepter of Christ. O, had he not caused us we never should have been subject to him; unsubmissive,

despisers, enemies, we still should have been, but almighty, rich and sovereign grace rescued us from our thralldom, and brought us poor, perishing sinners very willing to come under the rod, the reign of the lovely, precious Savior. We found Christ Jesus to be our very friend, and in his characters as Shepherd, Priest and King what acts of friendship were shewn to us by the Holy Spirit. O yes, and to this day we are learning more and more what a wondrously blessed thing it is to be under the rule of Christ. His scepter is a right scepter. Thy rod and thy staff, dear Savior, comfort me. Our self-righteousness and self-opinions are laid aside, and we become teachable beneath the rod of our God. God's new covenant dominion is so blessed to poor sinners; under his scepter we live and rejoice, for his scepter gives us pardon and righteousness, and in his fear we triumph over all our enemies. The gospel of Christ is all our blessedness; all elsewhere is sin and wretchedness, the curse and death, but here, passing under Christ's rod grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Ah, there had been the rod of the oppressor (Isaiah 9:4), but our victorious King hath broken that. And thou, O Assyrian, art the rod of the Lord's anger, the staff in thine hand is his indignation (Isaiah 10:5). But the rod we are now discoursing upon is the rod of our covenant God, our Father's rod, his government of his people in his only begotten Son, and in his characters of Shepherd, Priest and King he reigns, and brings his church to pass under his rod. The church of Christ is composed of elect human beings of Adam's race, eternally loved of Jehovah, redeemed by the blood of Christ and born of the Spirit; they are in due times called unto the fellowship of God's dear Son to be subject unto him. Do you know this delightful subject? How sovereign and abounding is the grace of God that rescues a poor, vile sinner from his alienation to God and brings him under the reign of Christ, under his grace (Rom. 6:14). O then it is that we know that he is our Lord, and we worship him (Psalm 45:11). Christ our Shepherd rules his flock. "He shall stand and feed [rule] in the strength of the

Lord" (Micah 5:4). His sheep say, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me", and as our High Priest, how comforting is his reign (Zechariah 6:13). A priest upon his throne is our Lord Jesus Christ, and he must reign till all enemies be put under his feet. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Did Aaron's rod put forth buds, blossoms and fruit? (Num. 17:2-8). Much more in all the unfoldings to our faith of the everlasting priesthood of Christ, from the first bud to the perfected fruit, we find it blessed and comforting indeed. Such an High Priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. So excellent is his ministry, and so needful to us poor, sinful worms; for only by his sacrifice, by his blood, can we draw nigh to God and feel that all is well. For his blood hath made our peace, and cleanseth us from all sin. Thus being now reconciled by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. We rejoice in him, our great Melchisedec, who is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him—that pass under his rod (Heb. 5:9). Being caused to pass under his rod we shall not be found saying to Jesus, our Priest, "Ye take too much npon you" (Numbers 16:3). No, indeed, for those who truly pass under his rod do so in faith and love, and know that it is essential that their High Priest should do all that he has done to make reconciliation for their sins. O blessed, merciful, faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. Christ is also our King, and his scepter is a right scepter. He is the King of kings, the Prince of life, the Prince of peace, and Lord of glory, the King of saints, (Rev. 17:14; Acts 3:15; Isaiah 9; 1 Cor. 2:8; Rev. 15:3), and he reigns on high our Savior God. It is in this aspect of his kingly glory that we poor sinners are brought into intimacy with him; for in a way so refreshing and uplifting to quickened sinners we are taught by the Spirit of God to know that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. In the incarnate Son of God we

contemplate him, our King of old (from the days of eternity), working salvation in the midst of the earth (Isaiah 74:12; Micah 5:2), revealing it also in our hearts to our everlasting consolation. Christ reigns, and his people, shall be willing in the day of his power. So effectual is his power, for he, our Prince and Savior, gives repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31). Thus by the effectual working of his power he takes his people by the heart and brings them under his scepter. Our King is our Savior, and he is the Lord of glory, and as we are led by the Holy Spirit, (for he glorifies Christ, and takes of the things of Christ and shews them unto us-John 16), in faith and love to see Jesus, we see him, the King, in his beauty, he is fairer than the children of men; the majesty and glory of his person, and his mighty acts in the redemption of his people, are all alluring to quickened sinners, and bring us most willingly to pass under rod. To pass under the rod of Christ our King signifies also that we are brought in willing subjection to his govern that his laws are our delight, and yield ourselves in cheerful obedience his statutes, as those who are alive from the dead. "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us" (Isaiah 33:22). We are under law to Christ (1 Cor. 9:21). This may well be so, for he writes his law in the mind and heart (Jer. 31:33), and we delight in the law of our God after the inward man. His commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3). An evil heart of unbelief and the base insinuations of the devil would sometimes tell us that at least some of Christ's laws are very humiliating, as, "Love your enemies, bless them curse you, do good to them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." O when the soul is graciously exercised with the commandments of Christ, is there any hardship in it? O no, nothing is more pleasant, more sweet. Is it a grievous thing to be merciful, when our heavenly Father is merciful? O to have a forgiving, a merciful heart, it is so sweet, so blessed. Yes, I say it again, it is so blessed to

forgive others their trespasses against us. O precious Jesus, reign over me and in me, to the praise of thine own glory.

“I will cause you to pass nude rod.” This at times means that God’s children have to come under his chastenings. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,” and the fruit of all new covenant chastenings is to bring us into the covenant.

**“Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly, vain delight;
But the true born child of God
Must not, would not it he might.”**

Have we not found, though the rod is severe, and we are sore broken beneath the rebukes of the Lord, that love and pity are so mingled with the severity that we fall at the feet of the Lord and confess that in faithfulness he has afflicted us? (Psalm 119:75). Or like Ephraim we say, “Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God” (Jer. 31:18). In all the aspects in which the saints pass under the rod the signification is that God sanctifies them, vitally and experimentally sets them apart unto himself (Psalm 4:3). Under his rod Christ brings his own, and they, saith he, “shall hear my voice”. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” There is no other way of entering into the bond of the covenant but to pass under the rod. Our God hath his way, his all-successful way, to cause us to pass under the rod. There is a divine compulsion, “The love of Christ constraineth us.” “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” We look over all the way, all the discipline, the teaching that was ours in coming unto Christ, and we see that everlasting love was in it all. The Holy Spirit in love and pity taught and led and brought us to pass under Christ’s rod. The covenant into which the Lord brings his people

is the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure (2 Sam. 23:5). It is sacredly blessed in faith and love to roam in the realms of this covenant. Here God speaks, and his voice takes hold of our hearts, and we are drawn to his voice, and his doctrine is so assuring and comforting. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. 13:9). In this covenant all spiritual blessings are promised, and eternal salvation and glory secured unto all the chosen of God, the vessels of mercy whom he hath afore prepared unto glory. This covenant is the counsel of God the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost concerning the elect of Adam's race, whom Jehovah hath chosen unto himself for his own peculiar treasure. He has predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, and in Christ, their covenant Head, they are predestinated unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them (Eph. 1:5-11; 1 Peter 1:4). And God hath predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29). The eternal power and grace of God shall surely secure this ultimate glory unto his people. Yes, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory (Col. 3:4). We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2). We shall bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:49). ● blessed hope! All shall be consummate when mortality is swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for this selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. This covenant was made in eternity, wherein the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, our one Jehovah (Deut. 6:4; 1 John 5:7), did covenant and provide all things for the welfare, salvation, exaltation and eternal happiness of the church, those chosen and eternally loved human beings of Adam's race. This covenant

"Was made with Jesus for His bride

**Before the sinner fell;
'Twas signed, and sealed, and ratified,
In all things ordered well."**

Let us consider a few moments, the bond of this covenant. This bond is the promise and oath of God. Wonderful indeed are the doings of our God, that he should, of his own pleasure, not only covenant to bless and to give his own elect eternal and infinite exaltation in Jesus Christ their head, and to make them in him and with him an eternal excellency, but he sware with an oath to the covenant, that the heirs of the covenant might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. And as God could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, "As I live, saith the Lord." "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (Heb. 6:17). To the priesthood of Christ in this covenant the Lord sware. He saith unto Christ, "The Lord sware and will not repent, thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec: by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Heb. 7:21-22). The blood of Christ is also the bond of the covenant, so it is written, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zech. 9:11). Did not Christ, our covenant Head, say, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"? (Matt. 26:28). He sealed it with his precious blood, and the covenant is in force. This we well know, for we are beginning to reap the unspeakably blessed glories of this everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. He writes his law in our hearts, he is merciful to our unrighteousness, we are tasting by faith the justification of life, and having the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Yes, it is now the portion of the heirs of promise to be having and living upon the first-fruits of the Spirit, and in the day of Jesus Christ, when the dead shall be raised incorruptible, we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on

incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality; death shall then be swallowed up in victory, and the whole infinite harvest of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory shall be ours. In this covenant there is set forth to our faith, in such comforting ways, the love and eternal nearness of the Lord unto us. God has espoused his people unto himself in eternal wedlock. Let us read the marriage bond: "I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord" (Hosea 2:19-20). O it is precious, supporting, so heart-cheering to be brought by the Holy Spirit into heartfelt realization of this bond. Then we can say, "The king hath brought me into his chambers"; "he brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" (Solomon's Song 1:4; 2:4). Will he ever write to his church a bill of divorcement? Never, the bond of this covenant is forever, and in faithfulness, and all the church shall know the Lord their Husband is faithful and true (Rev. 19:11). He hateth putting away (Mal. 2:16). He died for his church, to cleanse her with his blood, beautifies her with his righteousness, and puts his comeliness upon her (Ezek. 16:14), and by the sanctification of the Spirit she is all glorious within. The inward man is renewed day by day, and he having begun his good work in his own, will perform until the day of Jesus Christ, then he will come from heaven and change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:20-21). This bond of the covenant binds us to God. Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's (1 Cor. 3:23). What shall separate us from the love of Christ? His love to us is eternal, and we love because he first loved us. We are bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord our God (1 Sam. 25:29). Our life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then we also appear with him in glory. He, our glorious Head, is living, surely his members

cannot perish. The bond of covenant binds all the election of grace together. The bond of the covenant is the incarnation of the Son of God. Of this superlative glorious theme I feel I could write very much, but will not pen anything now. The covenant of God's grace is all-satisfying to believers in Jesus. "He will shew them his covenant." This is their sanctuary, here they are solaced with mercies, and their wearied, sin-buffeted souls are refreshed. "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant."

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