

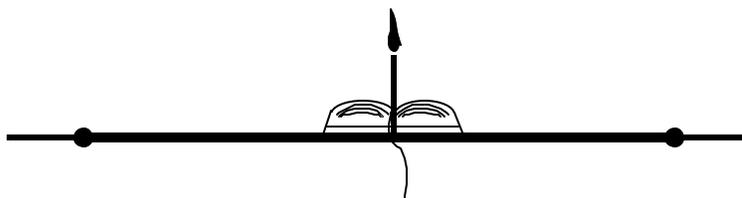
Scripture Studies

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“Come now, let us reason together,’ says the Lord...” I saiah 1:18

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Old Testament Study: Exodus 5:22-6:28

God Reiterates His Promise

²²Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? ²³Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."

¹Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."

²God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. ³I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. ⁴I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. ⁵Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant."

⁶"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. ⁸And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'"

⁹Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.

¹⁰Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹¹"Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country."

¹²But Moses said to the LORD, "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?"

¹³Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron about the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he com-

manded them to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

¹⁴These were the heads of their families:

The sons of Reuben the firstborn son of Israel were Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi. These were the clans of Reuben.

¹⁵The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. These were the clans of Simeon.

¹⁶These were the names of the sons of Levi according to their records: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. Levi lived 137 years.

¹⁷The sons of Gershon, by clans, were Libni and Shimei.

¹⁸The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. Kohath lived 133 years.

¹⁹The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi.

These were the clans of Levi according to their records.

²⁰Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, who bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years.

²¹The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg and Zicri.

²²The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan and Sithri.

²³Aaron married Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

²⁴The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah and Abiasaph. These were the Korahite clans.

²⁵Eleazar son of Aaron married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas.

These were the heads of the Levite families, clan by clan.

²⁶It was this same Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions." ²⁷They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. It was the same Moses and Aaron.

In the previous section, at the first sign of trouble, the people had turned on Moses, blaming him for their troubles (see Ex. 5:20). Their unbelief was contagious, for, in this section, we see Moses' faith was also wavering: **"Moses returned to the LORD and said, 'O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and You have not rescued Your people at all'"** (vss. 22-23). Moses was chosen to be the leader of God's people, but this did not exempt him from trouble. "Even when God is coming towards His people in ways of mercy, yet sometimes He takes such methods

that they may think themselves but ill-treated" [Wesley]. "God's chosen servants must expect opposition and misunderstanding, because that's part of what it means to be a leader; and leaders must know how to get along with God, pour out their hearts, and seek His strength and wisdom" [Wiersbe, 26].

We all can understand Moses' frustration. He was trying to do the will of God, but had so far only met up with failure. Not only did Pharaoh increase the workload of the Hebrew slaves, but the Israelites themselves had turned against Moses. "But as the greatest darkness is immediately before the dawn, so the people of God are often plunged into the deepest affliction when on the eve of their deliverance, and so it was in this case" [JFB, 291].

Moses was bold before God, frankly relating his frustration that God had not yet rescued His people. God honored the frankness of Moses with a reaffirmation of His promise: **"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of His country'"** (6:1).

However, God had more in mind than just to break Pharaoh, and free the people from slavery. God wanted to establish a cohesive nation, ruled by His law. He wanted the people of this nation to embrace God as their God. He desired to establish a different kind of relationship with His people than He did in the past: **"God also said to Moses, 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known'"** (vss. 2-3). To draw the people together, there had to be a common opposition, and a shared suffering, much as the players on a sports team are drawn together by their common opposition, or the soldiers on the battlefield are drawn together by their shared suffering.

God reminded Moses of His promises to His people: **"I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant"** (vss. 4-5). The promises of God are sure, and will be carried out.

Next, God gave Moses the words to say to the people who were, at that time, opposed to Moses' mission: **"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment'"** (vs. 6). God wanted Moses to speak His exact words to the people, in order to instill in the people the sense that Moses' mission was a mission of God and from God, not of man or from man.

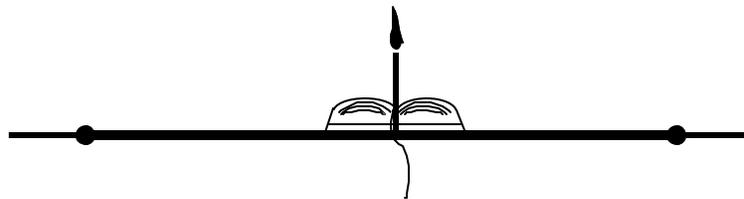
Then God wanted Moses to tell the people that His goal of rescuing

them was not just to free them, but to turn them into a unified nation of His people: **“I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord”** (vss. 7–8).

Sadly, the people did not accept God’s message: **“Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage”** (vs. 9). This, however, did not deter our gracious God from continuing to help them: **“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of the country’”** (vss. 10-11).

Moses’ continued lack of success bred more frustration: **“But Moses said to the Lord, ‘If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?’”** (vs. 12). We see here Moses’ humanity. As James told us: **“Elijah was a man just like us”** (James 5:17). So I say, also, Moses was a man just like us. We tend to think of the great prophets as supermen, but they were ordinary people, with human failings. But they persevered in faith to overcome their human failings, and to do great things for God.

At this point in the narrative, we are given a genealogy of Moses and Aaron. This genealogy is, I believe, placed here to remind us that God, from long beforehand, prepared Moses and Aaron for their mission. As the text tells us: **“It was this same Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, ‘Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.’ They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. It was the same Moses and Aaron”** (vss. 26–27).





A Classic Study: Patience in Affliction

A Classic Study by Richard Baxter (1615–1691)

[In each article, Mr. Baxter gives advice on how to be patient through a specific type of affliction.]—*Ed.*

The Common Sin and Misery of the World, and Fewness of Wise and Godly Men

A heavier trial of our faith and patience yet is, the misery of this world by the universal corruption of mankind, the prevalency of most odious wickedness, and paucity of wise and godly men: that at thousands of years after the creation, most of the earth seemed forsaken of God; five parts of six being heathens and infidels; and the sixth part, the far greatest part being ignorant of God. And of the church-goers, so few that so much as seem to be practicers of the Christian faith and hope, but most live in worldliness and sensuality, if not also in enmity to serious piety, and persecution of all that practice what themselves profess.

This is a manifold and grievous trial to our faith: while Satan taketh advantage of it to make us doubt whether man was made for another life, when his nature seemeth to have no inclination to it, but rather to abhor it: and to doubt how Christ is the Savior of the world, and died for all, and would have all to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, when so few of the world shall be saved, and so many kingdoms and ages damned; when we ourselves can scarce bear the pain of the stone or colic patiently, or the miscarriage or misery of a child or friend. And it maketh it the harder to us to perceive the goodness, love, and amiableness of God, who can convert and save the world, and will not.

Note these things:

1. We are fully certain of God's perfect goodness by all His works; it being equal to His greatness; and therefore no argument can be of force against a certain truth: nothing can be true that is inconsistent with so sure and great a truth.

2. God's goodness is infinite in act, in His blessed self-love: no finite creature is an object fit to demonstrate infinite love in perfect act, nor capable of it.

3. It is certain *de facto* that God hath made toads, serpents, dung, and puts sensitive nature in men and brutes to great pains and death; therefore

it is certain that all this is consistent with God's perfect goodness.

4. God's love to His creatures is His beneficence or complacency. He was no ways bound to make all His creatures equal, nor to give as much to a fly or flea as to a man, nor to a man as to an angel, or to the sun: nor is it required that He complacentially esteem any creature better than it is.

5. It is no way unusual that God should make a middle rank of active natures between necessitated brutes and immutable confirmed spirits, even a rank of intellectual free agents to be governed morally by laws, in a life of trial, with a power of self-determining as to their wills, and to leave them to their own determined choice, decreeing accordingly to judge them; yet resolving to secure the salvation of some. If it be not against God's goodness to make brutes that have no intellects nor capacity of glory, it is not contrary to it to make intellectuals merely capable, and leave them to their free wills.

6. While we are thankful for God's mercies to His peculiar people, the church, we must not, as some peevishly and rashly do, deny what He doth for the rest of the world. He uses them not according to the terms of the first law, **"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die"** (Gen. 2:17). Rather, **"He leaveth not Himself without a witness while he winketh at their ignorance"** (Acts 14:17); in that, He giveth them abundance of temporal mercies, fruitful lands and seasons, health and time, and punisheth them not as they deserve: so that **"that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it to them: for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse, because, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God"** (Rom. 1:19-21). **"Who hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they may feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us"** (Acts 17:25-27). **"And in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him; for He is no respecter of persons"** (Acts 10:34). **"He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him"** (Heb. 11:6). And Noah, that believed the warning of God, **"and prepared the ark, being moved by fear, became an heir of the righteousness of faith"** (Heb. 11:7). **"God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing do seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God. For as man as have sinned without law, shall**

also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the ; (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile either accusing or excusing one another); in the day when God, shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:6-16).

The world is not left in despair as devils, under the sentence of the broken law of innocence, but is under the edition of the law of grace which was made to Adam and Noah, and is used on terms of mercy and forgiveness, or else they should not receive all the mercies as they do: they are all obliged to repent in hope, and to use some means for recovery and salvation: and God under the law proclaimeth Himself to be **“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness an truth, keeping mercy for thousands forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear,”** etc. (Ex. 34:5-7). God would be no otherwise known to any men on earth.

And how far men keep or break this law of grace, their Judge best knoweth: but we know that they shall be judged according to the law that they are under, and the measure of talents delivered to them: to whom much is given, of them much is required. Melchizedec was king of Jerusalem, even of righteousness and peace; and Job and his friends seem to have been great men of several countries; in Nineveh they **“believed God, proclaimed a fast, and God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways, and God repented of the evil”** etc., (Jonah 3:5). **“From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be”** (or “is”) **“great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be”** (or “is”) **“offered to my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be”** (or “is”) **“great among the heathens, saith the Lord of hosts”** (Mal. 1:11).

John and Christ preached repentance and remission of sin, before they preached that Jesus was the Christ: and the very apostles that dwelt with Christ and followed Him, did not believe till after His resurrection, that He must be crucified and die for our sins, and rise again, and ascend and intercede in heaven, etc. They were fools, and slow of heart to disbelieve all that the prophets had spoken, how that Christ ought to suffer such things, and so to enter into His glory (see Luke 14).

We are too like the Jews, who were so proud of their peculiarity, that they deceitfully took their outward privileges to signify much more for them than they did: as if all the rest of the world had been quite forsaken and had been no people of God because they had not their covenant of peculiarity; whenas indeed their peculiarity was mostly typical, in that they were a type of the peculiar church under the gospel, and that Christ was to

be a Jew according to the flesh; even as their law and the righteousness of it was excellent as typical, and as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, though it was called faulty, and was to be done away, that a better covenant might take place. God promised Abraham temporal greatness, viz. that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and he should have a land that flowed with milk and honey. And all this was made good: but in such good as this, how small was the portion of the Israelites! How small and poor their land and kings, in comparison to the Romans, Turks, Chinese, Indians, etc.! The whole land of the twelve tribes, not so big as England; and they lived most in vexation or captivity by the Philistines or others, till David conquered, and Solomon reigned in peace and luxury; and no longer did David's line reign over any more than two of the twelve tribes, and those ere long went into captivity: so that the glory of the Jews' kingdom was the divinity of their typical law, and that the Messiah, and the original of the gospel church, was to spring from them.

“What advantage then hath the Jew, and what profit is there of circumcision? Much in every way; chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:1–2). And the Christian church hath now the said oracles and the covenant of peculiarity in a more excellent kind than ever the Jews had: but let us not follow them in our pride, lest we follow them in destruction; for if we be worse than others, we shall suffer more than others, as our light was greater. Though we only are the church and the peculiar people, the rest of mankind are part of the kingdom of the Redeemer, who **“died, rose, and revived, to this end, that He might be Lord of the dead and the living”** (Rom. 14:9–10). **“For all power is given Him in heaven and earth; and He is head over all to the church”** (Eph. 1:22–23). And our covenant of peculiarity is no repeal of the old law of grace made to mankind in Adam and Noah by God the Redeemer, who ruleth all upon terms of mercy and grace; and was known accordingly as a merciful, pardoning God, before He was incarnate or known as such: and so is still known, when as incarnate He is not known; and it is past doubt, that as much of His grace and mercy of redemption went before His incarnation, so much of it still extendeth further than the knowledge of His incarnation; as the light of the sun is not utterly gone, when clouds keep it unseen, and before it riseth, and after it is set.

And as to the question, “How many among the uncalled world do fear God and work righteousness, and are accepted of Him?” Who art thou that judgest another's servant? To his own master he stand or falls: only I repeat, that Abraham, the father of the faithful, who **“saw Christ's day,”** thought that there had been **“fifty righteous persons in Sodom”**; a city so bad, that fire from heaven must consume it. And all history tells us, that in all countries there are pious, virtuous persons, who are hated and derided by the sensual herd, yea, and persecuted in most places. This much I think needful to be considered, that we wrong not God, and ourselves, and others, by clouding His mercy and goodness, and making diffi-

culties to our faith and love.

7. And again, and again, I repeat, that no man is fit to judge diminutively of God's mercy and love, who knoweth not what he saith (and yet speaketh against a certain truth). But they that say, more are damned than are glorified, know not what they say: for it is visible, that all the earth is to the rest of the world, no bigger than an inch to all England, that I say not, to all Europe: and we see that each region hath inhabitants connatural here below (water, earth, air). And we see that the superior regions are most glorious as well as vast: and I think, that few men of sense do think, that sun, moon, and stars, and all the orbs, are made for no higher use than to shine upon or serve this dirty world of earth: so that again I say, that hell is like the gallows, and earth like the jail, to a whole kingdom or vast empire: and it is no sign of a bad prince, to have one gallows and one jail in his dominions.

8. And we must remember that though hell be but one word, it signifieth divers degrees of punishment: and Christ, who best knew, tells us, that they who **"knew not their Lord's will, shall be beaten with few stripes"**: and even to **"Sodom in the day of judgment it shall be easier"** than to those that refuse the gospel: and it is an airy, active life of misery that the devils themselves have now.

9. And we see by the pain and death of brutes, that God doth lay such pain and death on them without desert by any sin: and is it any diminution of his goodness to lay more on sinful man? All confess that He might have killed and annihilated us without our sin: He that gave a man life freely for thirty, fifty, sixty years, was not bound to continue it forever. And He that made toads and snakes might have made us such; and yet it is certain, that most men had rather endure any tolerable degree of pain, than either to be annihilated or made toads or snakes: and we cannot certainly tell how far those pains may be called tolerable, which Christ calleth by the name of **"easier and few stripes"**.

10. It is most certain that when we come to heaven, we shall be fully reconciled to all God's dealings, and rejoice in the glory of His holiness and justice, and see no cause to think diminutively of His goodness and grace.

11. And in the mean time, let us rejoice that He hath made us vessels of mercy, and that He hath endued so many thousands on earth with His grace and that the heavenly church is so great and glorious: there will be no want of number there.

12. And as to the temptations hence to unbelief, consider, that the heavenly hopes, and desires, and lives of all the godly, do prove that God intendeth them for heaven; all the work of His sanctifying Spirit is not delusion: and the fear and hope that human nature hath of another life, doth show that we have another to expect: and that the wicked have no such heavenly desire, doth but show, that they are incapable of heavenly felicity, but not that all others are so too.

New Testament Study:

Matthew 17:1-9



The Transfiguration

¹After six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²There He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

⁵While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"

⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," He said. "Don't be afraid." ⁸When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

In the previous chapter, Jesus spoke of His death and resurrection. In this chapter, Jesus gives three of His disciples a taste of His glory. "The order in which it is recorded is beautiful and instructive. The latter part of the last chapter showed us the cross: here we are graciously allowed to see something of the coming reward. The hearts which have just been saddened by a plain statement of Christ's sufferings, are at once gladdened by a vision of Christ's glory" [Ryle, 205]. Without this vision, Christ's glory may not have been apparent to the disciples. Though glorified in heaven, Jesus was soon to be mocked and scourged on earth. So even now, Christ's glory, in the absence of faith, is not immediately apparent to us on earth. Jesus is mocked on earth; His followers are ridiculed and persecuted. And so, for those of us who believe in the truth of the Bible, visions of Christ's glory, as told by eyewitnesses, are precious, edifying for our faith, and reassuring for the hope we hold so dear.

Matthew relates what happened: "**After six days Jesus took with**

Him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves" (vs. 1). The phrase **"After six days"**, correlates this event directly with the events at the end of the previous chapter. At the end of that chapter, Jesus made a promise: **"I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom"** (Matt. 16:28). When commenting on this verse in last month's issue, we pointed out that there were various events to which Jesus could have been referring (the resurrection and ascension, Pentecost, the miraculous spread of Christianity, etc.). But, we can't help but thinking that the primary fulfillment was the event that occurred just **"after six days"**. Indeed, **"some who were standing there"**, namely Peter, John and James, were **"led up"** by Jesus to a **"high mountain"**. They saw Jesus as He is glorified in the kingdom of heaven, and when He bodily returns to earth, it is the glorified Christ that the inhabitants of the earth will see as He **"comes in His kingdom."**

Jesus chose just three of His disciples to see the vision, trusting that "the conviction wrought in their minds by what they witnessed would impart itself to all the Apostles, through their tone and general influence" [Broadus, 370]. We learn that "our Lord will not use all His servants alike, but some, such as He pleases, He will make in some cases more intimate" [Dickson, 200]. Peter, James and John were clearly more intimate with Jesus than the other disciples. They alone were chosen to see the raising of Jairus' daughter (see Mark 5:37); and later, they alone would be chosen to witness Christ's agony in Gethsemane. Perhaps the vision on the mount of transfiguration was necessary to sustain their faith upon seeing Christ's agony in Gethsemane [Spurgeon, 231].

On the mountain, **"There He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light"** (vs. 2). The scene here is clearly indescribable and incomprehensible for we who were not there. And it must have been awesome for the three disciples. Jesus' transfigured appearance "was intended to give the disciples some idea of the majesty in which Jesus will appear to the world, when He comes the second time, and all His saints with Him. The corner of the veil was lifted up, to show them their Masters true dignity. They were taught that if He did not yet appear to the world in the guise of a King, it was only because the time for putting on His royal apparel was not yet come" [Ryle, 205].

This event was not an unnecessary display of power by Jesus. It was something that the disciples needed to see, especially given their resistance to the idea that Jesus was to be put to death. "Christ wanted to testify that He was not dragged unwillingly to death but went to it of His own free will, to offer the sacrifice of obedience to His Father" [Calvin, 197]. The disciples needed to see His power, so that they would have no doubt that He could not be overpowered by any man, except willingly. "And so we learn that He was subject to death because He wished to be, that He was

crucified because He offered Himself. For that same flesh which was sacrificed on the cross and lay in the tomb could have been immune from death and sepulcher, since it had already been partaker of the heavenly glory. We are taught that although Christ took the form of a servant and existed in the world and His majesty was hidden under the weakness of the flesh, nothing had been taken away from Him, for He emptied Himself of His own free will" [Calvin 197].

"Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus" (vs. 3). This event is quite beautiful in its symbolism. With Moses representing the Law, and Elijah representing the prophets, we have the entire revelation of God pointing to Jesus. "As to why these two appeared rather than others from the band of holy fathers, it should be sufficient for us to realize that the Law and the prophets had no other goal than Christ" [Calvin, 199]. We are told in the Gospel of Luke that the three of them—Jesus, Moses and Elijah—were speaking of Jesus' death (see Luke 9:31). Whenever we read of the transfiguration, we tend to focus on what a great experience this event was for Peter, John and James, but also consider what a great experience it was for Moses and Elijah: to speak to Jesus about His sacrifice, about the event to which so many of their writings and prophecies alluded.

Peter came up with an idea: **"Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah'"** (vs. 4). Peter's desire, apparently, was to stay upon that mountain, and spend time in worship of the three great men of God. Peter, it seems to be implied, was putting Moses and Elijah on equal footing with Jesus. God immediately responded, and made it clear that Jesus was to be more exalted than the other two: **"While [Peter] was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!'"** (vs. 5). "Moses and Elijah were great men, and favorites of Heaven, yet they were but servants, and servants that God was not always well pleased in; for Moses spoke unadvisedly, and Elijah was a man subject to passions; but Christ is a Son, and in Him God was always well pleased" [Henry, 557].

Note well the message to the disciples from the mouth of God: **"Listen to Him!"** "It is better to hear the Son of God than to see saints, or to build tabernacles. This will please the Father more than all else that love can suggest" [Spurgeon, 233].

It seems the voice of God was more awesome even than the sight of the transfiguration: **"When the disciples heard this, they fell face-down to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. 'Get up,' He said. 'Don't be afraid.'"** (vs. 7). Jesus never loses an opportunity to comfort His disciples.

"When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus" (vs. 8). Again, we see beautiful symbolism in this event: "Compared with God's revelation through Him, all other revelations pale" [Carson, 387].

“Accordingly, we find the founder of the law, and the great reforming prophet, coming to attend on the Messianic King; and as *they* disappear, a heavenly voice calls on men to hear *Him*” [Broadus, 371].

Sadly for the disciples, they were still men who must live in this world, and so they could not stay on the mount of transfiguration, but were constrained to come down the mountain: **“As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, ‘Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead’”** (vs. 9). This certainly must have been a tough mountain for the disciples to come down from: to return to the fallen world from the mountain of glory. But they could (and we can) look forward to the blessed time when they would forever be in Christ’s glorious presence.

Surprisingly to some, **“Jesus instructed them, ‘Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead’”** (vs. 9). Why would Jesus instruct them not to tell anyone until after He rose from the dead? Quite probably, the disciples were disappointed to hear this command. “This descent in the summer morning must have been accompanied by delightful reflections on what they had witnessed. Here was new and wondrous confirmation of their faith that Jesus was the Messiah. They would naturally wish to speak of it to the other disciples and all the people; and were doubtless surprised and disappointed when Jesus” commanded them not to tell anyone [Broadus, 372]. However, Jesus demonstrated great wisdom in giving this command. It was an extremely practical command. For, in the absence of the knowledge of Christ’s resurrection, who would believe the story of the transfiguration? “The transfiguration would be as hard to believe as the incarnation itself; and there could be no practical use in making demands upon a faith which scarcely existed. Until the greatest confirmation of all was given in our Lord’s resurrection, the vision on the Holy Mount would be rather a tax upon faith than a support of it in the case of those who did not themselves personally see it, but only heard the apostles’ report of it. It is wise not to overload testimony. There is a time for making known the higher truths; for out of season these may burden, rather than assist, inquiring minds” [Spurgeon, 235]. “The discharging of the disciples to tell no one until the resurrection, teaches us that the Lord has His own set time, when He will make use of what He reveals to His servants, and will bring forth every truth in His own time, when it may be most useful” [Dickson, 202]. “Note, Christ observed a method in the manifestation of Himself; He would have His works put together, mutually to explain and illustrate each other, that they might appear in their full strength and convincing evidence. Everything is beautiful in its season” [Henry, 560].

We, of course, are under no such restriction. We can shout from the rooftops the glory of our Lord. “Now that **‘the Son of man is risen again from the dead’**, no doctrine needs to be kept back” [Spurgeon].

A Topical Study: Self-Examination



The Necessity of Self-Examination, pt. 6 by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps. 139:23-24, AV).

Section 5

Self-examination concerning secret sins

I shall now propose to you to examine yourselves, Whether you do not live in some secret sin, whether you do not live in the neglect of some secret duty, or secretly live in some practice which is offensive to the pure and all-seeing eye of God. Here you should examine yourselves concerning all secret duties, as reading, meditation, secret prayer; whether you attend those at all, or if you do, whether you do not attend them in an unsteady and careless manner. You should also examine yourselves concerning all secret sins. Strictly inquire what your behavior is when you are hid from the eye of the world, when you are under no other restraints than those of conscience, when you are not afraid of the eye of man, and have nothing to fear but the all-seeing eye of God. — Here, among many other things which might be mentioned, I shall particularly mention two.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not live in the neglect of the duty of reading the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures were surely written to be read, and, we shall maintain, that they were not only given to be read by ministers, but by the people too. It doth not answer the design for which they were given, that we have once read them, and that we once in a great while read something in them. They were given to be always with us, to be continually conversed with, as a rule of life. As the artificer must always have his rule with him in his work, and the blind man that walks must always have his guide by him; and he that walks in darkness must have his light with him; so the Scriptures were given to be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. That we may continually use the Scriptures as our rule of life, we should make them our daily companion, and keep them with us continually: **“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.”** (Josh. 1:8). See also Deut. 6:6-9. So Christ commands us to search the Scriptures (see John

5:39). These are the mines wherein we are to dig for wisdom as for hidden treasures. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in the neglect of this duty, or neglect it so that you may be said to live in a way of sin.

(2.) Inquire whether you do not live in some way of secretly gratifying some sensual lust. There are many ways and degrees, wherein a carnal lust may be indulged but every way is provoking to a holy God. Consider whether, although you restrain yourselves from more gross indulgences, you do not, in some way or other, and in some degree or other, secretly from time to time gratify your lusts, and allow yourselves to taste the sweets of unlawful delight.

Persons may greatly provoke God, by only allowably gratifying their lusts in their thoughts and imaginations. They may also greatly provoke God by excess and intemperance in gratifying their animal appetites in those things which are in themselves lawful. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in some sinful way or other, in secretly gratifying a sinful appetite.

Section 6

Self-examination concerning respecting charity towards our neighbors, and conversation with them

I would propose to you to examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin, — 1. In the spirit and temper of mind which you allow towards your neighbour.

(1.) Do you not allow and indulge a passionate, furious disposition? If your natural temper be hasty and passionate, do you truly strive against such a temper, and labour to govern your spirit? Do you lament it, and watch over yourselves to prevent it? or do you allow yourselves in a fiery temper? Such a disposition doth not become a Christian, or a man. It doth not become a man, because it unmans him; it turns a man from a rational creature, to be like a wild beast. When men are under the prevalency of a furious passion, they have not much of the exercise of reason. We are warned to avoid such men, as being dangerous creatures: **“Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.”** (Prov. 22:24, 25).

(2.) Do not you live in hatred towards some or other of your neighbors? Do you not hate him because he is not friendly towards you and because you judge that he hath an ill spirit against you, and hates you, and because he opposes you, and doth not show you that respect which you think belongs to you, or doth not show himself forward to promote your interest or honour? Do you not hate him, because You think he despises you, has mean thoughts of you, and takes occasion to show it? Do you not hate him, because he is of the opposite-party to that which is in your interest, and because he has considerable influence in that party.

Doubtless you will be loth to call it by so harsh a name as hatred; but inquire seriously and impartially, whether it be any thing better. Do you not feel ill towards him? Do you not feel a prevailing disposition within you to be pleased when you hear him talked against and run down, and to be glad when you hear of any dishonour put upon him, or of any disappointments which happen to him? Would you not be glad of an opportunity to be even with him for the injuries which he hath done you? And wherein doth hatred work but in such ways as these?

(3.) Inquire whether you do not live in envy towards some one at least of your neighbours. Is not his prosperity, his riches, or his advancement in honour, uncomfortable to you? Have you not, therefore, an ill will, or at least less good will to him, because you look upon him as standing in your way, you look upon yourself as depressed by his advancement? And would it not be pleasing to you now, if he should be deprived of his riches, or of his honours, not from pure respect to the public good, but because you reckon he stands in your way? Is it not merely from a selfish spirit that you are so uneasy at his prosperity?

2. I shall propose to your consideration, whether you do not live in some way of sin, and wrong in your dealings with your neighbours.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not from time to time injure and defraud those with whom you deal. Are your ways with your neighbour altogether just, such as will bear a trial by the strict rules of the word of God, or such as you can justify before God? Are you a faithful person? May your neighbours depend on your word? Are you strictly and firmly true to your trust; or anything with which you are entrusted, and which you undertake? Or do you not by your conduct plainly show, that you are not conscientious in such things?

Do you not live in a careless sinful neglect of paying your debts? Do you not, to the detriment of your neighbour, sinfully withhold that which is not your own, but his? Are you not wont to oppress your neighbour? When you see another in necessity, do you not thence take advantage and tighten the screws upon him? When you see a person ignorant, and perceive that you have an opportunity to make your gains of it, are you not wont to take such an opportunity? Will you not deceive in buying and selling, and labour to blind the eyes of him of whom you buy, or, with deceitful words, hiding the faults of what you sell, and denying the good qualities of what you buy, and not strictly keeping to the truth, when you see that falsehood will be an advantage to you in your bargain?

(2.) Do you not live in some wrong which you have formerly done your neighbour without repairing it? Are you not conscious that you have formerly, at some time or other, wronged your neighbour, and yet you live in it, have never repaired the injury which you have done him? If so, you live in a way of sin.



A Study in Psalms: Psalm 64

Psalm 64 - David's Enemies, and Their Downfall

For the director of music.
A psalm of David.

¹Hear me, O God, as I voice my complaint;
protect my life from the threat of the enemy.

²Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked,
from that noisy crowd of evildoers.

³They sharpen their tongues like swords
and aim their words like deadly arrows.

⁴They shoot from ambush at the innocent man;
they shoot at him suddenly, without fear.

⁵They encourage each other in evil plans,
they talk about hiding their snares;
they say, "Who will see them?"

⁶They plot injustice and say,
"We have devised a perfect plan!"
Surely the mind and heart of man are cunning.

⁷But God will shoot them with arrows;
suddenly they will be struck down.

⁸He will turn their own tongues against them
and bring them to ruin;
all who see them
will shake their heads in scorn.

⁹All mankind will fear;
they will proclaim the works of God
and ponder what He has done.

¹⁰Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD
and take refuge in Him;
let all the upright in heart praise Him!

The inscription of this psalm tells us that it is **“A psalm of David,”** and certainly there can be no doubt about this. Like many of David’s psalms, this one begins with a plea to God concerning his enemies. “David’s life was one of conflict, and very seldom does he get through a Psalm without mentioning his enemies” [Spurgeon]. Also, typically for psalms of David, the psalm ends with confidence that God will remedy the situation.

David begins: **“Hear me, O God, as I voice my complaint; protect my life from the threat of the enemy”** (vs. 1). David would always run to God in times of trouble. So should we. “In all our troubles, whether beset by the unceasing and infinite malice of the devil, the perfidy of men, or the ingratitude of the world, it is best to carry our cause immediately to God in prayer” [Plumer, 638]. “The danger cannot be so great, wherein help may not be had from God; He is so near to a supplicant, so powerful, and so ready to save the man who hath made God his refuge” [Dickson, 375].

“Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from that noisy crowd of evildoers” (vs. 2). It is important, in order to have confidence in prayer, that we remain on the side of right in our conflicts. “That we may have the greater confidence to be delivered from our enemies, we had need to be sure that we are in a good cause, and that our adversaries have a wrong cause” [Dickson, 376].

“They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim their words like deadly arrows” (vs. 3). The weapon of war in this battle of David’s is the tongue. “The ingenuity of man has been wonderfully tasked and exercised in two things, inventing destructive weapons of war, and devising various methods of ruining men by wicked words” [Plumer]. The tongue can be a devastating weapon, and it is all the more dangerous because all evildoers have easy access to it. “Slander has ever been the master weapon of the good man’s enemies, and great is the care of the malicious to use it effectively” [Spurgeon]. I dare say, we have all been on the receiving side of slander and malicious talk. “If David, the modest, humble man, who in difficult circumstances acted so wisely, and was withal the man after God’s own heart, was permitted to be so traduced that probably no mere man was ever more vilified than he, surely we, who fall so far short of his attainments in everything good ought not to be surprised if we suffer sadly in the same way” [Plumer, 639]. “How much, then, doth it concern every man to walk circumspectly; to give no just cause of reproach, not to make himself a scorn to the fools of the world; but, if they will reproach (as certainly they will), let it be for forwardness in God’s ways, and not for sin, that so the reproach may fall upon their own heads, and their scandalous language into their own throats” [Burroughs, in Spurgeon].

“They shoot from ambush at the innocent man; they shoot at

him suddenly, without fear" (vs. 4). So often the evil one works concealed, **"from ambush."** "Satan lets fly a temptation so secretly, that he is hardly suspected in the thing. Sometimes he uses a wife's tongue to do his errand; another while he gets behind the back of a husband, friend, servant, etc., and is not seen all the while he is doing his work. Who would have thought to have found a devil in Peter, tempting his Master, or suspected that Abraham should be the instrument to betray his beloved wife into the hands of a sin? Yet it was so. Nay, sometimes he is so secret, that he borrows God's bow to shoot his arrows from, and the poor Christian is abused, thinking it is God who chides and is angry, when it is the devil who tempts him to think so, and only counterfeits God's voice" [Gurnall, in Spurgeon].

"They encourage each other in evil plans, they talk about hiding their snares; they say, 'Who will see them?'" (vs. 5). Sadly, there is great loyalty in the brotherhood of the evil. They ever encourage each other.

In verse 4, we saw that the shots David's enemies were fired **"without fear."** They feared not man nor God. Here we see that they encourage each other in their defiant lack of fear of God, saying of the snares they lay, **"Who will see them?"** "Godless men are dangerous enemies, for they fear not God, and so have no powerful restraint within them from doing any mischief, and the more they sin, they acquire the greater boldness to sin more... Yea, Satan so blindeth them, that they neither look to God, the avenger of such plots and practices, nor do they consider that God seeth them, and they think their pretences before men are so thick a covering, that no man can see through them" [Dickson, 377]. "They please themselves with an atheistical conceit that God Himself takes no notice of their wicked practices. A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked" [Henry]. The fear of God is a healthy thing, keeping us on the path of the righteous.

"They plot injustice and say, 'We have devised a perfect plan!' Surely the mind and heart of man are cunning" (vs. 6). They don't just do evil, they **"plot injustice."** "They rack their invention and ransack their memory for modes of doing mischief" [Alexander, 282]. "They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution" [Henry]. If only such effort was put toward constructive purposes.

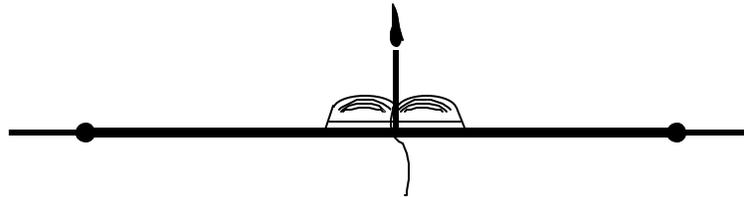
Does not all look hopeless for David? Yet, how quickly can the situation change! With just two words, one's whole perspective on his troubles can be transformed: **"But God..."** As David continues: **"But God will shoot them with arrows; suddenly they will be struck down"** (vs. 7). "By an abrupt but beautiful transition he describes the tables as completely turned upon the enemy" [Alexander, 282]. God can turn things around on a dime.

David was confident that God would use the sin of the evildoers to

bring about their downfall: **“He will turn their own tongues against them and bring them to ruin; all who see them will shake their heads in scorn”** (vs. 8). Seeing the punishment of the wicked will enhance the fear and reverence of God in His people: **“All mankind will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what He has done”** (vs. 9).

Seeing God bring about justice is a cause for the righteous to rejoice: **“Let the righteous rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in Him; let all the upright in heart praise Him!”** (vs. 10). “When woe and wrack come upon the wicked, then joy and comfort come to the godly, not so much for the damage of the wicked, as for the manifestation of the glory of God” [Dickson, 378]. “Their observation of providence shall increase their faith; since He who fulfills His threatenings will not forget His promises” [Spurgeon].

As can be inferred from his psalms, David led a life full of woe and trouble. For those of us who live in relative peace and tranquility, we can praise the Lord. However, there can be danger too in living tranquil life. “What an unspeakable blessing it is to be allowed to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, free from the tempests which have tossed the barks of so many good men, of whom David was but a sample. But let us not forget that a calm which puts us to sleep may be more fatal than a storm which keeps us wide awake. David was in more danger when he was attracted by the beauty of Bathsheba, than when Saul was pursuing him in the wilderness” [Plumer].



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Practical Atheism

"Now, I hold that secret sin, if any thing, is the worst of sin; because secret sin implies that the man who commits it has Atheism in his heart. You will ask how that can be. I reply, he may be a professing Christian, but I shall tell him to his face that he is a practical Atheist, if he labors to keep up a respectable profession before man, and then secretly transgresses. Why is not he an Atheist, who will say there is a God, yet at the same time thinks more of man than he does of God? Is it not the very essence of Atheism--is it not a denial of the divinity of the Most High when men lightly esteem him and think more of the eye of a creature than of the observation of their Creator? There are some who would not, for the life of them, say a wicked word in the presence of their minister, but they can do it, knowing God is looking at them. They are Atheists. There are some who would not trick in trade for all the world if they thought they should be discovered, but they can do it while God is with them; that is, they think more of the eye of man than of the eye of God; and they think it worse to be condemned by man than to be condemned by God. Call it by what name you will, the proper name of that is practical Atheism."

-- C. H. Spurgeon (1834 - 1892)

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