

Scripture Studies

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

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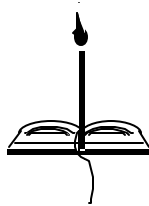
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May God bless you as you study His Word.



Old Testament Study: Exodus 12

The Passover, pt. 1 by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

¹And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying. ²This month [shall be] unto you the beginning of months: it [shall be] the first month of the year to you. ³Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'In the tenth [day] of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of [their] fathers, a lamb for an house: ⁴And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take [it] according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take [it] out from the sheep, or from the goats: ⁶And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. ⁷And they shall take of the blood, and strike [it] on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. ⁸And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; [and] with bitter [herbs] they shall eat it. ⁹Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast [with] fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. ¹⁰And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. ¹¹And thus shall ye eat it; [with] your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it [is] the LORD'S passover.

¹²"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I [am] the LORD. ¹³And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye [are]: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy [you], when I smite the land of Egypt."

In Exodus 11:4-7 we read, "**Thus saith the Lord, 'About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his**

throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it anymore. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue against man or beast, that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” Notice carefully the exact wording of verse 5: it was not “all the firstborn *of* the land of Egypt shall die”, but “**all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.**” This Divine sentence of judgment included the Israelites equally with the Egyptians. Yet in the seventh verse we are told “**not a dog shall move his tongue against any of the children of Israel**”, for the Lord “**put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel**”. Here is what the infidel would call ‘a flat contradiction!’ But as we are fully assured that there can be *no* contradictions in “**the Word of Truth**”, so we know there must be an interpretation which brings out the harmony of this passage. *What that is*, no mere human wisdom could have devised. The sentence of universal condemnation proceeded from the *righteousness* of God; the “**difference**” which He put between the Egyptians and Israel was the outflow of His *grace*. But how can justice and mercy be reconciled? How can justice exact its full due without excluding mercy? How can mercy be manifested except at the expense of justice? This is really the problem that is raised here. The solution of it is found in Exodus 12. *All* the firstborn *in* the land of Egypt *did die*, and yet the firstborn of Israel were *delivered* from the Angel of Death! But how could this be? Surely both could not be true. Yes they were, and therein we may discover a blessed illustration and type of the contents of the Gospel.

Exodus 12 records the last of the ten plagues. This was the death of the firstborn, and inasmuch as death is “**the wages of sin**”, we have no difficulty in perceiving that it is the question of *sin* which is here raised and dealt with by God. This being the case, both the Egyptians and the Israelites alike were obnoxious to His righteous judgment, for both were sinners before Him. This was dealt with at some length in our last paper. In this respect the Egyptians and the Israelites were alike: both in nature and in practice they were sinners. “**There is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God**” (Romans 3:22, 23). It is true that God had purposed to redeem Israel out of Egypt, but He would do so only on a *righteous basis*. Holiness can never ignore sin, no matter where it is found. When the angels sinned God “**spared them not**” (2 Peter 2:4). The elect are “**children of wrath even as others**” (Ephesians 2:3). God made no exception of His own blessed Son: when He was “**made sin for us**” (2 Corinthians 5:21) — He spared Him not (Romans 8:32). But all of this only seems to make the problem more impossible of solution.

The Israelites were sinners. Their guilt was irrefutably established. A just God can “**by no means clear the guilty**” (Exodus 34:7). A sentence

of death was passed upon them (Exodus 11:5). Nothing remained but the carrying out of the sentence. A reprieve was out of the question. Justice *must* be satisfied; sin *must* be paid its wages. What, then? Shall Israel perish after all? It would seem so. Human wisdom could furnish no solution. No; but man's extremity is God's opportunity, and He did find a solution. **"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"** (Romans 5:20), and yet grace was not shown at the expense of righteousness. Every demand of justice *was* satisfied, every claim of holiness *was* fully met. But how? By means of a *substitute*. Sentence of death *was* executed, but it fell upon an innocent victim. That which was **"without blemish"** died in the stead of those who had **"no soundness"** (Isaiah 1:6) in them. The **"difference"** between the Egyptians and Israel was not a moral one, but was made solely by the blood of the paschal lamb! It was in the blood of the Lamb that mercy and truth met together and righteousness and peace kissed each other (Psalm 85:10).

The whole value of the blood of the paschal lamb lay in its being a type of the Lord Jesus — **"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast"** (1 Corinthians 5:7, 8). Here is Divine authority for our regarding the contents of Exodus 12 as typical of the Cross-work of our blessed Savior. And it is this which invests every detail of our chapter with such deep interest. May our eyes be anointed so that we shall be able to perceive some, at least, of the precious unfoldings of the truth which are typically set forth in our chapter.

The first great truth to lay hold of here is what we are told in the 11th verse: **"It is the Lord's passover"**. This emphasizes a side of the truth which is much neglected today in evangelical preaching. Gospellers have much to say about what Christ's death accomplished for those who believe in Him, but very little is said about what that Death accomplished *Godwards*. The fact is that the death of Christ glorified God if never a single sinner had been saved by virtue of it. Nor is this simply a matter of theology. The more we study the teaching of Scripture on this subject, and the more we lay hold by simple faith of what the Cross meant to God, the more stable will be our peace and the deeper our joy and praise. The particular aspect of truth which we now desire to press upon the reader is plainly taught in many a passage. Take the very first (direct) reference to the **"Lamb"** in Scripture. In Genesis 22:8 we read that Abraham said to his son, **"God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering"**. It was not simply God would **"provide"** a lamb, but that He would **"provide Himself a lamb"**. The Lamb was **"provided"** to glorify God's character, to vindicate His throne, to satisfy His justice, to magnify His holiness. So, too, in the ritual on the annual Day of Atonement, we read of the two goats. Why *two*? To foreshadow the two great aspects of Christ's atoning work — Godwards and usward. **"And he shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot**

for the Lord, and the other for the scapegoat” (Leviticus 16:7, 8).

It is *this* aspect of truth which is before us in Romans 3:24-26, **“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness.. that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”**. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 we read, **“Christ our Passover”**. He is now *our* Passover, because He was first *the Lord’s* Passover (Exodus 12:11). If further confirmation of what we have said above be needed it is supplied by another term which is used in Exodus 12:27. Here we are expressly told that the Passover was a **“sacrifice”** — **“It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover”**. Nor is this the only verse in the Scriptures where the Passover is called a sacrifice. In Exodus 34:25 we read that God said unto Israel, **“Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left unto the morning”**.

Again, in Deuteronomy 16:2 we read, **“Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the Passover unto the Lord thy God”**. So also in the New Testament, it is said, **“Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us”** (1 Corinthians 5:7). We emphasize this point because it has been *denied* by many that the Passover was a **“sacrifice”**. Objectors have pointed out that the paschal lamb was not slain by the priest, nor was it offered upon the altar, for there was no altar which God could own in Egypt. But such an objection is quickly removed if reference be made to the later Scriptures on the subject. *After the Exodus* the “passover” was never allowed to be killed anywhere except in the place which God had chosen. This is abundantly clear from Deuteronomy 16:4,5, **“And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coasts seven days, neither shall there any thing of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning. Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee; but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt”**. The Israelites were here expressly forbidden to kill the passover in their own homes, and were commanded to sacrifice it *only* **“at the place which the Lord Thy God shall choose to place His name in”**.

What *that* “place” was we may learn from Deuteronomy 12:5,6 and similar passages — it was the Tabernacle, afterwards the Temple. That the Passover was a **“sacrifice”**, a priestly offering, is further proven by the fact that in Numbers 9:6,7,13, it is specifically designated a “corban”, and it is certain that nothing was ever so called except what was brought and offered to God in the Tabernacle or the Temple. Furthermore, there is definite scripture to show that the blood of the paschal sacrifice was poured out, sprinkled, offered at the altar by *the priests*. **“Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the**

fat of My sacrifice remain until the morning" (Exodus 23:18) — only *the priests* "offered" the blood. Plainer still is the testimony of 2 Chronicles 30:15,16, "**Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month and *the priests and the Levites* were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the Lord. And they stood in their place after their manner according to the Law of Moses the man of God; *the priests* sprinkled the blood". And 2 Chronicles 35:11, "**And they killed the passover and *the priests* sprinkled the blood**". So again Ezra 6:20, "**For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves**". Note "**the priests and Levites**" killed the passover *for* all the children of the captivity!**

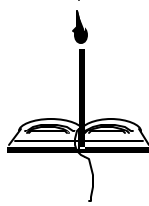
Now there are two lines of thought associated with *sacrifices* in Scripture. First, a sacrifice is a propitiatory satisfaction rendered unto God. It is to placate His holy wrath. It is to appease His righteous hatred of sin. It is to pacify the claims of His justice. It is to settle the demands of His law. God is "**light**" as well as "**love**". He is of "**purser eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity**" (Hab. 1:13). This truth is denied on every side today. Yet this should not surprise us; it is exactly what prophecy foretold (2 Timothy 4:3,4). Plain and pointed is the teaching of Scripture on this subject. Following the rebellion and destruction of Korah, we read that all the Congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron saying, "**Ye have killed the people**". What was God's response? This: "**The Lord spake unto Moses saying, 'Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment'**" (Numbers 16:45). How was the consuming anger of God averted? Thus: "**And Moses said unto Aaron, 'Take a censer and put fire therein off the altar, and put on incense and go quickly unto the congregation and make an *atonement* for them; for there is *wrath* gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun.'** And Aaron took as Moses commanded and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and *the plague was stayed*" (Numbers 16:46-48)!

A similar passage is found in the last chapter of Job. There we read, "**The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My *wrath* is kindled against thee and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath. *Therefore* take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a *burnt offering*; and My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly.'**" Here, then, is the primary thought connected with "**sacrifice**". It is a bloody offering to appease the holy wrath of a sin-hating and sin-punishing God. And *this* is the very word which is used

again and again in connection with the Lord Jesus the Great Sacrifice. Thus, Ephesians 5:2: **“Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.”** Again, **“Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself”**, (Hebrews 9:26). And again, **“This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever sat down on the right hand of God”** (Hebrews 10:12). The meaning of these passages is explained by Romans 3:25,26: Christ was unto God a **“propitiation”**, an appeasement, a pacification, a legal satisfaction. Therefore could the forerunner of the Redeemer say, **“Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29).

The second thought associated with **“sacrifice”** in the Scriptures is that of *thanksgiving and praise* unto God; this being the effect of the former. It is because Christ has propitiated God on their behalf that believers can now offer **“a sacrifice of praise”** (Hebrews 13:15). Said one of old, **“And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy”** (Psalm 27:6). Said another, **“I will sacrifice unto Thee with a voice of thanksgiving”** (Jonah 2:9). This is why, after being told that **“Christ our Passover hath been sacrificed for us”**, the exhortation follows **“therefore let us keep the feast”** (1 Corinthians 5:7). The paschal lamb was first a sacrifice unto God; second, it then became the food of those sheltered beneath its blood.

The ritual in connection with the Passover in Egypt was very striking. The lamb was to be *killed* (Exodus 12:6). Death must be inflicted either upon the guilty transgressor or upon an innocent substitute. Then its *blood* was to be taken and sprinkled upon the door-posts and lintel of the house wherein the Israelites sheltered that night. **“Without *shedding* of blood is no remission”** (Hebrews 9:22), and without *sprinkling* of blood is no salvation. The two words are by no means synonymous. The former is for *propitiation*; the latter is faith's *appropriation*. It is not until the converted sinner *applies* the blood that it avails *for him*. An Israelite might have selected a proper lamb, he might have slain it, but unless he had *applied* its blood to the outside of the door, the Angel of Death would have entered his house and slain his firstborn. In like manner today, it is not enough for me to know that the precious blood of the Lamb of God was shed for the remission of sins. A Savior *provided* is not sufficient: He must be *received*. There must be **“faith in His blood”** (Romans 3:25), and faith is a *personal* thing. I must exercise faith. I must by faith take the blood and shelter beneath it. I must place it between my sins and the thrice Holy God. I must rely upon it as the sole ground of my acceptance with Him.



A Classic Study: Early Piety

A Classic Study by George Whitefield (1714–1770)

[Here we begin a study by the preacher George Whitefield, on the importance of turning to God during youth.]—*Ed.*

The Benefits of an Early Piety, pt. 1

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.
(Eccl. 12:1, AV).

The amiableness of religion in itself, and the innumerable advantages that flow from it to society in general, as well as to each sincere professor in particular, cannot but recommend it to the choice of every considerate person, and make even wicked men, as they approach death, to envy the life of the righteous. And, indeed, we must do the world so much justice, as to confess, that the question about religion does not usually arise from a dispute whether it be necessary or not (for most men see the necessity of doing something for the salvation of their souls), but when is the best time to set about it. Persons are convinced by universal experience that the first essays or endeavors towards the attainment of religion are attended with some difficulty and trouble, and therefore they would willingly defer the beginning of such a seemingly unsatisfying work, as long as they can. The wanton prodigal, who is spending his substance in riotous living, cries: “A little more pleasure, a little more sensuality, and then I will be sober in earnest.” The covetous worldling that employs all his care and pains in **“heaping up riches, though he cannot tell who shall gather them”** (Ps. 39:6), does not flatter himself that this will do always; but hopes with the rich fool in the gospel, to lay up goods for a few more years on earth, and then he will begin to lay up treasures in heaven. And, in short, thus it is that most people are convinced of the necessity of being religious some time or another; but then, like Felix, they put off the acting suitably to their convictions, until, what they imagine, a more convenient season. However, would we be so humble as to be guided by the experience and counsel of the wisest men, we should learn that youth is the fittest season for religion; **“Remember now thy creator,”** (says Solomon) **“in the days of thy youth.”** By the word remember, we are not to understand a bare speculative remembrance, or calling to mind, (for that, like a dead

faith, will profit us nothing), but such a remembrance as will constrain us to obedience, and oblige us out of gratitude, to perform all that the Lord our God shall require of us. For as the forgetting God, in scripture language, implies a total neglect of our duty, in like manner, remembering Him signifies a perfect performance of it. So that, when Solomon says, **“Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,”** it is the same as if he had said, keep God’s commandments; or, in other words, be religious in the days of thy youth, thereby implying, that youth is the most proper season for it.

I shall in the following discourse,

FIRST, Endeavor to make good the wise man’s proposition, implied in the words of the text, and to show that youth is the fittest season for religion.

SECONDLY, By way of motive, I shall consider the many unspeakable advantages that will arise from, **“Remembering our Creator in the days of our youth.”** And,

THIRDLY, I shall conclude with a word or two of exhortation to the younger part of this audience.

FIRST, I am to make good the wise man’s proposition, implied in the words of the text, and to show that youth is the fittest season for religion: **“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”** But to proceed more clearly in this argument, it may not be improper, first, to explain what I mean by the word religion. By this term, then, I would not be understood to mean a bare outward profession or naming the name of Christ; for we are told, that many who have even prophesied in His name, and in His name cast out devils, shall notwithstanding be rejected by Him at the last day. Nor would I understand by it, barely being admitted into Christ’s church by baptism; for then Simon Magus, Arius, and the “heresy-archs” of old, might pass for religious persons (for these were baptized); nor yet the receiving the other seal of the covenant, for then Judas himself might be canonized for a saint; nor indeed do I mean any or all of these together. But I mean a thorough, real, inward change of nature, wrought in us by the powerful operations of the Holy Ghost, conveyed to and nourished in our hearts, by a constant use of all the means of grace, evidenced by a good life, and bringing forth the fruits of the spirit.

The attaining this real, inward religion, is a work of so great difficulty, that Nicodemus, a learned doctor and teacher in Israel, thought it altogether impossible, and therefore ignorantly asked our blessed Lord, **“How this thing could be?”** (John 3:9). And, truly, to rectify a disordered nature, to mortify our corrupt passions, to turn darkness to light, to put off the old man and put on the new, and thereby to have the image of God reinstamped upon the soul, or in one phrase, **“to be born again”** (John 3:7), however light some may make of it, must, after all our endeavors, be owned by man to be impossible. It is true, indeed, Christ’s

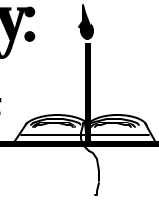
yoke is said to be an easy or a gracious yoke, and His burden light; but then it is to those only to whom grace has been given to bear and draw in it. For, as the wise son of Sirach observes, "At first, wisdom walks with her children in crooked ways, and brings them into fear, and torments them with her discipline, and does not turn to comfort and rejoice them, until she has tried them and proved their judgment." No, we must not flatter ourselves that we shall walk in wisdom's pleasant ways, unless we first submit to a great many difficulties. The spiritual birth is attended with its pangs, as well as the natural: for they that have experienced it (and they only are the proper judges), can acquaint you that in all things that are dear to corrupt nature, we must deny ourselves, lest, after all, when we come to the birth, we should want strength to bring forth. But if these things are so; if there are difficulties and pangs attending our being born again; if we must deny ourselves, what season more proper than that of youth? When, if ever, are our bodies robust and vigorous, and our minds active and courageous; and, consequently, we are then best qualified to endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ? We find, in secular matters, people commonly observe this method, and send their children abroad among the toils and fatigues of business, in their younger years, as well knowing they are then fittest to undergo them. And why do they not act with the same consistency in the grand affair of religion? Because, as our Savior has told us, "**The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light**" (Luke 16:8).

But, also, if pure and undefiled religion consists in the renewal of our corrupted natures, then it is not only a work of difficulty, but, the perfection of it, of time. And if this be the case, then it highly concerns every one to set about it betimes, and to "**work their work while it is day, before the night cometh, when no man can work**" (John 9:4).

Could we, indeed, live to the age of Methuselah, and have but little business to employ ourselves in, we might then be more excusable. But since our lives are so very short, and we are called to work our salvation with fear and trembling, we have no room left for trifling, lest we should be snatched away while our lamps are untrimmed, and we are entirely unprepared to meet the Bridegroom. Did we know a friend or neighbor, who had a long journey of the utmost importance to make, and yet should stand all the day idle, neglecting to set out till the sun was about to go down, we could not but pity and condemn his egregious folly. And yet it is to be feared most men are just such fools; they have a long journey to take, nay, a journey to eternity, a journey of infinite importance, and which they are obliged to dispatch before the sun of their natural life be gone down; and yet they loiter away the time allotted them to perform their journey in, till sickness or death surprises them; and then they cry out, "What shall we do to inherit eternal life?"

New Testament Study:

Matthew 20:20-34



Seeking Glory

²⁰Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of Him.

²¹"What is it you want?" He asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your kingdom."

²²"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

²³Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

²⁴When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

²⁹As Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. ³⁰Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³¹The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³²Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" He asked.

³³"Lord," they answered, "we want our sight."

³⁴Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him.

In the previous section, Jesus pulled His disciples aside and told them

about the suffering He would endure at the hands of the Romans. This appears not to have had the desired effect upon the disciples, as can be seen by the request made by the mother of John and James: **“Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of Him. ‘What is it you want?’ He asked. She said, ‘Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your kingdom’”** (vss. 20–21). “While the mind of Jesus was occupied with His humiliation and death, His followers were thinking of their own honor and ease” [Spurgeon, 280].

We must admit that John and James displayed faith in their request. They foresaw and believed that Jesus would come into His kingdom in power. However, by seeking for themselves a place of glory and power, they were not demonstrating an attitude appropriate for disciples of Jesus, for Jesus set aside His exalted place, and forsook all power in the Universe to serve, and even die, for sinful man. The disciples’s request “teaches that ambition or some other fault of the flesh is often entwined in a right and godly zeal, so that Christ’s followers have a different aim from what they should” [Calvin, 270]. “Consistently Jesus had taught His followers that there was no place for pride and self-seeking of any sort in the life to which He called them; equally consistently they failed to learn the lesson... It was not a minor misunderstanding, but an error at the heart of what service in the kingdom means” [Morris, 508]. “They ask not for employment in this kingdom, but for honour only; and no place would serve them in the kingdom, but the highest, next to Christ, and above everybody else” [Henry].

In response, Jesus first points out to them that to be at Jesus’ right and left hand would entail sharing in His sufferings, as well as His glory: **“You don’t know what You are asking,’ Jesus said to them. ‘Can You drink the cup I am going to drink?’ ‘We can,’ they answered”** (vs. 22). When Jesus said, **“...drink the cup”**, He was referring to the cup of His sufferings. “To ask that they might reign with Him was asking that they might suffer with Him” [Broadus, 417]. Did John and James know what they were saying when they said **“We can”**? “They were much in the dark concerning the way to that kingdom. They know not what they ask, who ask for the end, but overlook the means, and so put asunder what God has joined together. The disciples thought, when they had left what little all they had for Christ, and had gone about the country awhile preaching the gospel of the kingdom, all their service and sufferings were over, and it was not time to ask, ‘What shall we have?’ As if nothing were now to be looked for but crowns and garlands; whereas there were far greater hardships and difficulties before them than they had yet met with. They imagined their warfare was accomplished when it was

scarcely begun, and they had yet but run with the footmen. They dream of being in Canaan presently, and consider not what they shall do in the swellings of Jordan" [Henry]. "**We can,**" they said, without hesitation, without understanding, and without seeking clarification of exactly what the *cup* involved. That they claimed too much was made plain when they ran away in Gethsemane (see Matt. 26:56). And yet – in due course they did drink the cup: James by martyrdom (see Acts 12:1–2) and John by exile to Patmos" [Morris, 510].

Note that the "**cup**" was the cup that Jesus "**was going to drink.**" He went before us in suffering. Whatever we may suffer for His sake, He suffered more.

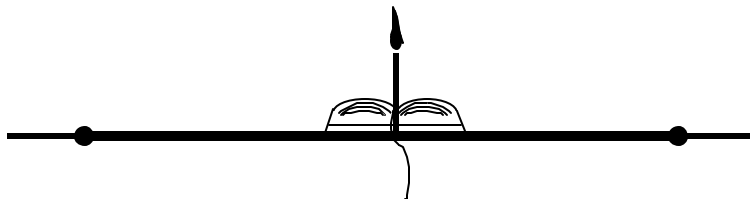
The other disciples reacted to the request: "**When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers**" (vs. 24). Why were they indignant? Well, surely because they themselves wanted the same asked-for glory.

Seeing this, Jesus had to set them all straight: "**Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many'**" (vss. 25–28). Jesus first points out that His followers must not have the same priorities as those of the world. Those of the world desire to "**lord it over**" others, and to "**exercise authority**". Jesus says concerning this, "**Not so with you.**" "In the pagan world humility was regarded, not so much as a virtue, but as a vice. Imagine a slave being given leadership! Jesus' ethics of the leadership and power in His community of disciples are revolutionary" [Carson, 432]. Jesus says, "**instead**" we must seek to serve. The greatness we aim for must be greatness in service—in serving others, in helping our brothers, in sacrificing our needs to make life better for others. "To rise in Christ's kingdom we must descend" [Spurgeon, 283]. Again, Jesus is our example in this: "**just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.**" Jesus chose to give up His throne of power and come into the world to serve humanity, and to save humanity. And He served even to the point of death. "The example of our Lord's humiliation of Himself serves to curb all ambition in His ministers" [Dickson].

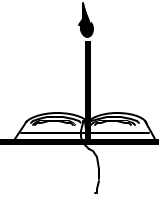
Jesus and the others moved on: "**As Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!'**" (vss. 29–30). In faith, the two blind men, obviously not having *seen* any of Jesus' mi-

raculous works, believed that He could heal them, based only on what they heard. They also believed He was the Messiah, for they addressed Jesus as **“Son of David”**. Those following Jesus apparently felt that the blind men were not worthy of receiving **“mercy”** from Jesus: **“The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!’”** (vss. 31). It is quite sad that the crowd, followers of Jesus, would attempt to deprive these men of their chance to be healed by Jesus. “Did they upbraid them for ill manners, or for noise, or for harshness of tone, or for selfishly wishing to monopolize Jesus? It is always easy to find a stick when you wish to beat a dog” [Spurgeon, 284]. Perhaps the followers of Jesus felt discomfort with the desperate blind men, who were no doubt poor, dirty, even a bit disgusting in their appearance. Perhaps the followers of Jesus did not want such as the blind men to come to Jesus. If so, this is surely a sinful and most un-Christlike attitude. Jesus desires that *all* should come to Him, especially those who are in the most desperate of circumstances. We must be careful that we do not display the same sinful attitude as those followers of Jesus.

The blind men were not deterred by the rebukes of the crowd. They **“shouted all the louder.”** The blind men knew that they would probably never get another chance to have their sight restored. Their persistence paid off: **“Jesus stopped and called them, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ He asked. ‘Lord,’ they answered, ‘we want our sight.’ Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him”** (vss. 32–34). It is somewhat strange that Jesus would ask the blind men, **“What do you want me to do for you?”**. Certainly, the whole crowd knew that they wanted their sight back, and certainly Jesus knew this as well. But it is God’s will that we ask for (through prayer) what we need from Him, even though He knows our needs. Prayer establishes a relationship to God by faith, and thus, qualifies us to receive God’s mercy.



A Topical Study: On Prayer



[Here we continue a series on Prayer. This study is self-described as, "A declaration what true prayer is, how we should pray, and for what we should pray. Set forth by John Knox, Preacher of God's Holy Word."—*Ed.*]

The True Nature of Prayer, pt. 3 **by John Knox (1505-1572)**

Observation in Godly Prayer - The Fifth Observation which godly prayer requires, is knowledge of the Advocate, Intercessor, and Mediator.

Of Necessity we must have a Mediator - For, seeing no man is of himself worthy to appear in God's presence, by reason that in all men continually rests sin, raising all debate, strife, hatred, and division betwixt His inviolable justice and us: For the while, unless satisfaction be made by another than by ourselves, so little hope rests in anything from Him we can attain, that no surety with Him may we have at all. To exempt us from this horrible confusion, our most merciful Father has given unto us His only beloved Son to be unto us justice, wisdom, sanctification, and holiness. If in Him we faithfully believe, we are so clad that we may with boldness compare and appear before the throne of God's mercy; doubting nothing but whatsoever we ask, by our Mediator, that same we shall obtain most assuredly.

Note diligently, by whom we must pray. - Here is most diligently to be observed, that without our Mediator and Peace-Maker, we enter not into prayer; for the incalling of such as pray without Jesus Christ are not only vain, but also they are odious and abominable before God. Which thing to us, in the Levitical Priesthood, most evidently was prefigured and declared: for as within the Sanctum Sanctorum (that is the most Holy Place), enters no man but the High Priest alone; and as all sacrifices offered by any other than by priests only, provokes the wrath of God upon the sacrifice made; so who does intend to enter into God's presence, without Jesus Christ, shall find nothing but fearful judgment, and horrible damnation.

When we be not heard. - For as the Law is a statute that we shall call upon God, and as the promise is made that He shall hear us, so are we commanded only to call by Jesus Christ, by whom alone our petitions we obtain; for in Him alone are all the promises of God confirmed and completed; whereof, without all controversy it is plain, that such as have called, or call presently unto God by any other name than by Jesus Christ alone, does nothing in regard to God's will, but obstinately prevaricates, and does against His commandments. And therefore, obtain not they their petitions, neither yet half entrance to His mercy. For no man comes to the Father

(says Jesus Christ) but by Me (see John 14:6). He is the right way; who declined from him erring, and going wrong; He is our Leader, whom without we shall walk in darkness; and He alone is our Captain, without whom neither praise nor victory ever shall we obtain.

Intercession to Saints - Against such as depend upon the intercession of Saints no other ways will I contend, but shortly touch the properties of a perfect Mediator. First, are the words most sure of Paul, "**A mediator is not the mediator of one**" (see Gal. 3:20), that is, where so ever is required mediator, there are also two parties; to wit, a party offending, and the other party which is offended; which parties by themselves may in no wise be reconciled. Secondly, the mediator which takes upon him the reconciling of these two parties must be such a one as having trust and favor of both parties, yet in some things must differ from both, and must be clear and innocent also of the crime committed against the party offended. Let this be more plain by this subsequent declaration: The Eternal God standing upon the one part, and all natural men descending of Adam on the other part. The infinite justice of God is so offended with the transgression of men, that in no wise can amity be made, except such a one be found as fully may make satisfaction for man's offenses. Among the sons of men none was found able: for all they were found criminal in the fall of one. And God, infinite in justice, must abhor the society ad sacrifice of sinners.

Angels cannot be mediators - And unto the Angels what prevailed the prevarication of man, who (albeit they would have designated themselves mediators), yet they had not the justice infinite. Who then shall here be found the Peace-maker? Surely the infinite goodness and mercy of God might not suffer the perpetual loss and repudiation of His creatures; and therefore His eternal wisdom provides such a mediator, having wherewith to satisfy the justice of God; differing also from the Godhead; His only Son, clad in the nature of man, who designated Himself a mediator, not as man only.

Jesus Christ, God and Man, our Mediator. - For the pure humanity of Christ (of itself) might neither make intercession nor satisfaction for us, but God and Man: In that He is God, He might complete the will of the Father, and in that He is Man, pure and clean without spot or sin, He might offer sacrifice for the purgation of our sins and satisfaction of God's Justice. So, without Saints have these two, Godhead equal with the Father, and humanity without sin, the office of mediators Saints may not usurp.

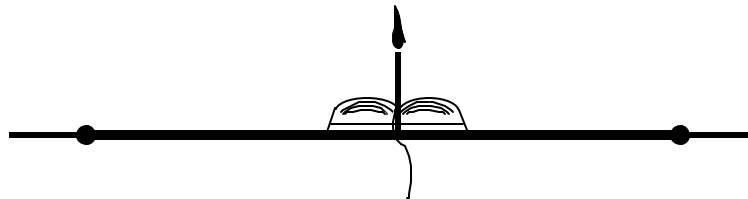
Who makes other Mediators than Jesus Christ Takes Honor from Him. - Do such men respectfully treat Jesus Christ, detracting from Him such portion of His honor? Otherwise speaking the Scriptures of God, testifying Him to have been made man, and to have proved our infirmities; to have suffered death willingly; to have overcome the same; and all to this end, that He might be our perpetual High Sovereign Priest, in who's place or dignity none other might enter. As John says, "**If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the just**" (I John 2:1).

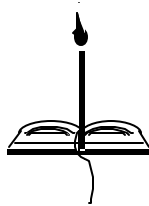
Mark well these words: John says, We have presently a sufficient advocate, whom Paul affirms that our advocate sits at the right hand of God

the Father, to be the only Mediator between God and Man. "For He alone," (says Ambrose), "is our mouth, by whom we speak to God; He is our eyes, by whom we see God, and also our right hand, by whom we offer anything unto the Father;" who, unless He makes intercession, neither we, neither any of the Saints, may have any society or fellowship with God. What creature may say to God the Father, "Let mankind be reserved into Thy favor, for the pain of his transgression that have I sustained in my own body. For His cause was I compassed with all infirmities, and so became the most despised of all men; and yet in my mouth was found no guile or deceit, but always obedient to Thy will, suffering most grievous death for mankind: And, therefore, behold not the sinner but me, who, be my infinite Justice, has perfectly satisfied for his offences." May any other (Jesus Christ excepted) in these words make intercession for sinners! If they may not, than are they neither mediators not yet intercessors. "For albeit," says Augustine, "Christians do commend one another unto God in their prayers, yet make they not intercession, neither dare they usurp the office of a Mediator; no not Paul, albeit under the Head He was a principal member, because He commends Himself to the prayers of faithful men." But if any do object, such is not the condition of the Saints departed, who now have put off mortality, and bear no longer the fragility of the flesh: Which albeit I grant to be most true, yet are they all compelled to cast their crowns before Him that does sit on the throne, acknowledging themselves to have been delivered from great affliction, to have been purged by the blood of the Lamb; and therefore none of them do attempt to be a Mediator, seeing they neither have being, nor justice, of themselves.

But in so great light of the Gospel which now is beginning, (praise be to the Omnipotent!) it is not necessary upon such matter long to remain. Some say, we will use but one Mediator, Jesus Christ, to God the Father; but we must have Saints, and chiefly the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, to pray for us to Him.

Against such as would have Mediators to Jesus Christ. - Alas! Whosoever thinks this way, shows plainly themselves to know nothing of Jesus Christ rightly. Is He who descended from heaven and condescended to be conversant with sinners, commanding all sorely vexed and seek to come to Him, (who, hanging upon the Cross, prays first for His enemies) become now so untractable that He will not hear us without a person between! O Lord! Open the eyes of such, that they may clearly perceive Your infinite kindness, gentleness, and love toward mankind.





A Study in Psalms: Psalm 69:19-36

Psalm 69:19-36 - A Prayer in Desperate Times

- ¹⁹You know how I am scorned,
disgraced and shamed;
all my enemies are before You.
- ²⁰Scorn has broken my heart
and has left me helpless;
I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
for comforters, but I found none.
- ²¹They put gall in my food
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.
- ²²May the table set before them become a snare;
may it become retribution and a trap.
- ²³May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,
and their backs be bent forever.
- ²⁴Pour out Your wrath on them;
let Your fierce anger overtake them.
- ²⁵May their place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in their tents.
- ²⁶For they persecute those You wound
and talk about the pain of those You hurt.
- ²⁷Charge them with crime upon crime;
do not let them share in Your salvation.
- ²⁸May they be blotted out of the book of life
and not be listed with the righteous.
- ²⁹I am in pain and distress;
may Your salvation, O God, protect me.
- ³⁰I will praise God's name in song
and glorify Him with thanksgiving.
- ³¹This will please the LORD more than an ox,
more than a bull with its horns and hoofs.
- ³²The poor will see and be glad--
you who seek God, may your hearts live!
- ³³The LORD hears the needy
and does not despise His captive people.

³⁴Let heaven and earth praise Him,
the seas and all that move in them,
³⁵For God will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah.
Then people will settle there and possess it;
³⁶the children of His servants will inherit it,
and those who love His name will dwell there.

Here we continue our study of Psalm 69. As we noted in the previous study, this psalm is a prayer offered up by David in a time of hopelessness. It is also a psalm which speaks prophetically of the sufferings of Jesus. In this psalm, the sufferings of David (as a type of Christ) mirror the sufferings of Christ, so this psalm is applied to Jesus numerous times in the New Testament.

David continues: **“You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed; all my enemies are before You. Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless”** (vss. 19–20a). As he prays, David (by faith) is certain that God **“knows”** of his sufferings. It is a source of comfort, to those who pray, that God is omniscient: He knows everything. And if we believe that He too is a God of love, we must also believe that our sufferings will turn out for our good, somehow. As Paul tells us: **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose”** (Rom. 8:28). “The consideration of God’s being witness to all the sufferings of the saints, is a ground of patience under trouble, and of hope to be delivered” [Dickson, 418]. “If Christians were well informed and wise they would greatly comfort themselves with the remembrance of God’s omniscience” [Plumer, 687]. Though the ungodly may fear and hate God’s omniscience, the godly can cherish and revel in it.

David continues: **“I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none. They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst”** (vss. 20b–21). Though we do not know when this happened to David, we do know when these verses, as prophecy, were fulfilled in Christ: **“They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, He refused to drink”** (Matt. 27:34), then later, **“Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink”** (Matt. 27:48). “This was the sole refreshment cruelty had prepared for Him” [Spurgeon]. “Such are the comforts often administered by the world, to an afflicted and deserted soul” [Horne, in Spurgeon].

In the next few verses (vss. 22–28), David prays for judgment on those who were persecuting him. On the prophetic level, the petitions can be seen as prophetic of the consequences that come upon those whose hearts

are hardened against Jesus (Paul uses verses 22 and 23 in just this way, see Rom. 10:9–10). First, David prays that their prosperity cause them harm: **“May the table set before them become a snare; may it become retribution and a trap”** (vs. 22). “In all our comforts, there is a forbidden fruit, which seemeth fair and tasteth sweet, but which must not be touched” [Wilkinson, in Spurgeon]. Second, David prays for their spiritual darkness to continue: **“May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever”** (vs. 23). Note that a consequence of spiritual darkness is back-breaking labor. Those who reject Jesus do not receive the benefit of His easy yoke, and light burden.

Next David prays for the full wrath of God to fall on those who rebel against Him: **“Pour out Your wrath on them; let Your fierce anger overtake them. May their place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in their tents”** (vss. 24–25). God is a God of love, but make no mistake: God is holy, and He is a God of justice. If we reject the wonderful salvation offered to us through His love, we can only expect, as those who have broken God’s law, to receive the full measure of His judgment. As the writer of Hebrews points out: **“How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?”** (Heb. 2:3); then later, **“Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Heb. 10:28–31). “What can be too severe a penalty for those who reject the incarnate God, and refuse to obey the commands of His mercy?... God is not to be insulted with impunity, and His Son, our ever gracious Savior, the best gift of infinite love, is not to be scorned and scoffed at for nothing” [Spurgeon].

David continues: **“For they persecute those You wound and talk about the pain of those You hurt. Charge them with crime upon crime; do not let them share in Your salvation. May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous”** (vss. 26–28). I myself would not pray as David is praying here. Those of us under the New Covenant, and who have a full understanding of the depths of God’s love and grace, must show love even for our enemies, and pray for their salvation. David, however, speaks prophetically, and by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and through these verses reminds us that salvation will not be for all. Those who reject the salvation through Jesus Christ offered to them, will be **“blotted out of the book of life”** (vs. 28).

David gets back to a more personal prayer: **“I am in pain and distress; may Your salvation, O God, protect me”** (vs. 29). David seeks

salvation the best place to find it: in God. Then David trusts that God will save him, for he foresees himself praising God for the salvation he would receive: **“I will praise God’s name in song and glorify Him with thanksgiving”** (vs. 30). “When the Lord comforts the heart of a sufferer for his cause, he can make him glad before the delivery come, by giving him the assurance that it shall come; and can engage his heart to solemn thanksgiving in the midst of trouble; for poverty of spirit will esteem the far foresight of delivery at last, as a rich mercy, and matter of a song” [Dickson, 423].

Concerning the praise, David says: **“This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs”** (vs. 31). This sentiment is expressed numerous times in the Bible. “Moral worship offered in spirit and truth, in the meanest degree of sincerity, is more acceptable to God than the most pompous ceremonial service, which can be done to Him without spirit and truth” [Dickson, 423]. God desires the voluntary, spontaneous worship of His people. He desires a worship springing from the love in their hearts. The system of animal sacrifices set up in the Old Testament was necessary for the atonement for their sins. God is certainly not pleased that, because of our sins, this system of sacrifices was necessary. (Jesus, by His sacrifice, has made obsolete the former system of animal sacrifices).

Our praise after the work of God in our lives is a witness to others that God will work in their lives, too: **“The poor will see and be glad—you who seek God, may your hearts live! The Lord hears the needy and does not despise His captive people”** (vss. 32–33). “The escape of His afflicted children out of their sufferings through faith in Him, is a matter of instruction, comfort, and joy to every humbled believer” [Dickson, 424].

The psalm ends with an exhortation for all God’s people to praise Him for the salvation and glory which is still to come: **“Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and all that move in them, for God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. Then people will settle there and possess it; the children of His servants will inherit it, and those who love His name will dwell there”** (vss. 34–36). “Large sense of troubles maketh way for large observation, and a corresponding sense of mercies. The evil of the deepest afflictions the Lord can recompense with highest consolation, as the beginning and ending of this psalm giveth evidence” [Dickson, 425]. “Thus a Psalm, which began in the deep waters, ends in the heavenly city. How gracious is the change. Hallelujah” [Spurgeon].

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God's Grace in Answering Prayer

"There is no more proper ground of praise than the fact that God hears prayer—the prayer of poor, ignorant, sinful, dying men. When we consider how great is His condescension in doing this; when we think of His greatness and immensity; when we reflect that the whole universe is dependent on Him, and that the farthest worlds need His care and attention; when we bear in mind that we are creatures of a day and 'know nothing,' and especially when we remember how we have violated His laws, how sensual, corrupt, and vile our lives have been, how low and groveling have been our aims and purposes, how we have provoked Him by our unbelief, our ingratitude, and our hardness of heart—we can never express, in appropriate words, the extent of His goodness in hearing our prayers, nor can we find language which will properly give utterance to the praises due to His name for having condescended to listen to our cries for mercy."

-- Albert Barnes (1798- 1870)

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