

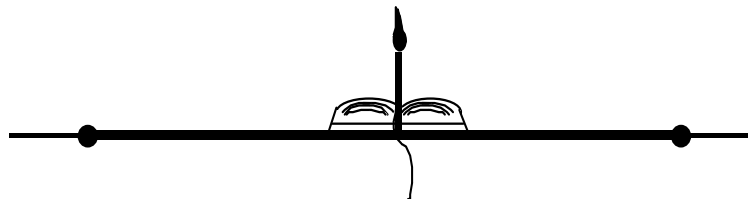
SCRIPTURE STUDIES

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"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord..." Isaiah 1:18

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May God bless you as you study His Word.



Old Testament Study: Exodus 13:1-13

The Accompaniments of the Passover, pt. 2 by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

¹And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²“Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.”

³And Moses said unto the people, “Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. ⁴This day came ye out in the month Abib. ⁵And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which He sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month. ⁶Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD. ⁷Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. ⁸And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, ‘This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.’ ⁹And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD’S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt. ¹⁰Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.

¹¹“And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, ¹²That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD’S. ¹³And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.”

“And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, ‘Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel both of man and of beast it is Mine’” (13:1, 2). “The narrative of

the Exodus from Egypt is suspended to bring in certain consequences, — responsible consequences for the children of Israel — consequences which flowed from their redemption out of the land of bondage. For, although, they are still in the land, the teaching of the chapter is founded upon their having been brought out, and it is indeed anticipative of their being in Canaan. If God acts in grace toward His people, He thereby establishes claims upon them, and it is these claims that are here unfolded” (Ed. Dennett).

A redeemed people become the property of the Redeemer. To His New Testament saints God says, **“Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price”** (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). It is on this same principle that Jehovah here says unto Moses, **“Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn”**. The reference to the **“firstborn”** here should be carefully noted. It was the *firstborn* of Israel who had been redeemed from the death-judgment which fell upon the Egyptians, and now the Lord claims these for Himself. Typically this speaks of practical holiness, setting apart unto God. Thus the first exhortation in Romans which follows the doctrinal exposition in chapters 1 to 11 is, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”** (Rom. 12:1). Personal devotedness is the first thing which God has a right to look for from His blood-bought people.

“Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters” (13:6, 7). Typically this shows the nature of sanctification. Throughout Scripture **“leaven”** is the symbol of evil, evil which spreads and corrupts everything with which it comes into contact, for **“a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”** (1 Corinthians 5:6). To eat **“unleavened bread”** signifies separation from all evil, in order that we may feed upon Christ. That this Feast lasted **“seven days”**, which is a *complete* period, tells us that this is to last throughout our whole sojourn on earth. It is to this that 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8 refers. **“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”** Because we are saved by *grace*, through the sprinkled blood of Christ, it is not that we may now indulge in sin without fear of its consequences, or that grace may abound. Not so. Redemption by the precious blood of Christ imposes an additional responsibility to separate ourselves from all evil, that we may now show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Carelessness of walk, evil associations, worldliness, fleshly indulgences are the things which hinder us from keeping this Feast of unleavened Bread.

But much more is included by this figure of **“leaven”** than the grosser things of the flesh. We read in the N. T. of **“the leaven of the Pharisees,”** (Matthew 16:6). This is superstition, the making void of the Word of God by the *traditions* of men. Formalism and legality are included too.

Sectarianism and ritualism as well are the very essence of Phariseeism. Then we read of **“the leaven of the Sadducees”** (Matthew 16:6). The Sadducees were materialists, denying a spirit within man, and rejecting the truth of resurrection, (Acts 23:8). In its present-day form, Higher Criticism, Rationalism, Modernism answers to Sadduceeism. We also read of **“the leaven of Herod”** (Mark 8:15). This is worldliness, or more specifically, the friendship of the world, as the various statements made about Herod in the Gospels will bear out. All of these things must be rigidly excluded. The allowance of any of them makes it impossible to feed upon Christ. Is it not because of our failure to **“purge out the old leaven”** that so few of the Lord’s people enter upon **“the feast of unleavened bread”**!

“And thou shall show thy son in that day, saying, this is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt” (13:8). Striking indeed is this. The basis of this Feast was what the Lord had done for Israel in delivering them from the land of bondage. In other words, its foundation was redemption accomplished, entered into, known, enjoyed. No soul can really *feast* upon Christ while he is in doubt about his own salvation. **“Fear hath torment”** (1 John 4:18) and this is the opposite of joy and salvation, of which **“feasting”** speaks. Little wonder then that there are so many joyless professing Christians. How could it be otherwise? **“Rejoice”** said Christ to the disciples, **“that your names are written in heaven”** (Luke 10:20). Until this joy of assurance is ours there cannot be, we say again, any *feasting* upon Christ.

“And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth; for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt” (13:9). The Feast was a **“sign”** upon the *hand*, that is, it signified that their *service* was consecrated to God. It was also a **“memorial between the eyes”**, that is, upon the forehead, where all could see; which being interpreted, signifies, *an open manifestation* of separation unto God. Finally, it was to be accompanied with **“the Lord’s law in their mouth”**. The correlative of **“law”** is obedience. God’s redeemed are not a lawless people. Said the Lord Jesus, **“If ye love Me, keep My commandments”** (John 14:15); and as John tells us, **“His commandments are not grievous”** (1 John 5:3). Those who insist so urgently that in no sense are Christians under Law evidence a sad spirit of insubordination; it shows how much they are affected and infected, with the spirit of *lawlessness* which now, alas, is so prevalent on every side and in every realm.

“And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as He sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, that thou shalt set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the Lord’s. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck; and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem” (13:11-13). The deep significance of this cannot be missed if we observe the connection — that which precedes. In Exodus 12 we have had the redemption of the **“firstborn”** of *Israel*, here it is the redemption of the **“firstling”** of an *ass*. In the second verse of chapter 13 the

two are definitely joined together — **“Sanctify unto Me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb of the children of Israel, both of man *and* of beast; it is Mine”**. That there may be no mistaking what is in view here, the Lord gave orders that the firstling of the ass was to be redeemed with a lamb, just as the firstborn of Israel were redeemed with a lamb on the passover night. Furthermore, the ass was to have its neck broken, that is, it was to be destroyed, unless redeemed; just as the Israelites would most certainly have been smitten by the avenging Angel unless they had slain the lamb and sprinkled its blood. The conclusion is therefore irresistible: God here compares the natural man with the ass! Deeply humbling is this!

The **“ass”** is an *unclean* animal. Such is man by nature; shapen in iniquity conceived in sin. The **“ass”** is a most *stupid and senseless* creature. So also is the natural man. Proudly as he may boast of his powers of reason, conceited as he may be over his intellectual achievements, the truth is, that he is utterly devoid of any *spiritual intelligence*. What saith the Scriptures? This: **“Walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them”** (Ephesians 4:17, 18). Again: **“If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of them which believe not”** (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). How accurately, then, does the **“ass”** picture the natural man! Again: the **“ass”** is *stubborn and intractable*, often as hard to move as a mule. So also is the natural man. The sinner is rebellious and defiant. He *will not* come to Christ that he might have life (see John 5:40). It is in view of these things that Scripture declares, **“For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt”** (Job 11:12).

It is instructive to trace the various references to the **“ass”** in Scripture.

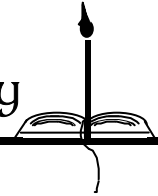
The first mention of the **“ass”** is in Genesis 22; from it we learn two things. **“Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his ‘ass’”** (v. 3). The **“ass”** is not a free animal. It is a beast of burden, *saddled*. So, too, is the sinner — **“serving divers lusts”**. Second, **“And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship”** (Genesis 22:5). The **“ass”** did not accompany Abraham and Isaac to the place of worship. Nor can the sinner worship God. Third, in Genesis 49:14 we read, **“Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens”**. So, too, is the *sinner* — *heavily laden* (Matthew 11:28). Fourth, God forbade His people to plow with an ox and ass together (see Deuteronomy 22:10). The sinner is shut out from the service of God. Fifth, in 1 Samuel 9:3 we are told, **“And the asses of Kish Saul’s father were lost”**, and though Saul and his servant sought long for them they recovered them not. The sinner, too, is lost, away from God, and no human power can restore him. Sixth, in Jeremiah 22:19 we read, **“He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem”**. Fearfully solemn is this. The carcass of the ass was cast forth *outside* the gates of the holy city. So shall it be with every sinner who dies outside of Christ; he shall not enter

the New Jerusalem, but be **“cast into the Lake of Fire”**. The final reference to the **“ass”** is found in Zechariah 9:9 **“Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass”**. Most blessed contrast is this. Here we see the **“ass”** *entering Jerusalem*, but only so as it was beneath the controlling hand of the Lord Jesus! Here is the sinner’s only hope — to submit to Christ!

In Genesis 16:12, we have a statement which is very pertinent in this connection, though its particular force is lost in the A.V. rendering; we quote therefore from the R.V., **“And he shall be a wild-ass man among men; his hand shall be against every man, and every man’s hand against him”**. Those were the words of the Lord to Sarah. They were a prophecy concerning Ishmael. From Galatians 4 we learn that Ishmael stands for *the natural man*, as Isaac for the believer, the seed of promise. In full accord, then, with all that we have said above is this striking description of Sarah’s **“firstborn”**; he was a *wild-ass* man. The Bedouin Arabs are his descendants, and fully do they witness to the truth of this ancient prophecy. But solemn is it to find that here we have *God’s* description of the natural man. And more solemn still is what we read of Ishmael in Galatians 4; he **“persecuted him that was born after the Spirit”** (v. 29), and in consequence had to be **“cast out”** (v. 30).

In view of what has been said above, how marvelous the *grace* which provided *redemption* for **“the firstling of an ass”**! **“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8). Ah, dear reader, have you taken *this place* before God? Do you own that the **“ass”** is an accurate portrayal of all that you are in yourself — unclean, senseless, intractable, fit only to have your neck broken? Do the words of the apostle suitably express the real sentiments of your heart — **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”** (1 Timothy 1:15)? Or, are you like the self-righteous Pharisee, who said, **“God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers”** (Luke 18:11)? Christ came not to call the righteous but *sinners* to repentance, (Luke 5:32). He came **“To seek and to save that which was lost”** (Luke 19:10). Again, we ask, Have you taken this place before God? Have you come to Him with all your wretchedness — undone, corrupt, guilty, lost? Have you abandoned all pretensions of worthiness and merit, and cast yourself upon His undeserved mercy? Have you seen your own need of the *sinner’s* Savior, and thankfully received Him? If you *have*, then will you gladly **“set to your seal that God is true”**, and acknowledge that the **“ass”** is a suitable figure to express what you were and still are by nature. And, then, too, will you praise God for the matchless grace which redeemed you, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, **“but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot”** (1 Peter 1:19). Thank God for the *Lamb* provided for the *ass*. The more fully we realize the accuracy of this figure, the more completely we are given to see how *ass-like* we are in ourselves, the deeper will be our gratitude and the more fervent our praise for the redemptive and perfect Lamb.

A Classic Study: The Danger of Prosperity



A Classic Study by William Bates (1635–1699)

[Here we continue a study by the eminent English Puritan William Bates, concerning the danger of prosperity. Mr. Bates is setting forth reasons that prosperity is dangerous to the believer. In this issue, he speaks of how prosperity exposes one to “the tempting power of Satan.”]—*Ed.*

The Danger of Prosperity, pt. 4

The prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (Prov. 1:32, AV).

3. Prosperity exposes dangerously to the tempting power of Satan, whose subtlety, malice, and diligence is always exercised in training men to perdition. His destructive power cannot make immediate impressions on the soul, but he tempts by objects without, and the affections within; with the world and the flesh that are in combination with him. He is accordingly styled, *the god of this world*, as he reigns in the men of the world, by using the things of the world, to obtain and establish his kingdom. He blinds their eyes by glittering temptations, deceives and surprises them by his fallacies. And although it is difficult to conceive and unfold his infernal agency, and pernicious operations; and it is certain he cannot make a forcible entry into the soul, and tempt with prevalence and success, without the consent of the will, yet we are told that he is a prime mover in the sins of men. He entered into Judas, and by putting a luster on the silver, exciting his covetous desires, prevailed with him to betray the Lord of Glory. **“He works powerfully in the children of disobedience”** (Eph 2:2). They are as it were possessed and acted by his strong inclinations. They are said to **“be taken captive by him at his will”** (2Tim 2:1). It is an allusion to the catching of beasts, when by the address and craft of the hunters, they are drawn or urged into the toil prepared for them. Now, prosperity furnishes him with the materials whereof he weaves the most fatal snares: for his strength and art to destroy principally lie in the specious representations, and fallacious promises of happiness in the enjoyment or worldly things.

This will appear, by considering that:

A. Pleasant temptations are most apt to seduce the souls of men to ruin. As is sowing the earth, when there is a congruity between the soil and the seed, it is nourished and springs up a plentiful harvest, so when temptations are suitable to the heart, they are entertained with complacency, and are productive of actual sins. **“Every man is tempted by Satan when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed”** (the sensual appetite is drawn forth by things grateful to it) **“...Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished brings forth death”** (James 1:14). When the appetite has obtained the consent of the will, the complete act of sin follows; and sin habitually indulged, ends in death.

Some temptations of Satan are of such a black complexion, and so terrible to human nature, that the soul initially resists them, until by violence and restless importunity, resistance is overcome. By the attractiveness of pleasure, Satan easily prevails. As in cutting of timber, if one strikes cross the grain, there is strong resistance; but if the blow follows the vein of the wood, it easily cleaves asunder. The temptations of riches, honor, and pleasures are so delightful, that the devil commands or persuades men to a compliance with them.

Besides, his malice in pleasant temptations is less discernable; and consequently men do not by circumspection, and prayer for divine grace, preserve themselves from the mischief of them. If we are fiercely assaulted by unnatural temptations that cause extraordinary agonies of the spirit; we seek supernatural assistance, and fortify ourselves with holy resolutions against the open enemy. But by the pleasures of sin, he insinuates into men’s hearts, and feeds the deadly disease so gratefully, that they discover not their danger until past recovery. Therefore he destroys more by his serpentine suggestions, by winning charms, than by fiery rage. Indeed, he is never more a devil, than when he deceives; and we are divinely warned of his guile, devices, and wiles, that we may not be surprised and ruined by our invisible adversary.

B. Plentiful prosperity affords variety of temptations, which he makes use of to prevent the satiety and dislike that the same repeated temptations would cause. Since man was divided from God, the true center of the soul, he breaks into a thousand irregular desires; and in the apostle’s phrase, **“serves divers lusts and pleasures”** (see Titus 3:3), and the vanities of the world do rather cloy than satisfy; that which brings transporting joy at first, by continuance becomes nauseous and insipid. Now, the tempter, with the abundance of prosperity, so orders his temptations, as to take off

the weariness of one pleasure by another, and keeps his slaves in the magical circle of variety. As a rich epicure provides a universe of luxury, commands the four elements to make a show, the earth, the air, the water, of their treasures, and the fire of its art to dress them, thereby to excite the languishing appetite, to give a relish of intemperance, and satisfy the greedy eye, as well as the blind belly. Thus Satan, the architect of pleasure, brings out of his storehouse several kinds of delightful temptations, to reenflame the carnal appetite when sated: without variety desire often fails the man, and pleasure sails the desire. Voluptuaries are dissolved in the changing streams of pleasure.

C. Idleness, that is often the concomitant of prosperity, gives him a tempting opportunity, and makes men more receptive of his temptations. The sin and destruction of Sodom was from hence. **“This was the iniquity of Sodom, Pride, fullness of bread, and idleness was in her, and her daughters”** (Ezek. 16:49). The idle person beckons the tempter to do his office. When the house is empty, the mind is not exercised with better employments, and the heart is loose and unguarded, the tempter is invited to take possession.

Idleness is directly opposite to life, as well as felicity. To live, is to be in action. Inanimate things are only bound with a dead rest. And among inanimate bodies as they ascend in perfection, they are more active. The heavens that excel in situation and qualities, things that are without life, are in continual motion. And man’s felicity consists in the most perfect actions of the most perfect life: in the vision and enjoyment of the blessed God. Now man, naturally being averse from a state contrary to life and felicity, if he is not employed in business becoming the reasonable immortal soul, rather than languishing in idleness, is active **“in making provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof”** (see Rom. 13:14). Time is tedious, and that it may pass away pleasantly, men seek for diversions that are usually either sinful in their own nature, or connected with sins.

Lawful employment is a double security against temptations. It is partly divine, as it entitles us to God’s providence over us. For while we are obeying His command, we are encouraged by His promise, **“that He will keep us in all our ways”** (see Ps. 91:11); either by preventing temptations, or by affording us assistance to vanquish them. It is partly natural, for while we are diligently exercised in a lawful calling, the mind is not at leisure to attend the temptation, and the senses do not so easily admit those objects that betray the soul. And it is observable, that God, who is merciful in His chastisements, orders that fallen man should obtain the fruits of the earth to support his life by the sweat of his brows, that his incessant labor might preserve him from idleness, for idleness, to corrupt

nature, is the seminary of so many vile lusts.

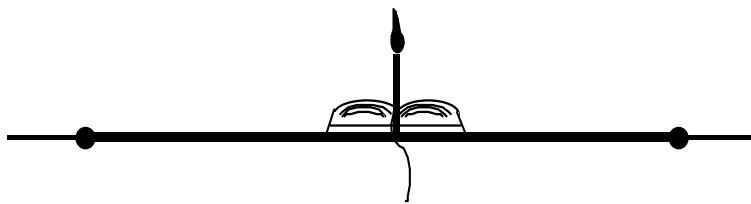
D. As the temptations of prosperity make men an easy prey to Satan, so they keep them in the most perfect and miserable bondage under his power. When he has taken hold of their affections, “**he leads them captive at his will**” (see II Tim. 2:26). They are freely drawn by the pleasing force of his temptations: They are voluntary slaves, and in love with their captivity. It was the cruel and crafty advice offered to the *Athenians*, to keep the subdued inhabitants of *Egina* from rebelling, to cut off their thumbs, that they might be incapable to manage a spear, and by war obtain a victorious rescue from their tyranny, but be fit to pull the oar in the galleys. It is an emblem of Satan’s dealing with his slaves; for by the pleasures of sin, their hearts are weak, disabled from vigorous and holy resolutions to resist his power; they cannot make use of the armor of God for their defense: and their lusts are strong, they are patient of his drudgery, constant at the oar, and faithful to their chains. And from hence it is evident that men are never more dangerously under the destructive power of Satan than when they enjoy prosperity.

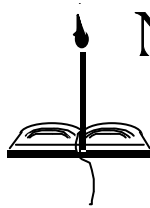
E. Prosperity is destructive to many in that it affords them advantages to corrupt others, and reciprocally exposes them to be corrupted by others. Persons in dignity, wealth, and power, when depraved in their inclinations and actions, are like public fountains poisoned, that convey a spreading ruin abroad. Their evil example has a pernicious influence, and more commanding efficacy as a rule, than their laws they ordain as rulers. The manners of princes are as current as their money, that being stamped with their image and superscription, though the metal be base, passes freely among the people. The reason of it is evident, for without the restraints of shame and fear, the sensual passions are riotous and licentious.

Shame is a displeasure at evils that are attended with dishonor and infamy, especially at sinful evils that are so shameful in their own nature, that the most sordid things in comparison are less ignominious. Now, foul vices when practiced by men of conspicuous eminence, do not seem with that turpitude and deformity as is inherent in their nature. They are like a muddy vapor drawn up by the sun, and enameled with the rays of light, appears amiable to the eye, not dreggy and foul as it is in itself. Innumerable miscarry by the vicious examples of persons in honor; for when sins are gilded over with creditableness, many think it necessary to be unholy, or even truly vile, that they may be fashionably noble. And when those that are in power abuse it, as a privilege for licentiousness in sin, inferiors are viciously bold, expecting facility and indulgence in the pardoning those faults of which their superiors are guilty: And those who do not fear to be punished, do not fear to sin. Thus among the heathens, lascivious-

ness was lawful, because they ascribed their vicious passions to their supposed deities, and did not fear their revenging justice for what was practiced by them.

Also, prosperity exposes the rich and great to be more corrupted by others. Servile spirits will be cruelly obsequious to the humors and lusts of those upon whom they depend, and the ready instruments of accomplishing their irregular desires. It is their interest to please them, from whom they receive favors and benefits. And how few have so firm a virtue, as to break the twisted temptations of pleasure and profit? The rich and great in the world are usually attended with a train of dependents, or vicious associates, whose compliance is very influential to harden a vicious disposition into a corrupt habit. These are underworkers to Satan, the master tempter, and feed the double element of infernal fire, lust and rage, in the breasts of those with whom they converse. It is the peculiar misery of men in a high and flourishing condition, that they have many flatterers, and few friends. Few or none dare faithfully represent their sins and danger, lest the sight of their guilt in its true reflections should offend them. As love is blind to others, so especially to one's self; and mercenary wretches, by the most vile flattery, endeavor to make them believe of themselves, what is pleasing to them to believe. Such, to ingratiate, will commend the mere shadows of virtue, as substantial virtue; and excuse real gross vices, as but the shadows of vice. By deceitful arts they color and conceal the native ugliness of sin, under a thin appearance and name of virtue. The arrogant and revengeful, they call *generous*; the covetous, *frugal*; the lascivious, *gentle*; the prodigal, *magnificent*; the malicious, *wary* and *cautious*; the brutish and secure, *courageous*. The conversation of such is infinitely dangerous and corrupting: for under the disguise of friendship they are the most deadly enemies. What greater danger of being poisoned can there be, than when by art the taste of poison is taken away from the poison, and there is no suspicion of the traitor that gives it? Thus it is further evident, that prosperity is very dangerous to the souls of men.





New Testament Study: Matthew 22:1-14

Parable of the Wedding Banquet

¹Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴“Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

⁵“But they paid no attention and went off— one to his field, another to his business. ⁶The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹²‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless.

¹³“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Jesus had been confronting the chief priests and Pharisees with parables that describe people who fail to do God’s will. The chief priests and Pharisees were so offended by the parables that they “**looked for a way to arrest Him**” (Matt. 21:46).

This did not stop Jesus, who continued with His parables: “**Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.’**” (vss. 1–3). Here we see the Gospel invitation compared to invitations given out to a prince’s wedding ban-

quet. The invitations had been sent out, and it was time for the banquet, but those who had received invitations **“refused to come”**. This parable is again directed at the chief priests and Pharisees, and speaks about the actions of their people, the children of Israel. They had been given the invitation to be God’s chosen people, and the coming of their Messiah to earth should have been their **“wedding banquet”**. But, by and large, they ignored the invitation and **“refused to come”**.

The king in the parable, showing great patience and grace, continued to extend the invitation to those who had rejected it, telling them of the great preparations made for the banquet: **“Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet’”** (vs. 4). An invitation by a king should never be rejected, and so the king was going far beyond normal protocol in continuing to extend the invitation. “A royal invitation is a command that is disobeyed at the refuser’s peril” [Spurgeon, 308]. The king had all rights to punish those who rejected his invitation. But in his grace, he continued to extend the invitation, even to the point of practically begging the invitees to accept it.

And what was the reaction of the invitees: **“But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them”** (vss. 5–6). Some of the invitees were indifferent to the invitation, too busy with the things of the world to heed it. The invitation was “counted of less importance than the worldly affairs in which their hearts were engrossed” [Spurgeon, 309]. Others received the invitation with violence, and **“seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.”** This speaks of the reaction of the children of Israel to the prophets sent by God. God’s prophets were, at best, largely ignored, and at worst, **“mistreated and killed”**. This would all culminate in the mistreatment and killing of no-less-than God’s Son.

Though this parable seems to speak specifically about the reaction of the children of Israel to the coming of Jesus, it also echoes various responses to the preaching of the Gospel message today. Day in and day out, all over the world, the Gospel invitation is extended by servants of God (with the help of the Holy Spirit) to lost souls. While some respond positively to the Gospel message, many more reject the invitation. Some treat it with indifference, too concerned with the things of this world, and they go off, **“one to his field, another to his business.”** Others respond to the Gospel invitation with hostility, sometimes with violence. Sadly, they do not realize that the preaching of the Gospel is a supreme act of love.

Back to the parable, the reaction of the king to the indifference that his invitation found should not be surprising to anyone: **“The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city”** (vs. 7). This was fulfilled against the children of Israel when, in 69 AD, the Romans besieged Jerusalem, and destroyed the city and many of its inhabitants. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived through the destruction of Jerusalem, realized that God was the “author of the destruction” [Josephus, *Wars*, 5:1:3 (19)]. Ironically, many of the captured Jews were crucified by the Romans: “So the soldiers out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and

crosses wanting for the bodies" [Josephus, *Wars*, 5:11:1 (451)].

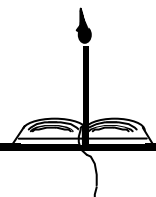
Jesus continues with the parable: **"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests"** (vss. 8-9). The rejection of the Messiah by the children of Israel opened up the **"wedding banquet"** to everyone. There is no limit to those who are **"invited"**. The Gospel message is to go everywhere, to be shouted on the **"street corners"**. It is to be heard by both **"good and bad"**.

However, those who are invited must come to the banquet worthy as guests of the king: **"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'** For many are invited, but few are chosen" (vss. 11-14). Though **"both good and bad"** were invited, the guests, when attending the prince's wedding banquet, must appear at the banquet worthy as guests. They cannot appear at the banquet in their work clothes or street rags. And for the Gospel **"banquet"**, how would one prepare? We are told elsewhere: **"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved"** (Acts 16:31); **"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved"** (Rom. 10:9). Those who believe in the Lord Jesus are clothed in His righteousness, and worthy of the King's banquet. They will be able to say, with Isaiah, **"I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness"** (Isa. 61:10).

In the end, the number of those clothed in righteousness, worthy of the king's banquet, will be smaller than one might expect. As Jesus said: **"For many are invited, but few are chosen"** (vs. 14). The invitation has been shouted from the street corners. The Gospel message has gone out to all nations of the world. Indeed, **"many are invited"**. And yet, relatively few respond to the invitation, **"...but few are chosen."** Jesus purposely used the word **"chosen"**, lest we forget that God is sovereign in the matter. Though, from our point of view, we must respond to the Gospel message, and we ourselves must **"believe in the Lord Jesus"** and **"confess with our mouths that 'Jesus is Lord'"**, yet God is sovereign in this decision. This is a difficult concept for our small minds to fully grasp. How can we be accountable for our response to the Gospel, and at the same time, God be sovereign over the decisions that are made? Perhaps, we will understand this fully after we go to dwell with our Lord in the mansion He has prepared for us.

It is best for us as humans, I think, to consider the matter from the human point of view, that is, we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. When we hear the Gospel message, when we feel the Holy Spirit tugging at our hearts, we must choose to respond, and turn our lives over to our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we can look forward to the wedding banquet, not of a mere earthly prince, but of the Lamb of God, Lord of All (see Rev. 21:2). At that banquet, we will not be mere guests, but we, the Church, will be the bride of Christ. What a glorious day that will be!

A Topical Study: On Prayer



[Here we continue a series on Prayer. This continues a study by the great intellect of Stephen Charnock. In the study, he digs deep into Phil. 4:6. In the previous study, he began enumerating *how* we are to pray. He continues that here, by pointing out we should *pray spiritually*.]—*Ed.*

Pray for Everything, pt. 3 by Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)

**But in everything by prayer and supplication with
thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.
(Phil. 4:6, AV).**

4. Pray spiritually; with spiritual intentions, and by the Spirit's assistance.

A. With spiritual intentions. Look that your aim and end be right, in all you seek. It cannot be right, unless it be spiritual. Even in our worldly business, end and design should be higher than the world. A Christian should not have such ends and designs as a natural and worldly man hath in his earthly affairs. How far should we be from such ends in holy and spiritual employments? Our prayers will be such as our ends are, carnal, and selfish, and earthly, if our intentions be such; for the form gives the denomination, and what the form is in natural things, that the end is in moral acts. If the end in praying be carnal or worldly, it is a carnal and worldly prayer, no more fit to be offered unto God, than an unclean beast was to be offered in sacrifice. **"It is as the cutting off a dog's neck, or the pouring out of swine's blood, an abomination in the sight of God"** (Isa. 66:3-4). When you pretend to be best employed, it is to be doing evil before His eyes, and to choose that in which He delights not. **"You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts"** (James 4:3). They asked amiss, because they missed the right end. The ends we should aim at, are the honoring of God, pleasing Him, enjoying communion with Him. These we should principally aim at, in seeking either spiritual or temporal things. If we seek spiritual gifts, that we may be more eminent than others, and accordingly respected, applauded, admired; this is to be little better than Simon Magus (see Acts 8:9). Such prayers may be the issue of the gall of bitterness. Those that are in the bond of iniquity, may be enlarged in making such requests. If we seek more grace, higher degrees of holiness, out of respect

to our reputation or merely for our own ease and comfort, instead of seeking and worshipping God in such prayers, we do but seek ourselves.

B. Pray by the Spirit's assistance: seek it, wait for it, do nothing that may check or restrain it, and give any impediment to it. Rely not upon inward abilities or outward helps, real or pretended; so as to disengage that blessed Spirit, ready to help His people in praying, when they are sensible of their want of His assistance, and look up to Him for it. Be not like those who would shut their eyes because they have spectacles; or tie up their legs, if not cut them off, because they have gotten crutches. When you have a better help, do not disoblige it by preferring or confining yourselves to a worse. Depend upon Him alone, who can help you to make requests in everything. Do nothing which may provoke Him to withdraw or suspend His assistance. Look upon this alone as your sufficiency for this duty, which are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought, much less to offer up a good prayer, a Spiritual sacrifice. The Lord will not have it offered with common fire of your own or others kindling. You must fetch fire from heaven, if you would sanctify the Lord in your approaches.

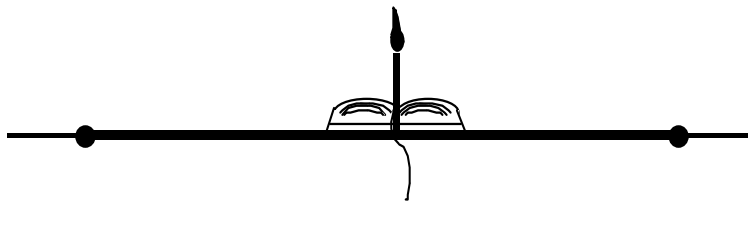
Look to the promise: **"I will pour upon the House of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced"** etc. (Zech. 12:10). Prayer should not be the issue of models and exemplars only, no nor of habits and qualifications within; but should flow from the Spirit of grace and supplication. So, in the primitive times, they were required to pray accordingly, by the spirit, by its help and assistance, that the prayer may be said to proceed from Him.

Those who like not to hear the command to pray by the Spirit, confess from hence, that so they prayed in the Apostles's time; but they would have us believe it was a miraculous and extraordinary gift, such as was not to continue, and is not now to be expected or pretended to: But I think they mistake. By praying in the Spirit, in these two texts, cannot be meant an extraordinary gift, such as those of healing, prophesying, tongues, etc. For not to take notice that such a gift of prayer is not mentioned amongst those that were miraculous and extraordinary, where we have a particular account of them. But this we may insist on as granted by them. Yet, as all extraordinary gifts were not confined upon any one person, except the Apostles, so no one extraordinary gift was bestowed upon all and every believer; and so that which all partook of, was no extraordinary grace or gift. But this gift for praying was bestowed upon all believers, as appears by the texts alleged: For all the believing Hebrews (all that were sanctified, to whom Jude wrote in Jude verse 1), are required thus to pray; and all the converted gentiles at Ephesus, to whom Paul wrote, are exhorted to exercise this gift (see Eph. 6:18). And all other believers in them, are called to do it, if the Epistles be of general concernment. Now, it could not be their duty to exercise it, if they had it not, or might not have had it. And if they all had it, it was an ordinary gift, and continued to the Church in all ages. These precepts oblige us as much as them; and it is as much

our duty to pray in or by the Spirit, as it was theirs.

We are still to pray by the assistance of the Spirit; but how does the Spirit help us therein? What assistance are we to look for? We may learn that by the Apostle: **“The Spirit helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered”** (Rom. 8:26). This assistance is expressed by this: He helps our **“infirmities”** or **“weaknesses”**. Weakness is from some want; we are in some want as to several things requisite to praying; some want of judgment to discern what we should pray for; what is best for us, we know not. The Spirit helps that. He reminds us of what is most needful, most seasonable, when otherwise we might pass it over. Also, want of affection, holy and lively motions, the languor and sickness of the soul, the dullness and deadness of it, that is many infirmities in one. Want of expression, too, which is more apparent by the word **“intercession”**, which signifies to act for one as an advocate for his client. The Spirit of God advises His people; intercedes for them; His petitions or motions, dictating what He shall move for, and how, and in what form and words. And this is it which the Apostle declares here. This is the way whereby the Holy Ghost helps our infirmities in prayer. Thus it is that He makes intercession for them, by dictating what, and how, in what manner, for what things, with what expressions, helping them both to matter, affections and words. And so, to pray in the Holy Spirit, is with Him to pray, the Spirit of God dictating, suggesting to us what and how to pray.

But of the Spirit’s assistance in prayer, more hereafter. Let us in the mean time be sensible, when we are going to pray, of our great need of it, our insufficiency without it. Let us labor to engage it for us by all means, especially by depending on Him for it. Let us hearken to His motions, and follow His dictates, and yield to what He suggests, and not grieve, not quench the Spirit of Grace, nor put restraints upon Him, nor any way provoke Him to withdraw, and leave us to ourselves, or to vices. When we come to the Throne of Grace, if the Spirit be not there as our advocate, our plea will avail nothing; but prayers cannot be spiritual without the assistance of the Spirit; and unless they be spiritual, they will not be fit to be offered unto that God, who is a spirit, and who is to be worshipped in spirit and truth.





A Study in Psalms: Psalm 72 (pt. 2)

Psalm 72 - The Coming Kingdom, part 2

Of Solomon.

- ¹Endow the king with Your justice, O God,
the royal son with Your righteousness.
- ²He will judge Your people in righteousness,
Your afflicted ones with justice.
- ³The mountains will bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.
- ⁴He will defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
He will crush the oppressor.
- ⁵He will endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.
- ⁶He will be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.
- ⁷In his days the righteous will flourish;
prosperity will abound till the moon is no more.
- ⁸He will rule from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- ⁹The desert tribes will bow before him
and his enemies will lick the dust.
- ¹⁰The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores
will bring tribute to him;
The kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts.
- ¹¹All kings will bow down to him
and all nations will serve him.
- ¹²For he will deliver the needy who cry out,
the afflicted who have no one to help.
- ¹³He will take pity on the weak and the needy
and save the needy from death.
- ¹⁴He will rescue them from oppression and violence,
for precious is their blood in his sight.

- ¹⁵Long may he live!
May gold from Sheba be given him.
May people ever pray for him
and bless him all day long.
- ¹⁶Let grain abound throughout the land;
on the tops of the hills may it sway.
Let its fruit flourish like Lebanon;
let it thrive like the grass of the field.
- ¹⁷May his name endure forever;
may it continue as long as the sun.
All nations will be blessed through him,
and they will call him blessed.
- ¹⁸Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel,
who alone does marvelous deeds.
- ¹⁹Praise be to His glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen and Amen.
- ²⁰This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.

Here we continue a study in this psalm which, as we mentioned in the previous issue, is a prayer and prophecy about Solomon's reign, with an eye toward the future reign of the Messiah. Most passages in this psalm are prophetic to both Solomon's and Christ's reigns, but there are some passages that could only apply to the future reign of Christ.

David continues in verse 8: **"He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth"** (vs. 8). This is an example of a passage that did not apply to Solomon. He never ruled **"from the River to the ends of the earth."** But, Christ will. "It is hardly necessary to say that this did not occur under Solomon, and that it could not have been expected that it would occur under him, and especially as it was expected that his reign would be one of peace and not of conquest. It would find its complete fulfillment only under the Messiah" [Barnes]. In fact, Christ is the only one that this will apply to. Though many leaders throughout history have sought to rule the entire earth, only Christ will succeed. Thank God for that!

"The desert tribes will bow before him and his enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts. All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him" (vss. 9-11). This passage was pretty much fulfilled in Solomon's life. We read in the history of Solomon: **"All the kings of the earth sought audience**

with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift—articles of silver and gold, and robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules” (II Chron. 9:23–24). I’m not sure that Solomon’s “enemies licked the dust”, for Solomon was a king of peace, not of might. Jesus, of course, will have all kings of the earth subject to Him, even His enemies. So, though this passage was fulfilled to some extent for Solomon, “surely it is not torturing the passage to say that its complete and glorious fulfillment can be found in Christ only” [Plumer, 704].

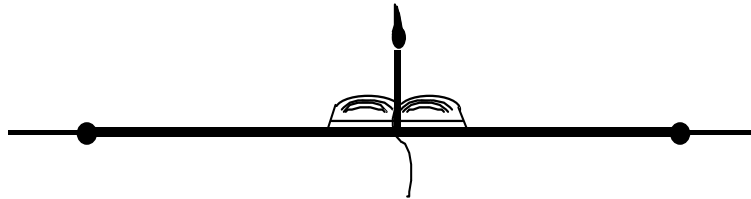
Next, the reason is given for the obeisance of the kings: “**For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight**” (vss. 12–14). “Here is an excellent reason for man’s submission to the Lord Christ; it is not because they dread His overwhelming power, but because they are won over by His just and condescending rule. Who would not fear so good a prince, who makes the needy His peculiar care, and pledges Himself to be their deliverer in times of need?” [Spurgeon]. By and large, it is not threatenings of hell and damnation that lead people to submission to Christ, but it is “**God’s kindness that leads you toward repentance**” (see Rom. 2:4). Speak of God’s love and kindness to others to bring them to repentance; speak of the love demonstrated by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

It seems to me that, in this psalm, David started the psalm as a prayer and blessing on Solomon’s reign, but then, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the psalm became not only that, but also a prophecy about the reign of Christ. Having finished the prophecy in verse 14, in verse 15, David pronounces a blessing on his son Solomon and Solomon’s reign: “**Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be given him. May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long. Let grain abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. Let its fruit flourish like Lebanon; let it thrive like the grass of the field. May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed**” (vss. 15–17). Many aspects of David’s blessing were fulfilled in Solomon’s reign: he lived a fairly long life (he reigned for forty years, see I Kings 11:42); gold from Sheba was given to him (see I Kings 10:2); his reign was prosperous (see I Kings 10:14ff); his name has endured down to this age; other nations were blessed by him as he imparted his wisdom to them (see I Kings 10:24).

By the way, just as David said of Solomon, **“May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long”**, so also, we should pray for our political leaders. “It is the duty of subjects to make prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for kings and all in authority, not in compliment to them, as is too often done, but in concern for the public welfare” [Henry].

The psalm ends with praise, **“Praise be to the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. Praise be to His glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and amen. This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse”** (vss. 18–20). These verses seem to have been added by the compilers of the psalms, with the intent of bringing Book 2 of the psalms to a conclusion (similar verses conclude Book 1 of the psalms, see Psalm 41:13). Not that we should ignore these verses. It is good for us to be reminded to praise God, who has done so much for us. May praise for our Lord and God be on our lips constantly.

(This ends book II of the Psalms. At this time, we will take a break from our study in Psalms. In the next issue, we will begin a reprint of a portion of Joseph Caryl's study in Job, D.V.)



Adoration

Now the last light of amber day is dying,
 Over the levels of this field in flower,
 And in my heart a voice of worship crying:
 O lovely, lovely is the earth, this hour—
 Never so dearly held, so deep adored,
 As now when I alone of weary men
 Am witness how the fragrant-vestured Lord,
 In the cool evening, walks His earth again.

-- David Morton

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God's Early Guidance

"God's providence towards His people dates not at the time of their being called to a knowledge of Himself, but long before. In the formation of their bodies, what goodness appears. No man has ever been able to suggest how the form or figure of the human frame could be improved. In this indeed the wicked share the same bounty of God. In their early infancy how amazing was God's care over them. Think too of the early and deep impressions which God often makes on the minds and hearts of His chosen, even years before their conversion. In a solitary wood among huge rocks, or hoary mountains, or by some gentle stream, or noble river, or vast expanse of waters, what conceptions of God has many a child had! In an escape from danger, what a sense of God's goodness has stolen over the hearts of His people, even before their conversion... Even where such impressions do not end in a speedy conversion, they are often very salutary in preserving the young from the worst forms of evil."

-- William Plumer (1802-1880)

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