

Scripture Studies

VOL. XIV, No. 3

SEPTEMBER
2010

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

Old Testament Study:

Exodus 17:1-7.....3
The Smitten Rock, pt. 1, by A. W. Pink

A Classic Study:

A Treatise on Providence, pt. 1, by William S Plumer7

New Testament Study:

Matthew 25:31-4610
'Lord, When Did We See You Hungry?', by Scott Sperling

A Topical Study:

Contentment, pt. 6.....15
The Art of Divine Contentment, pt. 6, by Thomas Watson

A Study in Wisdom:

Job 1:5-6 (pt. 2)19
Job's Offering, pt. 2, by Joseph Caryl

A Meditation:

The Spiritual Chemist.....21
A Meditation Upon a Multiplying Glass, by William Spurstowe

Scripture Studies (ISSN: 1520-4308) is edited and published by Scott Sperling. It is distributed via the internet free of charge.

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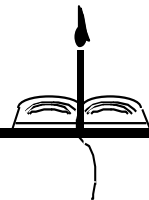
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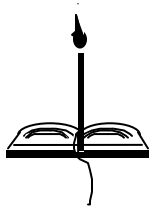
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For readability's sake, some of the classic articles have been edited, so that they use modern English. Very occasionally, they are edited in other ways, also. Every attempt is made to maintain the author's original meaning. If such editing irks you, I apologize.

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May God bless you as you study His Word.





Old Testament Study: Exodus 17:1-7

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

¹And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. ²Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, "Give us water that we may drink."

And Moses said unto them, "Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?"

³And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

⁴And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me."

⁵And the LORD said unto Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. ⁶Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" (Ex. 17:1-7, AV)

"And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the Wilderness of Sin" (v. 1). Mark that this chapter opens with the word "And," connecting it with the one preceding. So, too, chapter 16 begins with "And," linking it on to the closing verses of 15. "And" is a little word, but we often miss that which is of much importance and value through failing to weigh it carefully. There is nothing trivial in God's Word, and each word and syllable has its own meaning and worth. At the close of Exodus 15 (v. 23) Israel came to Marah, and they could not drink of the waters there because they were bitter. At once we find the people *murmuring* against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" (v. 24). Sad, sad was this, after all that the Lord had done for them. Moses cried unto God, and in long-suffering grace He at once came to the relief of the people. The Lord showed him a tree, which when cast into the bitter

waters, at once sweetened them. After this experience they reached Elim, where were twelve wells of water. There Exodus 15 closes.

Exodus 16 opens with "And." Why? To connect with what has just preceded. But for what purpose? To show us the inexcusableness and to emphasize the enormity of the conduct of Israel immediate following; as well as to magnify the marvelous patience and infinite mercy of Him who bore so graciously with them. Israel had now entered the wilderness, the Wilderness of Sin, and it furnished no food for them. How, then, do they meet this test of faith? After their recent experience at Marah, one would suppose they promptly and confidently turned unto their Divine Benefactor and looked to Him for their daily bread. But instead of doing this we read, once more, "The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron" (16:3), and not only so, they "spake against God; they said, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?'" (| Psalm 78:19). Yet, notwithstanding their petulency and unbelief, the Lord again came to their relief and rained down bread from Heaven. The remainder of the chapter is occupied with details concerning the manna.

Now, once more, the chapter before us for our present study, begins with "And." The opening verse presents to us a scene very similar to that which is found at the beginning of the previous chapter. The Israelites are once again face to face with a trial of faith. Their dependency upon God is tested. This time it is not lack of food, but absence of water. How this illustrates the fact that the path of faith is a path of trial. Those who are led by God must expect to encounter that which is displeasing to the flesh, and also a constant and real testing of faith itself. God's design is to wean us from everything down here, to bring us to the place where we have no reliance upon material and human resources, to cast us completely upon Himself. O how slow, how painfully slow we are to learn this lesson! How miserably and how repeatedly we fail! How *long-suffering* the Lord is with us. It is *this* which the introductory "And" is designed to point. Here in Exodus 17 it is but a tragic repetition of what it signifies at the beginning of chapter 16.

"And there was no water for the people to drink." What of that? This presented no difficulty to Him who could part the sea asunder and then make its waves return and overwhelm their enemies. It was no harder for Jehovah to provide water than it was for Him to supply them with food. Was not He their Shepherd? If so, shall they want? Moreover, had not the Lord Himself *led* Israel to Rephidim? Yes, for we are here expressly told, "The children of Israel journeyed according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim." He knew there was no water there, and yet He directed them to this very place! Well for us to remember this. Ofttimes when we reach some particularly hard place, when the streams of creature-comfort are dried up, we blame ourselves, our friends, our brethren, or the Devil perhaps. But the first thing to realize, in every circumstance and situation where faith is tested, is that the Lord Himself has *brought us* there! If this be apprehended, it will not be so difficult for us to trust Him to *sustain* us while we remain there.

"Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, 'Give us water that we may drink'" (v. 2). The word "chide" signifies that the

people expostulated with Moses in an angry manner for bringing them hither, reproaching and condemning him as the cause of their trouble. When they said to him, **“Give us water that we may drink,”** it was either that they petulantly demanded *he* should give what God only could provide, signifying that he was under obligations to do so, seeing that he was the one who had brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness; or, because they had seen him work so many wonders, they concluded it was in *his* power to miraculously obtain water for them, and hence, insisted that he now do this.

“And Moses said unto them, ‘Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?’” (v. 2). Moses at once reminded the Israelites that in criticizing him they arraigned the Lord. The word **“tempt”** in this verse seems to signify try or test. They tried His patience, by once more chiding His servant. They called into question both His goodness and faithfulness. Moses was their appointed leader, God’s representative to the people; and therefore to murmur against him was to murmur against the Lord Himself.

“And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, ‘Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?’” (v. 3). As their thirst increased they grew more impatient and enraged, and threw out their invectives against Moses. “Had Israel been transported from Egypt to Canaan they would not have made such sad exhibitions of what the human heart is, and, as a consequence, they would not have proved such admirable ensamples or types for us: but their forty years’ wandering in the desert furnish us with a volume of warning, admonition, and instruction, fruitful beyond conception. From it we learn, amongst many other things, the unvarying tendency of the heart to distrust God. Anything, in short, for it but God. It would rather lean upon a cobweb of human resources than upon the arm of an omnipotent, all-wise, and infinitely gracious God; and the smallest cloud is more than sufficient to hide from its view the light of His blessed countenance. Well, therefore, may it be termed ‘an evil heart of unbelief,’ which will ever show itself ready to ‘depart from the living God’” (C.H.M.).

“And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, ‘What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me’” (v. 14). It is beautiful to see that Moses made no reply to the cruel reproaches which were cast upon him. Like that Blessed One whom he in so many respects typified, **“When He was reviled. He reviled not again; when He suffered. He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously”** (1 Peter 2:23). This is what we see Moses doing here. Instead of returning an angry and bitter rejoinder to those who falsely accused him, he sought the Lord. Blessed example for us. This was ever his refuge in times of trouble (cf. 15:25 etc.). The fact that we are told Moses **“cried unto the Lord”** indicates the earnestness and vehemence of his prayer. **“What shall I do?”** expressed a consciousness of his own inability to cope with the situation, and also showed his confidence that the Lord would come to his and their relief. How often should we be spared much sorrowful regret later, if, instead of replying on the spur of the moment to those who malign us, we first sought the Lord and asked, **“What shall I**

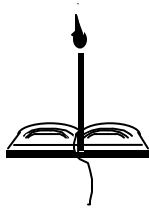
do?”

“And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Go on before the people, and take with thee of the ciders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shall smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.’ And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel” (v. 5, 6). This brings before us one of the many Old Testament types of the Lord Jesus, one for which we have New Testament authority for regarding it as such. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 we read, **“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: And that Rock was Christ.”**

The **“Rock”** is one of the titles of Jehovah, found frequently on the pages of the O.T. In his **“song,”** Moses laments that Israel forsook God and **“lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation”** (Deuteronomy 32:15). In his song, we also hear the sweet singer of Israel saying, **“The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer”** (2 Samuel 22:2). The Psalmist bids us make a **“joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation”** (95:1). While the prophet Isaiah tells us **“And a Man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a Great Rock in a weary land”** (32:2). In the N.T. we get that memorable and precious word, **“Upon this Rock”** (pointing to Himself, not referring to Peter’s confession) **“I will build My church”** (Matthew 16:18).

The first thing that impresses one when we see a rock is its *strength and stability*, a characteristic noted in Scripture in the question of Bildad to Job, **“Shall the rock be removed out of his place?”** (Job. 18:4). This is a most comforting thought to the believer. The Rock upon which he is built cannot be shaken: the floods may come, and the winds may beat upon it, but it will **“stand”** (Matthew 7:25). Another prominent characteristic of rocks is their *durability*. They outlast the storms of time. Waters will not wash them away, nor winds remove them, from their foundations. Many a vessel has been dashed to pieces on a rock, but the rock stands unchanged; and it is a deeply solemn thought that those who are not *built* upon The Rock, will be *shattered* by it — **“And whosoever shall fall on this Stone shall be broken,”** said Christ, pointing to Himself, **“but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder”** (Matthew 21:24).

A third feature that may be mentioned about a rock is its *elevation*. It towers high above man and is a landmark throughout that part of the country where it is situated. Some rocks are so high and so steep that they cannot be scaled. Each of these characteristics find their application to and realization in the Lord Jesus. He is the strong and powerful One — **“The mighty God”** (Isaiah 9:6). He is the durable One — **“the Same yesterday and today and forever.”** He is the elevated One, exalted to the Throne of Heaven, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.



A Classic Study: Providence

A Treatise on Providence, pt 1, by William Plumer (1802–1880)

[Here, we begin a study by William Plumer, concerning God's providence.]—*Ed.*

"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said to this day, 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen'" - Gen. 22:14

Providence Asserted

"Behold the fowls of the air: they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ... Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" - Jesus (Matt. 6:26,28-30)

"In the hand of the Lord is the soul of every living thing, and the heart of all mankind" - Job (Job 12:10)

"God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither but God" - Joseph (Gen. 45:7)

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be" - Moses (Deut. 33:25)

"The Lord is King for ever and ever" - David (Ps. 10:16)

"O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth" - Hezekiah (Isa. 37:16)

"It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity" -

Isaiah (Isa. 40:22)

"The Lord is the true God, He is the living God and an everlasting King... O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself" - Jeremiah (Jer. 10:10,23)

"In Him we live and move and have our being" - Paul (Acts 17:28)

"Ye ought to say, 'If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that'" - James (James 4:15)

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" - Peter (II Peter 2:9)

"Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" - The Multitudes in Heaven (Rev. 19:6)

God reigns is a logical sequence from *God is*. To deny God's providence is as atheistical as to deny His existence. A God, who neither sees, nor hears, nor knows, nor cares, nor helps, nor saves, is a vanity, and can never claim homage from intelligent men. Such a god should be derided, not worshipped. He might suit the mythology of Paganism, or meet the demands of an infidel heart, but could never command the allegiance, or win the confidence of an enlightened and pious man. Yet there have been and still are those, who deny Providence. They **"encourage themselves in an evil matter; they commune of laying snares privily; they say, 'Who shall see them?'"** (Ps. 44:5). Some say outright, **"God hath forgotten, He hideth His face, He will never see it"** (Ps. 10:11). Nothing more derogatory to the character of God can possibly be said, than that He does not rule the world. To bring into existence and then forsake a race of beings, and care no more for them would argue a total want of the moral attributes of divinity. Such conduct may well comport with the character of false gods, but is wholly abhorrent to the nature of Jehovah. The world may as well be without a God, as have one who is incompetent to rule it, or, who, wrapping Himself in infinite indifference, abandons creation to the governance of puny mortals, to the rule of devils, or to the sway of a blind fortuity. **"The ostrich leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers"** (Job 39:14–16). Thus this bird fulfills the instincts of her nature. Yet in so doing she proves that she is one of the lowest orders of irrational animals. But God's tender mercies are over all His works. His kingdom rules over all.

Providence Defined

"Providence is the care and superintendence which God exercises over His creatures" - Webster

"Providence is that by which anything is foreseen before it takes place" - Cicero

"The doctrine of divine Providence is, that *all things are sustained, directed, and controlled by God*" - Dr. Leonard Woods

"By the law of providence, I intend God's sovereign disposal of all the concerns of men in this world, in the variety, order, and manner, which He pleaseth, according to the rule and infinite reason of His own goodness, wisdom, righteousness, and truth" - John Owen

"The word providence is taken from the Latin, and by its etymology means foresight, not merely in the sense of seeing before but in the sense of taking care for the future, or rather an ordering of things and events after a pre-determined and intelligent plan; it supposes wisdom to devise and power to execute" - Bethune

"Providence is the care which God takes of all things, to uphold them in being and to direct them to the ends which He has determined to accomplish by them, so that nothing takes place in which He is not concerned in a manner worthy of His infinite perfections, and which is not in unison with the counsels of His will" - Dick

"God's conserving all things means His actual operation and government in preserving and continuing the being, powers, dispositions, and motions of all things" - Clarke

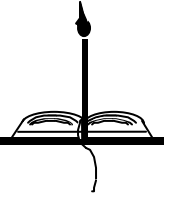
"The providence of God is His almighty and everywhere present power, whereby as it were by hand, He upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand" - Heidelberg Catechism

According to preceding views and to the Scriptures, God's providence consists:

1. In His preserving all that He has made. He upholds all things by the word of His power (see Heb. 1:3). **"The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season"** (Ps. 145:15-16). This dependence of creatures is universal and perpetual. Could one link in the chain thereof be broken, the least evil that would follow would be annihilation.

2. In governing all that He has made. First, He restrains the creature. By the law of gravitation He keeps solid worlds in their places. By the power of His hand He withholds free agents from evil both natural and moral. Secondly, He guides His creatures. It is His voice that rolls the stars along, and marshals all the host of heaven, and works wonders among the inhabitants of the earth. Without Him atoms and planets, angels and devils, saints and sinners can do nothing. (See John 19:11; II Chron. 32:31; Acts 14:16; Ps. 76:10).

New Testament Study: Matthew 25:31-46



Separation of the Sheep from the Goats

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

³⁴"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷"Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

⁴⁶"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

This discourse was initiated by the disciples asking about the destruction of the Temple, and (what the disciples thought would happen at the same time) the end of the age (see Matt. 24:3). The focus now, and in the previous few parables, is the return of Christ at the end of the age. While the prediction of the destruction of the Temple was a great prophecy, and the destruction itself a significant event, the coming return of Christ is a much more significant event, especially to us today. “The reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, with which this great discourse began, has now passed out of sight, and we think only of the final coming of Christ” [Broadus, 507]. Specifically, here we see that, with the return of Jesus, will come the final judgment: **“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left”** (vss. 31–33).

Note that, though in the previous sections Jesus spoke in parables, He here does not use a parable, but speaks directly about the end-times judgment, **“When the Son of Man comes in His glory...”** This is a description of what will happen on Judgment Day. We learn that “there is a judgment to come, in which every man shall be sentenced to a state of everlasting happiness, or misery, in the world of recompense or retribution, according to what he did in this world of trial and probation, which is to be judged of by the rule of the everlasting gospel” [Henry]. The significance of this cannot be understated. “There are few passages in the whole Bible more solemn and heart-searching than this. May we read it with the deep and serious attention which it deserves” [Ryle, 341].

It is somewhat ironic that Jesus here spoke of Himself as being exalted, for very soon, He would face His greatest humiliation. “Within three days He was to be crucified; yet He spoke of the time **‘when the Son of man shall come in His glory’**” [Spurgeon, 369]. “That same Jesus who was born in the manger of Bethlehem, and took upon Him the form of a servant; who was despised and rejected of men, and often had not where to lay His head; who was condemned by the princes of this world, beaten, scourged, and nailed to the cross—that same Jesus shall Himself judge the world, when He comes in His glory” [Ryle, 341]. “No longer will He be a homeless wanderer, with a handful of followers,” rather, **“all the angels”** will be with Him [Broadus, 508].

And let us all take note that it is Jesus who will be Judge. “The administration of the judgment of the great day is committed to the Son of man; for by Him God will judge the world (see Acts 17:31), and to Him all judgment is committed” [Henry]. Our eternal destiny will be determined by Him. Did we please Him when on earth? Did we accept His great gift of sacrifice? Will He be a stranger to us when we stand before Him?

Note that Jesus will be Judge over, not just those from so-called Christian nations, but rather, **“All the nations will be gathered before Him”** (vs. 32). No matter what religion you profess, you will stand before Jesus in judgment. “Not only Jews, but Gentiles, not only some nations, but all... Though His personal mission was exclusively to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (15:24), yet He was destined to draw all men unto Him (John 12:32), and the proclamation of His work was to be made to all nations (28:19)” [Broadus, 508]. Note also that, the separation in judgment of people will be **“one from another.”** The judgment will be made on an individual basis. The actions of your godly mother will not apply to your account. “The division will be very close and personal: **‘one from another.’** They will not be separated into nations, nor even into families; but each individual will be allotted his or her proper place among the sheep or among the goats” [Spurgeon, 370].

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?’³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’” (vss. 34–39). Jesus here refers to Himself as **“the King”**. This is somewhat unusual. He usually referred to Himself as **“the Son of Man”**. But here, He is looking forward to when He will come to earth to reign.

The **“King”**, presiding over the judgment, will bestow an **“inheritance”** on the **“righteous”**. Their righteousness was evidenced in their actions. They fed the hungry, clothed the needy, and visited the imprisoned. They had compassion for the afflicted, and did their best to ease their afflictions. Their compassion proved that they were true disciples. “The good works here described imply three things, which must be found in all that are saved: Self-denial; love to our brethren; a believing regard to Jesus Christ” [Henry]. At the judgment, “the question to be ascertained will not merely be what we said, but what we did; not merely what we professed, but what we practiced. Our works unquestionably will not justify us: we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law; but the truth of our faith will be tested by our lives. Faith which hath not works is dead, being alone (see James 2:11)” [Ryle, 342]. “The essence of the passage is that the actions in question will be accepted as

indicating personal relation to Christ; and it is really personal relation to Christ, as acted out in the life, that will fix eternal destiny" [Broadus, 510]. "We must bear in mind that it is common to the whole scriptural picture that we are saved by grace and judged by works (for this latter point, cf. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; II Cor. 5:10, etc). The works we do are the evidence either of the grace of God at work in us or of our rejection of that grace" [Morris, 634]. "Are we, then, after all, to be saved by our works? By no means. Yet are our works the evidences of our being saved. If our actions are such as Christ will commend at the day of judgment, they prove that we are saved by grace, and that the Holy Spirit has wrought effectually in us, and through us" [Spurgeon, 371].

The rewarded ones were surprised at the King's words: "**Lord, when did we...**". Christ answered them: "**I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me**" (vs. 40). Notable here is that when we show our compassion for others, and help them out, our Lord accounts the action as if we had helped Him. "Christ is more among us than we think... Christ espouses His people's cause, and interests Himself in their interests, and reckons Himself received, and love, and owned in them. If Christ Himself were among us in poverty, how readily would we relieve Him? In prison, how frequently would we visit Him?" [Henry]. "They will bashfully disclaim the praise pronounced by the King. They had no idea that there was anything meritorious in what they had done; they never dreamed of being rewarded for it" [Spurgeon, 371]. They weren't doing the works to be saved. The works were natural, outflowing acts from their lives as children of God. "They did it because they delighted to do it, because they could not help doing it, because their new nature impelled them to it" [Spurgeon, 372]

Many wonder, how can I serve Christ? Well, here's your answer. The simplest act on behalf of the needy is accounted as if done for Christ. One doesn't have to fly to the far reaches of a jungle to serve Christ. One doesn't have to found a mega-church to serve Christ. There is no shortage of affliction in the world, and so there is no shortage of opportunity to serve our Lord.

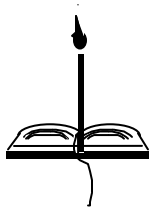
Let us not move on from this passage without taking note of the reward given the righteous. Jesus said, "**Take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world**" (vs. 34). The kingdom, which will be our inheritance, was "**prepared**" for us. What a blessing! It was "**prepared**" especially for us. This demonstrates the care, and love God has for us. "The Father designed it for us in His thoughts of love, and provided it for us in the greatness of His wisdom and power" [Henry].

The unrighteous will face a different fate: "**Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the**

eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' They also will answer, '**Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'** He will reply, '**I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'** Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (vss. 42–46). They are judged for neglecting to give aid to the "**hungry**", the "**thirsty**", the "**stranger**", the unclothed, and those "**in prison**". "All that is charged upon them, on which the sentence is grounded, is omission; as, before, the servant was condemned, not for wasting his talent, but for burying it" [Henry]. Their omission demonstrated that they were not true children of God. "This omission on their part was no small matter; it was fatal, and it was visited with the eternal death sentence" [Spurgeon, 372]. "They are not sentenced for omitting their sacrifices and burnt-offerings, but for omitting the weightier matter of the law, *judgment, mercy, and faith*... Note, sinners will be condemned, at the great day, for the omission of that good which it was in the power of their hand to do. But if the doom of the uncharitable be so dreadful, how much more intolerable will the doom of the cruel be, the doom of persecutors!" [Henry].

Just as the righteous were surprised at what they were commended for, so this group is surprised at what they are condemned for. They asked: "**Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'**" (vs. 44).

Their punishment is severe: "**Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life**" (vs. 46). Take note of this. "He leaves His hearers in no doubt as to the solemnity of what He is saying. Eternal issues are involved, and this is so for both those on His right hand and on His left" [Morris, 641]. The state of things after the judgment is changeless and without end. The misery of the lost, and the blessedness of the saved, are both alike for ever: let no man deceive us on this point" [Ryle, 344]. "It will at once be taken for granted, by any unprejudiced and docile mind, that the punishment of the wicked will last as long as the life of the righteous; it is to the last degree improbable that the Great Teacher would have used an expression so inevitably suggesting a great doctrine He did not mean to teach; those who deny the doctrine must establish here a difference of meaning, and with an overwhelming presumption against them" [Broadus, 512].



A Topical Study: Contentment

The Art of Divine Contentment, pt. 6 by Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

[Here we continue Mr Watson's study on contentment. In this article, he continues to answer some excuses for not being content. In the original text of Mr Watson's book, these were called "Apologies". We have changed the word to "Excuses", for readability's sake, to be in line with the modern meaning of the words.]

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content (Philippians 4:11, AV).

Excuses (cont.)

The second excuse which discontent makes is this:

Excuse 2. I have a great part of my estate strangely melted away, and trading begins to fail.

God is pleased sometimes to bring his children very low, and cut them short in their estate; it fares with them as with that widow who had nothing in her house save **"a pot of oil,"** (II Kings 4:2); nevertheless be content.

1. God has taken away your estate, but not your portion. This is a sacred paradox. Honor and estate are no part of a Christian's jointure, they are rather accessories than essentials; and are extrinsical and foreign; therefore the loss of these cannot denominate a man miserable; still the portion remains: **"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul"** (Lam. 3:24). Suppose one were worth a million of money, and he should chance to lose a pin off his sleeve, this is no part of his estate, nor can we say he is undone: the loss of sublunary comforts is not so much to a Christian's portion, as the loss of a pin is to a million. **"These things shall be added unto you,"** (Matt. 6:33); they shall be cast in as overplus. When a man buys a piece of cloth, he has an inch or two given in to the measure; now though he lose his inch of cloth, yet he is not undone, for still the whole piece remains: our outward estate is not so much in regard of the portion, as an inch of cloth is to the whole piece; why then should a Christian be discontented when the title to his spiritual treasure re-

mains? A thief may take away all my money that I have about me, but not my land; still a Christian has a title to the land of promise. Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her.

2. Perhaps if your estate had not been lost, your soul had been lost; outward comforts do often quench inward heat. God cannot bestow a jewel upon us, but we fall so in love with it, that we forget Him that gave it. What a pity is it that we should commit idolatry with the creature! God is forced sometimes to drain away an estate; the plate and jewels are often cast overboard to save the passenger. Many a man may curse the time that ever he had such an estate, it has been an enchantment to draw away his heart from God. Some there are that will be rich (see I Tim. 6:9), and they fall into a snare. Riches are thorns (see Matt. 13:7). Are you angry that God has pulled away a thorn from you? Riches are compared to thick clay (see Hab. 2:6). Perhaps your affections, which are the feet of the soul, might have stuck so fast in this golden clay, that they could not have ascended up to heaven. Be content; if God bank up our outward comforts, it is that the stream of our love may run faster another way.

3. If your estate be small, yet God can bless a little. It is not how much money we have, but how much blessing. He that often curses the bags of gold, can bless the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse. What if you have not the full flesh-pots? Yet you have a promise: I will **"bless her provision"** (Ps. 132:15), and then a little goes a great way. Be content, you have the dew of a blessing distilled: a dinner of green herbs, where love is, is sweet; I may add, where the love of God is. Another may have more estate than you, but more care; more riches, less rest; more revenues, but withal more occasions of expense: he has a greater inheritance, yet perhaps God does not give him **"power to eat thereof,"** (Eccl. 6:2); he has the dominion of his estate, not the use; he holds more, but enjoys less; in a word, you have less gold than he, perhaps less guilt.

4. You did never so thrive in your spiritual trade, your heart was never so low, as since your condition was low; you were never so poor in spirit, never so rich in faith. You did never run the ways of God's commandments so fast as since some of your golden weights were taken off. You never had such trading for heaven all your life. You did never make such adventures upon the promise as since you left off your sea adventures. This is the best kind of merchandise. O Christian, you never had such incomes of the Spirit, such spring-tides of joy; and what though weak in estate, if strong in assurance? Be content, what you have lost one way, you have gained another.

5. Be your losses what they will in this kind, remember in every loss there is only a suffering, but in every discontent there is a sin, and one sin is worse than a thousand sufferings. What! Because some of my revenues are gone, shall I part with some of my righteousness? Shall my

faith and patience go too? Because I do not possess an estate, shall I not therefore possess my own spirit? O learn to be content.

The third excuse which discontent makes is this:

Excuse 3. It is sad with me in my relations; where I should find most comfort, there I have most grief.

This excuse or objection branches itself into two particulars, whereto I shall give a distinct reply.

1. My child goes on in rebellion; I fear I have brought forth a child who will perish forever. It is indeed sad to think of, but though you ought to be humbled, yet not discontented: for consider,

(1.) You may learn something out of your child's undutifulness; the child's sin is sometimes the parent's sermon: the undutifulness of children to us may be a memento to put us in mind of our undutifulness once to God. Time was when we were rebellious children; how long did our hearts stand out as garrisons against God! How long did He parley with us, and beseech us, ere we would yield! He walked in the tenderness of His heart towards us, but we walked in the forwardness of our hearts towards Him. And since grace has been planted in our souls, how much of the wild olive is still in us! How many motions of the Spirit do we daily resist! How many unkindnesses and affronts have we put upon Christ! Let this open a spring of repentance; look upon your child's rebellion, and mourn for your own rebellion.

(2.) Though to see him undutiful is your grief, yet not always your sin. Has a parent given the child, not only the milk of the breast, but the **"sincere milk of the word,"** (I Pet. 2:2)? Have you seasoned his tender years with religious education? You can do no more. Parents can only work knowledge, God must work grace; they can only lay the wood together, it is God must make it burn: a parent can only be a guide to show his child the way to heaven; the Spirit of God must be a loadstone to draw his heart into that way. **"Am I in God's stead,"** said Jacob, **"who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?"** (Gen. 30:2). Can I give children? So, is a parent in God's stead to give grace? Who can help it, if a child having the light of conscience, scripture, education, these three torches in his hand, yet runs willfully into the deep ponds of sin? Weep for your child, pray for him, but do not sin for him, by discontent.

(3.) Say not, you have brought forth a child for Satan; God can reduce him; He has promised to turn the heart of the children to their parents (see Mal. 4:6), and to open springs of grace in the desert (see Isa. 35:6). When your child is going full sail to ruin, God can blow with a contrary wind of the Spirit, and alter his course. When Paul was breathing out persecution against the saints, and was sailing hell-ward, God turns him another way; he was going to Damascus, but God sends him to Ananias; before a persecutor, now a preacher. Though our children

are for the present fallen, God can turn them from the power of Satan (see Acts 26:18), and bring them in at the twelfth hour. Monica was weeping for her son Augustine: at last God gave him to her in answer to prayer, and he became a famous instrument in the church of God.

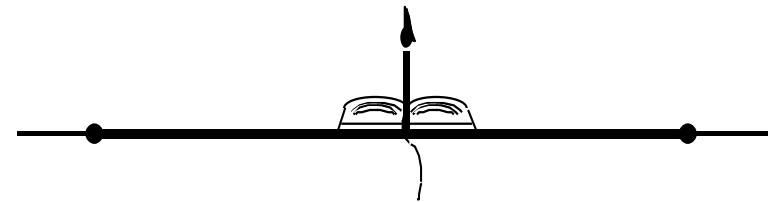
2. The second branch of the objection is—but, my husband takes ill courses; where I looked for honey, behold a sting.

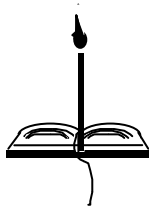
Answer. It is sad to have the living and the dead tied together; yet, let not your heart fret with discontent; mourn for his sin, but do not murmur. For,

(1.) God has placed you in your relation, and you cannot be discontented without quarrelling with God. What! For every cross that befalls us, shall we call the infinite wisdom of God in question? Oh the blasphemy of our hearts!

(2.) God can make you a gainer by your husband's sin; perhaps you had never been so good, if he had not been so bad. The fire burns hottest in the coldest climate: God often turns the sins of others to our good, and makes our maladies our medicines. The more profane the husband is, oft the more holy the wife grows; the more earthly he is, the more heavenly she grows: God makes sometimes the husband's sin a spur to the wife's grace. His exorbitances are as a pair of bellows to blow up the flame of her zeal and devotion the more.

Is it not thus? Does not your husband's wickedness send you to prayer? You perhaps had never prayed so much, if he had not sinned so much: his deadness quickens you the more; the stone of his heart is a hammer to break your heart. The apostle said, the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband (see I Cor. 7:14); but in this sense, the believing wife is sanctified by the unbelieving husband; she grows better; his sin is a whetstone to her grace, and a medicine for her security.





A Study in Wisdom: Job 1:5-6 (pt. 2)

[Here we continue a reprint of a small portion of Joseph Caryl's study in Job. Mr. Caryl wrote twelve volumes on the book of Job. His study is a great example of how deep one can dig into the truths of the Bible.]

Job 1:5-6 (part 2) - Job's Offering, by Joseph Caryl

⁵And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings, according to the number of them all. ⁶For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

Yet there is a third query upon this passage: Suppose that there was an institution of God for sacrificing; why did God call for sacrifices? What is his meaning? **"Doth God delight in the blood of bulls and goats? Thou delightest not in sacrifices"** (says David) **"Thou desirest not burnt offerings"** (Ps. 51:26). And what was the sacrifice unto Job, or unto his sons? Could the killing of a beast take away sin? Why then does Job, when he fears that his sons had sinned, go presently and offer sacrifice?

For answer, it is true that the sacrifices in themselves were nothing, either to God or man; they could do no good, they had no power in them, either to pacify God or to purge the souls of men. But look upon the sacrifice, as it was an institution, and then God saw His son Jesus Christ in it, and was well pleased: and likewise man beheld and believed Christ in it, and was purged. When the sacrifice was offering, man saw Christ suffering, this took away his sin and pacified his conscience. A sacrifice in itself, as it was the killing or burning of a beast had no virtue in it, but as it had respect unto Christ, so God saw the death of His son, and that satisfied Him, and man saw the death of his Savior, and that justified him.

Again, it was not the bare sacrifice that was effectual, but the faith of Job, and the faith of his sons carried up in prayer; these mingled with the sacrifice wrought the cure. Therefore we find in the time of the Sacrifice still the people were at prayer, they knew the sacrifice, the incense, could

do nothing, but as joined with the faith of the sacrifice in prayer. We read, when Zechariah the priest was offering the incense within the temple, the text says, **"that the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense"**. The incense might burn long enough, and yet the anger of God burn too; the incense might burn, and yet the people be not purified, but consumed. But while the incense was burning, while the sacrifice was offering, the people were praying and believing. These actings of faith, and pourings out of prayer made the sacrifice as effective for man, so acceptable to God.

Then, in that he offered burnt-offerings, which burnt-offerings were made when he feared that his sons had sinned, these offerings typing out and leading them to Christ and His death; we may note this,

That Christ was ever the only remedy and cure of sin.

As soon as ever there was any fear of sin, presently they had recourse to a sacrifice; and what was that? They went to Christ. Christ has been the help against sin in all the generations of the world from the first, and will be to the last. **"If any man sin"** (says the Apostle John) **"we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins, He is the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins"** (1 John 2:1). It follows,

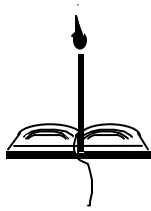
"According to the number of them all": That is, he offered for each of his sons a sacrifice. There were some sacrifices which did serve for the whole congregation, as we may see in Leviticus 4:13-14, and in many other chapters of that book. Besides these there were personal sacrifices, where the laws about sacrifices are set forth; if any soul had sinned that particular soul must come to the priest, and bring a sacrifice for his sin. So here, Job does not offer only one general family sacrifice for them all, but he offered up a distinct sacrifice for every particular son. This teaches us,

First, that everyone is saved and pardoned by the special and particular actings of his own faith, every soul must believe for itself.

Every one must have a sacrifice. We have congregational prayers, and we have personal prayers; it is not enough for people to pray in public with the minister, or for the minister (who is the mouth of the congregation to God), to offer up a prayer for the pardon of the people. But everyone must apart and by himself sue out his own pardon, which is, as it were, his own sacrifice, by offering up and tendering of Jesus Christ unto God for the pardon of his sins.

Then again, you may note, in that Job offered a sacrifice for every one of his sons, *that it is not enough for parents to pray in general for their children, but they ought to pray particularly for them.*

As parents, who have many children, provide portions according to the number of them all, and proportion out their care personally, according to the number of them all; and the family they provide meat and clothing, according to the particular number of them all. So likewise they ought to be at a proportional expense in spirituals, to lay out and lay up prayers and intercessions, according to the number of them all; not only to pray in general, that God would bless their children and their family, but even to set them one by one before God, and so beg and sue out a special blessing upon the head of every one of them, as without all question Job did. When the sacrifice for every son was made, he sent up a prayer to God for the pardon and acceptance of every son. That for the opening of the second act in the text, first he sent and sanctified them, and secondly, he offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all.

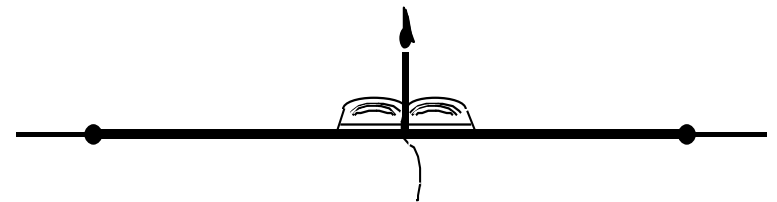


A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist

A Meditation Upon a Multiplying Glass by William Spurstowe (ca. 1666)

What a vain and fictitious happiness would that be, if a poor man, who had only a small piece of money, should, by the looking upon it through a multiplying glass, please himself in believing that he is now secure from the fears of pressing wants, his single piece being suddenly minted into many pounds, with which he can readily furnish himself with fuel to warm him, clothes to cover him, and food to satisfy him? But alas! When he puts forth his hand to take a supply from what he beholds, he can feel nothing of what he sees; and when the glass is gone that presented him with so much treasure, he can then see nothing but his first pittance, which also becomes the less desirable because of the disappointment of his hopes. Upon what better foundation does the felicity of the greatest part of men stand, which is not fixed upon any true and spiritual good, as its proper basis, but upon the specious semblances of a corrupt and mutable fancy? What is it that rich men do not promise themselves, who conceive riches to be a strong tower? They think they can laugh at famine, and when others, like the poor Egyptians, whose substance is exhausted, sell themselves and their children for food, they can buy their bread at any rate. If enemies rise up against them, they question not, but they can purchase a peace or a victory. If sickness come, oh how can they please themselves in thinking that their purse can command the physicians skill, and the drugsters shops, elixirs, cordials, magisterial powders, they conceive beforehand will be prescribed both as their diet and physic: And every avenue of the body, at which the disease or death may threaten to enter, shall be so fortified, as that both of them shall receive an easy and quick repulse. Now what are all these representations but the impostors of the glass of fancy, which, like the colors of the rainbow, have more show than of entity. Does not Solomon counsel men not to labor to be rich, and expostulate with them, **“Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?”** (Prov. 23:5). Does not our Savior call them deceitful riches? And Paul, uncertain riches? What then can they contribute to the real happiness of any man?

Surely the transient sparks that with much difficulty are forced from the flint, may as soon add light to the body of the sun, as riches can yield any solid comfort to the soul, or keep it from lying down in the bed of darkness and sorrow. Away then from me you flattering vanities and gilded nothings of the world, get you to the bats, and to the moles, and try what beauteous rays you can dart into their eyes. I will hence no more behold you in the glass of fancy, but in the glass of the word, which discovers that you are always vanity and vexation, no objects of trust in the times of strait, or price of deliverance in the day of wrath. It is methinks observable that four times in Scripture this saying is repeated, that **“riches and treasures profit nothing in the day of wrath”**, twice in the Book of Proverbs (11:4; 27:24), and then again by two prophets, Ezekiel (7:19) and Zephaniah (1:18). Doubtless these holy men knew what an universal proneness there is in the minds of most to exalt riches above righteousness, and to think, that by them heaven might be purchased, and the flames of hell bribed. How else could such words ever drop from the mouths of any, that they had made a covenant with death, and were at an agreement with hell to pass from them? But, Lord, keep me from imagining to save my soul by merchandise, or of entitling myself any other way to the inheritance of heaven, than by the blood of Christ, who is my life, my riches, my rejoicing, and sure confidence.



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Denying the Existence of God

"The fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God." He regards him as little as if he had no being. He said in his heart, not with his tongue, nor in his head: he never firmly thought it, nor openly asserted it. Shame put a bar to the first, and natural reason to the second; yet, perhaps, he had sometimes some doubts whether there were a God or no. He wished there were not any, and sometimes hoped there were none at all. He could not raze out the notion of a Deity in his mind, but he neglected the fixing the sense of God in his heart, and made it too much his business to deface and blot out those characters of God in his soul, which had been left under the ruins of original nature."

-- *Stephien Charnock*, (1628-1680)