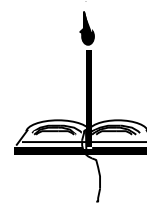


"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord... Isaiah 1:18

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Old Testament Study: Exodus 21-23

Detailed Ordinances for the Children of Israel,
by C. H. Mackintosh (1820-1896)

Exodus 21

¹ Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.

² If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.

³ If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴ If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. ⁵ And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: ⁶ Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

⁷ And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do. ⁸ If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. ⁹ And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. ¹⁰ If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. ¹¹ And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.

¹² He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. ¹³ And if a man lie not in wait, but God

deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. ¹⁴ But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

¹⁵ And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.

¹⁶ And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.

¹⁷ And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

¹⁸ And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: ¹⁹ If he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.

²⁰ And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. ²¹ Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.

²² If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. ²³ And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, ²⁴ Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

²⁶ And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. ²⁷ And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake.

²⁸ If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. ²⁹ But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death. ³⁰ If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the

ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. ³¹ Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. ³² If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

³³ And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; ³⁴ The owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his.

³⁵ And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die; then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead ox also they shall divide. ³⁶ Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own.

Exodus 22

¹ If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.

² If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. ³ If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴ If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.

⁵ If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.

⁶ If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

⁷ If a man shall deliver unto his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double. ⁸ If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought

unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbor's goods. ⁹ For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbor. ¹⁰ If a man deliver unto his neighbor an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it: ¹¹ Then shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good. ¹² And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof. ¹³ If it be torn in pieces, then let him bring it for witness, and he shall not make good that which was torn.

¹⁴ And if a man borrow ought of his neighbor, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof being not with it, he shall surely make it good. ¹⁵ But if the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be an hired thing, it came for his hire.

¹⁶ And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. ¹⁷ If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.

¹⁸ Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

¹⁹ Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death.

²⁰ He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

²¹ Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

²² Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

²³ If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; ²⁴ And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

²⁵ If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, nei-

ther shalt thou lay upon him usury. ²⁶ If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: ²⁷ For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.

²⁸ Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

²⁹ Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. ³⁰ Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me.

³¹ And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

Exodus 23

¹ Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

² Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:

³ Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.

⁴ If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. ⁵ If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him. ⁶ Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. ⁷ Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

⁸ And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

⁹ Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. ¹⁰ And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: ¹¹ But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy

people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard. ¹² Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed. ¹³ And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

¹⁴ Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. ¹⁵ Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty.) ¹⁶ And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. ¹⁷ Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God. ¹⁸ Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning. ¹⁹ The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

²⁰ Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. ²¹ Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. ²² But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. ²³ For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. ²⁴ Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. ²⁵ And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

²⁶ There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. ²⁷ I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. ²⁸ And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. ²⁹ I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. ³⁰ By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. ³¹ And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. ³² Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. ³³ They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee. (KJV)

The study of this section of our book is eminently calculated to impress the heart with a sense of God's unsearchable wisdom and infinite goodness. It enables one to form some idea of the character of a kingdom governed by laws of divine appointment. Here, too, we may see the amazing condescension of Him who, though He is the great God of heaven and earth, can, nevertheless, stoop to adjudicate between man and man in reference to the death of an ox, the loan of a garment, or the loss of a servant's tooth. **"Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and on earth?"** (Ps. 113:5-6). He governs the universe, and yet He can occupy Himself with the provision of a covering for one of His creatures. He guides the angel's flight and takes notice of a crawling worm. He humbles Himself to regulate the movements of those countless orbs that roll through infinite space and to record the fall of a sparrow.

As to the character of the judgments set forth in the chapter before us, we may learn a double lesson. These judgments and ordinances bear a twofold witness: they convey to the ear

a twofold message, and present to the eye two sides of a picture. They tell of God and they tell of man.

In the first place, on God's part, we find Him enacting laws which exhibit strict, even-handed, perfect justice. **"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe"** (Ex. 21:24-25). Such was the character of the laws, the statutes, and the judgments by which God governed His earthly kingdom of Israel. Everything was provided for, every interest was maintained, and every claim was met. There was no partiality—no distinction made between the rich and the poor. The balance in which each man's claim was weighed was adjusted with divine accuracy, so that no one could justly complain of a decision. The pure robe of justice was not to be tarnished with the foul stains of bribery, corruption, and partiality. The eye and the hand of a divine Legislator provided for everything; and a divine Executive inflexibly dealt with every defaulter. The stroke of justice fell only on the head of the guilty, while every obedient soul was protected in the enjoyment of all his rights and privileges.

Then, as regards man, it is impossible to read over these laws and not be struck with the disclosure which they indirectly, but really, make of his desperate depravity. The fact of Jehovah's having to enact laws against certain crimes, proves the capability, on man's part, of committing those crimes. Were the capability and the tendency not there, there would be no need of the enactments. Now, there are many who, if the gross abominations forbidden in these chapters were named to them, might feel disposed to adopt the language of Hazael and say, **"Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?"** (II Kings 8:13). Such persons have not yet travelled down into the deep abyss of their own hearts. For albeit there are crimes here forbidden which would seem to place man, as regards his habits and tendencies, below the level of a **"dog,"** yet do those very statutes prove, beyond all question, that the most refined and cultivated member of the human family carries about, in his bosom, the seeds of the very darkest and most horrifying abominations. For whom were those statutes

enacted? For man. Were they needful? Unquestionably. But they would have been quite superfluous if man were incapable of committing the sins referred to. But man *is* capable; and hence we see that man is sunk to the very lowest possible level—that his nature is wholly corrupt—that, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, there is not so much as a speck of moral soundness.

How can such a being ever stand, without an emotion of fear, in the full blaze of the throne of God? How can he stand within the holiest? How can he stand on the sea of glass? How can he enter in by the pearly gates and tread the golden streets? The reply to these inquiries unfolds the amazing depths of redeeming love and the eternal efficacy of the blood of the Lamb. Deep as is man's ruin, the love of God is deeper still. Black as is his guilt, the blood of Jesus can wash it all away. Wide as is the chasm separating man from God, the cross has bridged it. God has come down to the very lowest point of the sinner's condition, in order that He might lift him up into a position of infinite favor, in eternal association with His own Son. Well may we exclaim, **"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God"** (I John 3:1). Nothing could fathom man's ruin but God's love, and nothing could equal man's guilt but the blood of Christ. But now the very depth of the ruin only magnifies the love that has fathomed it, and the intensity of the guilt only celebrates the efficacy of the blood that can cleanse it. The very vilest sinner who believes in Jesus can rejoice in the assurance that God sees him and pronounces him *"clean every whit."*

Such, then, is the double character of instruction to be gleaned from the laws and ordinances in this section, looked at as a whole; and the more minutely we look at them, in detail, the more impressed we shall be with a sense of their fulness and beauty. Take, for instance, the very first ordinance that presents itself, namely, that of the Hebrew servant:

"Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them. If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for

nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free': then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever" (Ex. 21:1-6). The servant was perfectly free to go out, so far as he was personally concerned. He had discharged every claim, and could, therefore, walk abroad in unquestioned freedom; but because of his love to his master, his wife, and his children, he voluntarily bound himself to perpetual servitude; and not only so, but he was also willing to bear, in his own person, the marks of that servitude.

The application of this to the Lord Jesus Christ will be obvious to the intelligent reader. In Him we behold the One who dwelt in the bosom of the Father before all worlds—who the object of His eternal delight—who might have occupied, throughout eternity, this His personal and entirely peculiar place, inasmuch as there lay upon Him no obligation (save that which ineffable love created and ineffable love incurred) to abandon that place. Such, however, was His love to the Father, whose counsels were involved, and for the Church collectively, and each individual member thereof whose salvation was involved, that He, voluntarily, came down to earth, emptied Himself, and made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant and the marks of perpetual service. To these marks we probably have a striking allusion in the Psalms: "**Mine ears hast thou digged**" (Ps. 40:6, marg). This psalm is the expression of Christ's devotedness to God. "**Then said I, 'Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea thy law is within my heart'**" (Ps. 40:7-8). He came to do the will of God, whatever that will might be. He never once did His

own will, not even in the reception and salvation of sinners, though surely His loving heart, with all its affections, was most fully in that glorious work. Still He receives and saves only as the servant of the Father's counsels. "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day**" (John 6:37-39).

Here we have a most interesting view of the servant-character of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, in perfect grace, holds Himself responsible to receive all who come within the range of the divine counsels; and not only to receive them, but to preserve them through all the difficulties and trials of their devious path down here, yea, in the article of death itself, should it come, and to raise them all up in the last day. Oh! How secure is the very feeblest member of the Church of God! He is the subject of God's eternal counsels, which counsels the Lord Jesus Christ is pledged to carry out. Jesus loves the Father, and, in proportion to the intensity of that love, is the security of each member of the redeemed family. The salvation of the sinner who believes on the name of the Son of God is, in one aspect of it, but the expression of Christ's love to the Father. If one such could perish, through any cause whatsoever, it would argue that the Lord Jesus Christ was unable to carry out the will of God, which were nothing short of positive blasphemy against His sacred name, to whom be all honor and majesty throughout the everlasting ages.

Thus we have, in the Hebrew servant, a type of Christ in His pure devotedness to the Father. But there is more than this. "**I love my wife and my children**" (Ex. 21:5). "**Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish**" (Eph. 5: 25-27). There are various other passages of Scripture present-

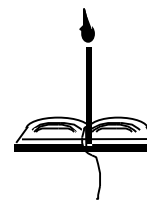
ing Christ as the antitype of the Hebrew servant, both in His love for the Church, as a body, and for all believers personally. In Matthew 8, John 10 and 13, and Hebrews 2, my reader will find special teaching on the point.

The apprehension of this love of the heart of Jesus cannot fail to produce a spirit of fervent devotedness to the One who could exhibit such pure, such perfect, such disinterested love. How could the wife and children of the Hebrew servant fail to love one who had voluntarily surrendered his liberty in order that he and they might be together? And what is the love presented in the type, when compared with that which shines in the antitype? It is as nothing. **“The love of Christ passeth knowledge”** (Eph. 3:19). It led Him to think of us before all worlds—to visit us in the fullness of time—to walk deliberately to the door post—to suffer for us on the cross, in order that He might raise us to companionship with Himself, in His everlasting kingdom and glory.

Were I to enter into a full exposition of the remaining statutes and judgments of this portion of the Book of Exodus, it would carry me much further than I feel, at present, led to go. I will merely observe, in conclusion, that it is impossible to read the section and not have the heart drawn out in adoration of the profound wisdom, well-balanced justice, and yet tender considerateness which breathe throughout the whole. We rise up from the study of it with this conviction deeply wrought into the soul, that the One who speaks here is the only true, the only wise, and the infinitely gracious God.

May all our meditations on His eternal Word have the effect of prostrating our souls in worship before Him, whose perfect ways and glorious attributes shine there, in all their blessedness and brightness, for the refreshment, the delight, and the edification of His blood-bought people.

This article is taken from: Mackintosh, C. H. *Notes on the Book of Exodus*. London: George Morrish, 1858. A PDF file of this book can be downloaded, free of charge, at <http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



A Classic Study: Job 1:7-8 (part 3)

[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 1:7-8 (part 3) - God's Second Question, pt. 1, by Joseph Caryl (1644)

⁷And the Lord said unto Satan, "Whence comest thou?" Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." ⁸And the Lord said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (KJV)

Let us now consider what the Lord replied, or His second question to Satan. Well, you have been walking to and fro in the earth, said God, **“Hast thou considered my servant Job?”** (vs. 8). Tell me, hast thou taken notice of such a one? **“Hast thou considered?”** The meaning is, *Hast thou put thy heart upon Job?* So it is word for word in the original, *Hast thou laid Job to thy heart? Hast thou seriously, fully and exactly considered my servant Job?* And so it is rendered out of the Septuagint, *Hast thou attended with thy mind upon my servant Job?* To put a thing upon the heart, is to have serious and special regard to it; as when the Scripture speaks of not putting a thing upon a heart, it notes a sleighting and neglecting of it. When the wife of Phineas was delivered, and they told her that she had brought forth a son, the text says, **“She answered not, neither did she regard”** (I Sam. 4:20); the Hebrew is, *neither did she put her heart upon it*; the same word is used here in Job. Thus Abigail speaks to David, **“As for this son of Belial, let not my lord put his heart upon him”** (I Sam. 25.25), or (as

it can be translated), *let not my Lord regard this man of Belial*; take no notice of such a one as he is, *he is fool name and thing*, do not regard him, do not put him upon thy heart.

There are diverse such expressions where *putting upon the heart* is expressed by *regarding*, and not putting upon the heart, by not regarding. Then here, *Hast thou put Job upon thy heart?*, that is, *Hast thou seriously weighed and considered Job?* As if God had said, *I am sure in thy travels and wanderings about the world, thou couldst not choose but take notice of Job; he is my jewel, my darling, a special man among all the sons of men. He is such a spectacle as may justly draw all eyes and hearts after him. When thou walkedst didst thou not make a stand at Job's door? I cannot but look upon him myself and consider him, therefore surely thou hast considered him. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His heart is upon them, too. A wicked man hath not the eye of God, a godly man hath his heart, and shall have it to all eternity.*

The sum is, this question teaches us, *that amongst all the men dwelt on the face of the earth, Job was the most considerable.*

“Hast thou not considered my servant Job”: It is as if one should say to a man come from this city in the country, “Were you at court, or have you seen the King?”, because he is the most eminent and considerable person. So God here speaks to Satan upon his account of walking about the earth, *“Hast thou taken notice of Job? A godly man, who is the most considerable man in the world?”* But then you must *put your heart* upon him, not your *eye* only, for then as it was said of Christ (see Isa. 53:3): you may perhaps *see no beauty in him*, his inside is the most considerable thing in the world.

But secondly, in reference to Satan, some read these words not by way of question, but by way of affirmation: *Thus, thou hast considered my servant Job.* You have been abroad in the world, surely then you have taken notice of my servant Job; you have considered him; that is, of all the men in the world, you have set yourself about Job to tempt him and to try him; when you came to Job's house, there you made an assault; there you tried the uttermost of your strength to overcome him; you considered him what to do against him, how to overthrow him and, tell me, have you not found him a tough

piece? Did you ever meet with such a one in the world before? To consider a thing is to try always how to gain it, or how to compass such a thing. As Samuel said to Saul, when he was seeking his father's asses, **“As for thine asses that were lost, set not thy mind on them”** (I Sam. 9:20); that is, do not trouble yourself, do not beat your brains to consider which way to go to find them, or where it is most probable to get them. So here you have set your mind or considered my servant Job, that is, you have beat your brains, and set all your wits on work what course to take with greatest advantage to destroy my servant Job.

Take the words in that sense, and they yield us this instruction: *That Satan's main temptations, his strongest batteries are planted against the most eminent godly persons.* When Satan sees a man that is eminent in grace, against him he makes his hottest and subtlest assaults: he sets his heart upon such a man, yea and vexes his heart too about him. Satan is most busy at holy duties (one said he saw in a vision ten devils at a sermon, and but one at the market) and about holy persons. As for others, he does not trouble himself about them, for they (as the Apostle shows), **“are led captive by the devil at his will”** (II Tim. 2:26), if he do but *whistle* (as it were) they easily follow him and come after him presently, so that he needs not set his heart or vex himself about them. But when he comes to a Job, he sets all his wits and all his strength a work, bends all his thoughts to consider what course to take to assault such a *strong hold of grace.* If he can get such a man down then there is triumph indeed, *he sings Victoria.* Then (if we may so speak), there is joy in hell; as there is joy indeed in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, so there is a kind of joy in hell, when one sins that is converted. If anything can make the devils merry, it is this, to give a godly man the foil. Though they see he is past their reach to destroy him, yet if they can but blemish or disgrace him, if they can but trouble and disquiet him, this is their delight. Hence it is that Satan with his legions of darkness, those infernal spirits encamp about such persons with deadly hatred, as when an army meets with a strong castle or city, they sit down and there consider what course to take for

the besieging and gaining of it.

“Hast thou considered my servant Job.” The title which God give Job is very observable, **“My servant Job.”** A servant, you know, is one that is not at his own disposal, but at the call and beck of another. So the Centurion describes a servant: **“For I am a man under authority and I have servants, and I say to this man go and he goeth, and to another and he cometh”** (Matt. 8:9). Servants are at the word of another; they are not in their own power. Therefore, Aristotle calls servants, *living tools*, or *living instruments*, because they are at the will of another, to be used and employed at the discretion of the master. Here God calls Job his servant. And he calls him so, first, by way of distinction or difference; *my servant*, that is, mine not his own; many are their own servants; they serve themselves, as the Apostle says, **“They serve not the Lord Jesus, but their own bellies** (Rom. 11:16); they serve their own lusts, diverse lusts and pleasures; Job is not such a one; *he is my servant*.

Many are Satan’s servants; as if God should have said to Satan here: *Satan thou hast gone about the world, and thou hast found a great family of thine one; thou hast found many servants in all places, but “hast thou considered my servant?”* There is one I am sure that does thee no service, and by his good will, will do thee none; hast thou not found my servant?

Some are the servants of men; but Job is my servant; not a servant of men, to subject himself to their lusts, either for hope or fear. *He is not* (as the Apostle speaks) *the servant of men* (in that sense) to please men, with sinning against and provoking God.

Secondly, *My servant*, by way of special right and property. So Job and all godly persons are called God’s servants, as Paul is called *a chosen vessel*, that is, a chosen servant, to carry the name of God. 2. They are God’s servants by the right of purchase; *my servant* whom I have bought and purchased; so in I Cor. 6: **“You are bought with a price, be not the servants of men,”** that is, you are bought with a price to be my servants, therefore be not the servants of men in opposition to me, or to my disservice in anything. So Job was God’s servant

by way of purchase; *God buys every one of his servants with the blood of his son*.

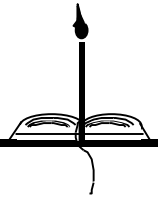
Thirdly, *My servant*, by way of covenant. Job was God’s covenant servant; God and he has (as it were) *sealed indentures*. Job entered into covenant with him that he should enjoy the privilege of a servant. Now that which is God’s by right of covenant, is his by special right.

Then again, we may further understand this, and all such like expressions: When God says, *my servant*, he does as it were glory in his servant. God speaks of him, as of his *treasure*, *my servant*, as a man does of that which he glories in. As the saints glory in God, when they use this expression, *my God* and *my Lord*, *my Master* and *my Christ*; this is a kind of glorying and triumphing in God. So this expression carries such a sense in it, **“Hast thou not considered my servant Job?”**, there is one that I have honor by, one that I rejoice and glory in, one that I can speak of with much more, than content, even with triumph, *my servant Job: There’s a man*.

It is man’s honor to be God’s servant, and God thinks himself honored by the service of man. It was once a curse, and it is a great curse still to be the *servant of servants*; but it is an honor, the *great honor* of the creature to be a servant of God. He that is a servant of Christ, is not only free, but noble. And Christ reckons that he has not only work done him, but honor done him by *his willing people*, and therefore he glories many such, *my servant*.

This article is taken from: Caryl, Joseph. *An Exposition with Practical Observations upon the Book of Job*. London: G. Miller, 1644. A PDF file of this book can be downloaded, free of charge, at <http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

New Testament Study: Matthew 27:11-26



Matthew 27:11-26 - Jesus Before Pilate

¹¹Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

¹²When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. ¹³Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" ¹⁴But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

¹⁵Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. ¹⁶At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" ¹⁸For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

¹⁹While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

²⁰But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

²¹"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor.

"Barabbas," they answered.

²²"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked.

They all answered, "Crucify him!"

²³"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

²⁴When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

²⁵All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!"

²⁶Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The narrative here continues from verses 1 and 2 of this chapter, which read: "Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor" (Matt. 27:1-3). "It was in the 'morning' that followed the dark night in Gethsemane, and opened the dread day of the crucifixion" [Thomas, 523]. So begins one of the few most significant days in human history.

As stated, the purpose of the chief priests in bringing Jesus to Pilate was "to have Jesus executed." The chief priests, in and of themselves, did not have the right to sentence a man to death, so they sought out Pilate with the purpose of convincing him to sentence Jesus to death. Thus, the action of bringing Jesus to Pilate was essentially an act of murder, for the chief priests knew that Jesus was innocent of any crime that deserved death.

So Jesus stood before Pilate, who was the local governor, representing the Roman government which controlled Jerusalem at the time. In the book of Luke, we learn that the chief priests told Pilate: "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king" (Luke 23:2). This short statement is full of misleading half-truths, and lies. Jesus did

“subvert” the chief priests, but called them out in matters of religion, specifically in regard to their religious hypocrisy. Jesus did not **“oppose payment of taxes to Caesar”**; on the contrary, Jesus said: **“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”** (Matt. 22:21). Jesus did claim to be **“the Messiah”**, but not a political Messiah against the Romans. Jesus did not seek to bring political salvation from the Romans, but rather spiritual salvation from our own sins..

Following these false charges, Pilate confronted Jesus: **“Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ ‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied”** (vs. 11). “In Roman trials the magistrate normally heard the charges first, questioned the defendant and listened to his defense, sometimes permitted several such exchanges, and then retired with his advisors to decide on a verdict, which was then promptly carried out” [Carson].

Matthew abbreviates the conversation between Jesus and Pilate concerning Jesus’ kingship. In the Gospel of John, we are given more details about this exchange between Jesus and Pilate: **“Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ ‘Is that your own idea,’ Jesus asked, ‘or did others talk to you about me?’ ‘Am I a Jew?’ Pilate replied. ‘Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?’ Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.’ ‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate. Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’ ‘What is truth?’ retorted Pilate”** (John 18:33-38). So Jesus made it clear to Pilate that He was no threat to Rome, saying, **“My kingdom is not of this world”** (John 18:36). Moreover, “clearly, one sight of Jesus was enough to

tell this experienced governor that this was no terrorist, no leader of a revolt aimed at overthrowing the Romans. Pilate would also have known that Jesus had no high position, no wealth, no soldiers, a preposterous position for anyone claiming to be a king” [Morris, 699].

The chief priests then brought more specific charges against Jesus to Pilate, probably the same **“false evidence”** that was used in front of the Sanhedrin (see Matt. 26:59): **“When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, ‘Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?’ But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor”** (vss. 12-14). Matthew does not even dignify the lies by enumerating the specific allegations of the chief priests. “The specific allegations did not matter; they were determined to have him executed, and to refute their accusations was irrelevant. If these charges were shown to be false, they would raise others. They were not concerned with justice but with an execution” [Morris, 700]. Jesus also does not dignify the false charges; instead, **“Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge.”** Peter later writes of this: **“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly”** (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus, as He did at Gethsemane, committed Himself to His Father’s will. In His silence, Jesus fulfilled prophecy found in the book of Isaiah: **“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth”** (Isaiah 53:7).

Pilate saw through the motives of the chief priests, and knew that Jesus was innocent of capital charges, and so, did not want to condemn Jesus. Then Pilate proposed a way to release Jesus that would, in a way, save face for the chief priests, in that it would not be a case of Roman authorities

over-ruling the desires of the chief priests: **“Now it was the governor’s custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, ‘Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?’ For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him”** (vss. 15-18). We learn in the Gospel of Luke that Barabbas was **“thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder”** (Luke 23:19). So Barabbas clearly deserved capital punishment. Pilate hoped the crowd would recognize this, and free Jesus.

At this point, the trial of Jesus was interrupted in an unusual way: **“While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: ‘Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him’”** (vs. 19). It is surprising, and sad, that the only testimony (in effect) on Jesus’ behalf during the trial was made, not by any of Jesus’ disciples, nor apostles, nor followers, but by Pilate’s wife. “When all Christ’s disciples were fled from Him, when none of His friends durst speak a word for Him, God raises up a woman, a stranger, a pagan, to give evidence of His innocency” [Burkitt, in Lange, 517]. “This was an honourable testimony to our Lord Jesus, witnessing for him that he was a just man, even then when he was persecuted as the worst of malefactors. When his friends were afraid to appear in defense of him, God made even those that were strangers and enemies to speak in his favour: when Peter denied him, Judas confessed him; when the chief priests pronounced him guilty of death, Pilate declared he found no fault with him; when the women that loved him stood afar off, Pilate’s wife that knew little of him, shewed a concern for him” [Henry, 240]. “It was necessary that by all means the righteousness of Christ should be borne witness unto, that in his condemnation, not for his own

sins, but for ours, our justification from sin might shine the more clearly; therefore, among other testimonies of Christ’s innocency, Pilate’s wife, extraordinarily moved, sent [a message to Pilate]” [Dickson, 330].

Pilate, knowing that Jesus was innocent, receives further confirmation of this through his wife. This message from Pilate’s wife can be seen as a message from God, to check Pilate from going down the path of sin and injustice, in using his power to condemn and kill Jesus. “Note, God has many ways of giving checks to sinners in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences, and our great duty to hearken to them” [Henry, 240].

While Pilate received and digested the message from his wife, the chief priests were busy: **“But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed”** (vs. 20). In stirring up the crowd to release Barabbas, the chief priests give proof of their utter wickedness by corrupting the crowd to join with them in their crime. “This deliberate preference of a bad man to a good one, of a justly condemned criminal to one whom even Pilate recognized as innocent, would have been enough to brand the conduct of the priests with infamy. But when to this we add that they preferred a murderer to the Lord of life, a rebel and a robber to a prophet, to their own Messiah, nay, to the incarnate Son of God himself, this perverseness seems almost incredible and altogether irreconcilable with rectitude of purpose and sincere conviction” [Alexander, in Broadus, 564].

Pilate returned to continue the proceedings: **“Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor. ‘Barabbas,’ they answered”** (vs. 21). “Barabbas is preferred to Jesus whenever the offer of salvation is rejected” [Scott, in Lange, 517]. “This mad choice is every day made, while men prefer the lusts of their flesh before the lives of their souls” [Trapp, 272].

Because of his release, in a situation where he fully deserved the punishment of death, Barabbas becomes symbolic of each and every one of us: Christ died in his place. “Jesus was falsely accused of sedition, and a man really guilty of sedition was released” [Broadus, 563]. “It may be that the two who were crucified with Jesus were co-rebels with Barabbas, for Matthew 27:38 calls them [a word that should be translated] ‘rebels,’ ‘guerrillas,’ or ‘insurrectionists’, and their crucifixion indicates they were judged guilty of more than robbery. The fact that three crosses were prepared strongly suggests that Pilate had already ordered that preparations be made for the execution of the three rebels. If so, Jesus the Messiah actually took the place of the rebel Barabbas because the people preferred the political rebel and nationalist hero to the Son of God” [Carson].

At this point, it appears that Pilate, though nominally in authority, has ceded all power to the mob: **“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked. They all answered, ‘Crucify him!’**” (vs. 22). “It was absurd for them to prescribe to the judge what sentence he should pass, but their malice and rage made them forget all rules of order and decency, and turned a court of justice into a riotous, routous, and seditious assembly” [Henry, 240].

Pilate’s question, **“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?”** is a question that every human being must ask himself. Shall I accept Jesus’ sacrifice, and proclaim Him Lord of my life? Or shall I mock Him, along with the raucous mob?

The raucous mob chose to **“Crucify him!”** This baffled Pilate: **“Why? What crime has he committed?”** (vs. 23). “It is much for the honour of the Lord Jesus, that though he suffered as an evil doer, yet neither his judge nor his prosecutors could find that he had done any evil. Had he done any evil against God? No, he always did those things that pleased God. Had he done any evil against the civil government? No, as he did himself, so he taught others to render to Caesar the things that were Caesar’s. Had he done any evil against the

public peace? No, he did not strive or cry, nor did his kingdom come with observation. Had he done any evil to particular persons? Whose ox had he taken, or whom had he defrauded? No, so far from that, he went about doing good. This repeated assertion of his unspotted innocence, plainly intimates that he died to satisfy for the sins of others” [Henry, 240].

Despite Jesus’ utter innocence, the crowd persists: **“Crucify him!”** All reason had left the crowd. Blood-lust had taken over and won the day. “Now was truth fallen in the street, and equity could not enter. Where one looked for judgment, behold oppression, the worst kind of oppression for righteousness; behold a cry, the worst that ever was, crucify, crucify the Lord of glory. Though they that cried thus, perhaps were not the same persons that the other day had cried ‘Hosanna’, yet see what a change was made upon the face of the populace in a little time: When he rode in triumph to Jerusalem, so general were the acclamations of praise, that one would have thought he had no enemies; but now when he was led in triumph to Pilate’s judgment-seat, so general were the outcries of enmity, that one would think he had no friends. Such revolutions are there in this changeable world, through which our way to heaven lies” [Henry, 240].

“When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood,’ he said. ‘It is your responsibility!’” (vs. 24). The onset of an **“uproar”** tipped the scales of justice, and brought the hearing to an end. “The Romans desired two things in the provinces: tribute and peace. A successful governor was one who kept everything quiet, and popular tumult was greatly disliked, as being troublesome and expensive, if not dangerous” [Broadus, 565].

So Pilate **“washed his hands”** of the whole thing, claiming to be **“innocent of this man’s blood.”** Yet then Pilate went on to hand Jesus **“over to be crucified”** (see vs. 26). Though Pilate blamed the crowd, he himself had the power to release Jesus. Pilate was far from innocent. “Had he steadily and res-

olutely adhered to the sacred laws of justice, as a judge ought to do, he had not been in any perplexity; the matter was plain, and past dispute, that a man in whom was found no fault, ought not to be crucified upon any pretence whatsoever, nor must an unjust thing be done to gratify any man, or company of men in the world” [Henry, 241].

And yet, Pilate **“washed his hands”**, believing that this made him **“innocent”**. However, the washing of hands in impotent water accomplishes nothing as far as innocence or guilt is concerned. Only the washing **“in the blood of the Lamb”** (see Rev. 7:14) will effect the innocence and clear conscience that Pilate sought. Only clothing ourselves with Christ as we accept His sacrifice on our behalf will impart to us blamelessness in the eyes of God, and allow us to bypass the punishment we so richly deserve. **“Too weak an element to wash off guilt; which is not purged but by the blood of Christ, or fire of hell”** [Trapp, 272].

Nevertheless, Pilate shouted to the rioting crowd: **“It is your responsibility! All the people answered, ‘His blood is on us and on our children!’”** (vs. 25). A generation later, in 70 AD, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the Jews were scattered throughout the world. During the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome, many Jews were scourged and crucified: **“Titus, during the siege, A. D. 70, caused many captured fugitives, sometimes five hundred a day, to be ‘scourged and tortured in every form, and then crucified in front of the ramparts. . . . And so great was their number that there was no space for the crosses, nor were there crosses for the bodies’ (Josephus, ‘War’, 2:14:9; 5:11:1)”** [Broadus, 565].

The trial thus came to an end: **“Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified”** (vs. 26). Matthew does not give here details about the **“flogging”**, but it was a brutal, horrid, and horrible punishment in itself. **“The whip was the dreaded flagellum, made by plaiting pieces of bone or lead into leather thongs. The victim was stripped and tied to a post. Severe flogging not only reduced the flesh to bloody pulp but could**

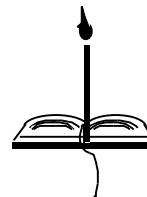
open up the body until the bones were visible and the entrails exposed” [Carson]. The flogging of the Messiah was foreseen; it was referred to and hinted at by various Old Testament scriptures: **“Plowmen have plowed my back and made their furrows long”** (Ps. 129:3); **“I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting”** (Isa. 50:6); **“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed”** (Isa. 53:5). The flogging of Jesus was not incidental; it was significant, for **“by His wounds we are healed.”** **“Christ was scourged when we had offended, that he might free us from the sting of conscience, and those scourges and scorpions of eternal torments; that he might make us a plaster of his own blessed blood, ‘for by his stripes we are healed’, by the bloody weals made upon his back we are delivered. We hold it a thing almost beyond belief, that the applying of medicines to the sword that wounded a man shall make the wounds heal in a man. But here is a mystery that only Christian religion can tell of, and of which there never was precedent in nature, that the scourging and wounding of one man should cure another”** [Trapp, 273].

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All of these books, except Carson, Keener, Morris, and Wilkins can be downloaded free of charge from:
<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



A Topical Study: Prayer

[Matthew Henry is greatly known for his magnificent commentary on the whole Bible. He also wrote a book proposing A Method for Prayer, in between writing volumes of that commentary. This series of articles is from that book.]

How to Begin Every Day with God, pt. 2, by Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

**My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord;
in the morning will I direct my Prayer unto thee,
and I will look up
(Psalm 5:3).**

This we have to do in every prayer, we must speak to God; we must write to him; we say we hear from a friend whom we receive a letter from; we must see to it that God hears from us daily. Why?:

1. He accepts and requires it. Though he has no need of us or our services, nor can be benefited by them, yet he has obliged us to offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise to him continually.

(1.) Thus he will keep up his authority over us, and keep us continually in mind of our subjection to him, which we are apt to forget. He requires that by prayer we solemnly pay our homage to him, and give honour to his name, that by this act and deed of our own, thus frequently repeated, we may strengthen the obligations we lie under to observe his statutes and keep his laws, and be more and more sensible of the weight of them. He is thy Lord, and worship thou him, that by frequent humble adorations of his perfections, thou mayest make a constant humble compliance with his will the more easy to thee. By doing obeisance we are learning obedience. (2.) Thus he will testify his love and compassion towards us. It would have been an abundant evidence of his

concern for us, and his goodness to us, if he had only said, let me hear from you as often as there is occasion; call upon me in the time of trouble or want, and that is enough but to show his complacency in us, as a father doth his affection to his child when he is sending him abroad, he gives us this charge, let me hear from you every day, by every post, though we have no particular business; which shows, that the prayer of the upright is his delight; it is music in his ears. Christ saith to his dove, **“Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely”** (Cant. 2:14). And it is to the spouse, the church, that Christ speaks in the close of that Song of Songs, **“O thou that dwellest in the garden,”** (in the original it is feminine), **“the companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it”** (Cant. 8:13). What a shame is this to us, that God is more willing to be prayed to, and more ready to hear prayer, than we are to pray.

2. We have something to say to God every day. Many are not sensible of this, and it is their sin and misery; they live without God in the world; they think they can live without him, are not sensible of their dependence upon him, and their obligations to him; and therefore, for their parts, they have nothing to say to him; he never hears from them, no more than the father did from his prodigal son when he was upon the ramble, from one week’s end to another. They ask scornfully, “What can the Almighty do for us?” And then no marvel if they ask next, “What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?” And the result is, they say to the Almighty, “Depart from us”; and so shall their doom be. But I hope better things of you, my brethren, and that you are not of those who cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God; you are all ready to own that there is a great deal that the Almighty can do for you, and that there is profit in praying to him, and therefore resolve to draw near to God, that he may draw nigh to you.

We have something to say to God daily:

(1.) As to a friend we love and have freedom with; such a

friend we cannot go by without calling on, and never lack something to say to, though we have no particular business with him; to such a friend we unbosom ourselves, we profess our love and esteem, and with pleasure communicate our thoughts. Abraham is called the friend of God, and this honour have all the saints. I have not called you servants (saith Christ), but friends. His secret is with the righteous. We are invited to acquaint ourselves with him, and to walk with him as one friend walks with another. The fellowship of believers is said to be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And have we nothing to say to him then ?

Is it not errand enough to the throne of his grace to admire his infinite perfections, which we can never fully comprehend, and yet never sufficiently contemplate, and take complacency in? To please ourselves in beholding the beauty of the Lord, and giving him the glory due to his name? Have we not a great deal to say to him in acknowledgment of his condescending grace and favour to us, in manifesting himself to us, and not to the world; and in profession of our affection and submission to him. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.

God hath something to say to us as a friend every day, by the written word in which we must hear his voice, by his providences, and by our own consciences; and he hearkens and hears whether we have anything to say to him by way of reply, and we are very unfriendly if we have not. When he saith to us, **“Seek ye my face”**, should not our hearts answer as to one we love, **“Thy face, Lord, will we seek”**? When he saith to us. **“Return, ye backsliding children”**; should not we readily reply, **“Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God”**? If he speak to us by way of conviction and reproof, ought not we to return an answer by way of confession and submission? If he speak to us by way of comfort, ought we not to reply in praise? If you love God, you can be at no loss for something to say to him, something for your hearts to pour out before him, which his grace has already put there.

(2.) As to a master we serve and have business with: Think how numerous and important the concerns are that lie between us and God, and you will readily acknowledge that you have a great deal to say to him. We have a constant dependence upon him; all our expectation is from him; we have constant dealings with him; he is the God with whom we have to do (see Heb. 4:13).

Do we not know that our happiness is bound up in his favour? It is life, the life of our souls; it is better than life, than the life of our bodies. And have we not business with God, to seek his favour, to entreat it with our whole hearts, to beg as for our lives that he would lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and to plead Christ's righteousness, as that only through which we can hope to obtain God's loving kindness.

Do we not know that we have offended God, that by sin we have made ourselves obnoxious to his wrath and curse, and that we are daily contracting guilt? And have we not then business enough with him to confess our faults and folly, to ask for pardon in the blood of Christ, and in him, who is our peace, to make our peace with God, and renew our covenant with him in his own strength, to go and sin no more?

Do we not know that we have daily work to do for God, and our own souls, the work of the day that is to be done in its day? And have we not then business with God, to beg of him to show us what he would have us to do, direct us in it, and strengthen us for it? To seek to him for assistance and acceptance, that he will work in us both to will and to do that which is good, and then countenance and own his own work? Such business as this the servant has with his master.

Do we not know that we are continually in danger? Our lives, our bodies, and our comforts are so; we are continually surrounded with diseases and deaths, whose arrows fly at midnight and at noon-day. And have we not then business with God, going out and coming in, lying down and rising up, to put ourselves under the protection of his providence,

to be the charge of his holy angels? Our souls much more are so, and their lives and comforts; it is those our adversary the devil, a strong and subtle adversary, wars against, and seeks to devour: and have we not then business with God, to put ourselves under the protection of his grace, and clothe ourselves with his armour, that we may be able to stand against the wiles and violence of Satan, so as we may neither be surprised into sin by a sudden temptation, nor overpowered by a strong one?

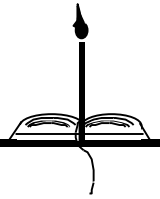
Do we not know that we are dying daily, that death is working in us, and hastening towards us, and that death fetches us to judgment, and judgment fixeth us in our everlasting state? And have we not then something to say to God in preparation for what is before us? Shall we not say, **“Lord, make us to know our end! Lord, teach us to number our days!”** Have we not business with God, to judge ourselves, that we may not be judged, and to see that our matters be right and good?

Do we not know that we are members of that body whereof Christ is the head, and are we not concerned to approve ourselves living members? Have we not then business with God upon the public account, to make intercession for his church? Have we nothing to say for Zion? Nothing in behalf of Jerusalem's ruined walls? Nothing for the peace and welfare of the land of our nativity? Are we not of the family, or but babes in it, that we concern not ourselves in the concerns of it?

Have we no relations, no friends that are dear to us, whose joys and griefs we share in? And have we nothing to say to God for them? No complaints to make, no requests to make known? Are none of them sick or in distress? None of them tempted or disconsolate? And have we not errands to the throne of grace, to beg relief and succour for them?

Now lay all this together, and then consider whether you have not something to say to God every day; and particularly in days of trouble, when it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement; and when, if you have any sense of things, you will say unto God, “Do not condemn me.”

A Study in Wisdom: Psalm 74



Psalm 74:1-3 - A Lament

A maskil of Asaph.

- ¹ **O God, why have you rejected us forever?
Why does your anger smolder
against the sheep of your pasture?**
- ² **Remember the nation you purchased long ago,
the people of your inheritance,
whom you redeemed –
Mount Zion, where you dwelt.**
- ³ **Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins,
all this destruction the enemy
has brought on the sanctuary.**

This psalm is a prayer to God following the destruction and defiling of His “sanctuary” (vs. 3). The psalm seems to speak of the destruction of Temple in Jerusalem, and yet no single episode of Temple destruction fits all of the elements of the Psalm. Plumer summarizes this problem: “To what scene of desolation does the Psalm refer? Grotius applies it to the destruction of Shiloh, the city once so famous as the place of the tabernacle, but, being despoiled of the ark by the Philistines, it fell into decay and became a proverb for desolation (see Josh. 18:1-10; Ps. 78:60; Jer. 7:12-14). But the tabernacle was not burned at Shiloh, though it had not in it the ark (see 2 Chron. 1:3). Moreover this Psalm expressly refers to Mount Zion (vss. 3, 7). A few have applied the Psalm to the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib. But that

haughty invader was not permitted to enter Jerusalem, nor shoot an arrow into it, nor cast a bank against it (see 2 Kings 19:32), much less to waste it and destroy the sanctuary. Calvin, Calmet, Pool, Henry and Tholuck suppose that the Psalm had its fulfilment in the destruction of the holy city by the Chaldeans, about five hundred and eighty-eight years before Christ. The chief objection to this is a clause in v. 9: ‘There is no more any prophet.’ Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel survived this desolation; but neither of them remained in Jerusalem; and for a time they all seem to have been silent... Others extend the scope of the prophecy so as to include the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in the times of the Maccabees, one hundred and sixty-seven years before Christ, and of course during the time of the second temple. Rosenmuller applies it to this time. But although Antiochus did many atrocious things, yet he did none of the things mentioned in vss. 6-7. He defiled the temple, but he did not destroy it... So that the reference to this dreadful persecutor, if real, cannot be exclusive. Others, following the Syriac title [which sees the psalm as ‘a prediction of the siege of the city of the Jews, forty years after the ascension’], refer it to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Clarke: ‘It is not so clear whether the desolations here refer to the days of Nebuchadnezzar, or to the desolation that took place under the Romans about the seventieth year of the Christian era.’ A full and candid examination of the whole subject would perhaps bring us to think that the Psalmist here groups together most of the appalling incidents attending the desolation of the temple and holy city from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the days of Titus. One event followed another till the work was complete, and the prophecy fulfilled. Is there anything wild or unreasonable in this suggestion?” [Plumer, 720].

I tend to agree with these last statements of Plumer: I believe that the destruction in the psalm is described prophetically, and is multiply fulfilled by various episodes in which the Temple in Jerusalem was defiled, and ultimately, destroyed.

These episodes include the original destruction by Nebuchadnezzar before the Babylonian captivity (586 BC), the destruction and defiling of the Temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes during the Maccabean revolt (168 BC), and the final destruction of the Temple by the Romans (70 AD). God Himself, when speaking to Solomon just after the construction of the Temple, predicted the possibility that it would be destroyed: **“But if you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. This temple will become a heap of rubble. All who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, ‘Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this temple?’ People will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the LORD their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them—that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them’”** (I Kings 9:6-9). This passage in I Kings seems to directly parallel the events described in Psalm 74. The Psalmist, in this psalm, is asking the very question that the LORD predicts will be asked: **“Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this temple?”** (I Kings 9:8).

The inscription of this psalm states that the psalm is **“A maskil of Asaph.”** Asaph was a contemporary of David, who was appointed by him to lead in the worship of God (see I Chron. 16:5-11). If this Asaph was the author, then the psalm must be a prophetic psalm, because the Temple in Jerusalem was not even built at the time of David (Solomon led its construction later). Asaph, it seems, did have the gift of prophecy, for he **“prophesied under the king’s supervision”** (see I Chron. 25:2).

Some commentators believe that the psalm was penned by one of the so-called “sons of Asaph”. The term “sons of Asaph” seems to have been a general term for Levites who were responsible for the worship of God (see Ezra 3:10). If one of the “sons of Asaph” wrote the psalm, this would push back the date of composition of the psalm to a later time. Nevertheless, the psalm is prophetic, in my opinion, because it speaks of events future to the composition of any of the writings of the Old Testament.

The inscription to the psalm states that it is **“A maskil.”** The exact definition of this word is unknown, but the derivation of the word seems to indicate that the psalm is meant for instruction [*Vine’s*]. “This psalm is entitled *Maschil*, a psalm to give instruction, for it was penned in a day of affliction, which is intended for instruction; and this instruction, in general, it gives us: That, when we are, upon any account, in distress, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and we shall not find it in vain to do so” [Henry]. “Upon whatever occasion this Psalm might have been originally composed, it is plainly intended for the use of the church in time of persecution” [Horne, 260]. “In singing it, we must be affected with the former desolations of the church, for we are members of the same body, and may apply it to any present distresses or desolations of any part of the Christian church” [Henry].

The Psalmist begins: **“O God, why have you rejected us forever?”** (vs. 1). Right away, with this verse, we have an indication that this is a prophetic psalm, for at no time in which authors of the Old Testament were writing, was Israel rejected **“forever”**. This verse speaks of a later time, when the work of God was to be absent from the people of Israel for hundreds, even thousands, of years (thus, seemingly **“forever”**). During the Old Testament times, there were ever and always prophets, and the work of God continued on behalf of the people of Israel. Even during the exile of the people of Israel in Babylon, there were prophets, such as Daniel and Ezekiel. Ezra

and Nehemiah returned to Israel to rebuild the Temple, so one could not say that at that time the people of Israel were rejected **“forever”**.

One can even look ahead to after the last book of the Old Testament was written (approx. 420 BC), and still see the work of God on behalf of the people of Israel. The Second Temple remained in service and in use on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Even after the desecration of this Second Temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BC, one could not say that Israel was rejected **“forever”**, for after the Maccabean revolt, the Temple was restored and rededicated. And then, as if to prepare for the coming of the true Messiah, Jesus Christ, Herod the Great (so-called) expanded the Temple grounds and brought the construction of the Temple and the Temple grounds up to near its former Solomon-ic glory. This was the Temple which was still in operation until the time of Christ.

Christ Himself predicted the destruction of this Second Temple: **“Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ‘Do you see all these things?’ he asked. ‘Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down’”** (Matt. 24:1-2). This was fulfilled when the Romans utterly destroyed the Temple in 70 A.D. After this, the people of Israel were dispersed throughout the world (the so-called, “Jewish Diaspora”). Since 705 AD, an Islamic mosque has occupied the Temple Mount, along with other Islamic constructions. And so, for nearly 2000 years, the Temple of the people of Israel has been destroyed, and the people of Israel have been, for the most part, dispersed throughout the whole world. It is of this time, I believe, that the Psalmist prophetically asks: **“O God, why have you rejected us forever?”** (vs. 1). Seen in this way, the psalm becomes a lament to be spoken by the children of Israel during the times of the Jewish Diaspora, even during the present times.

The Psalmist continues: **“Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture?”** (vs. 1). The **“rejection”** of the children of Israel by God, and the **“smoldering anger”** of God against them, was ultimately brought on by the rejection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, by the children of Israel. They themselves, led by the chief priests and teachers of the law, the leaders of the Jews at the time of Christ, accepted (in effect) any punishment that they would incur by killing their Messiah, saying to Pilate: **“His blood is on us and on our children!”** (Matt. 27:25). Within a generation of this utterance (some forty years later), the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the children of Israel forcibly scattered to the ends of the earth, not to return to their promised land until some 1900 years after that.

The Psalmist appeals to God’s demonstrated love for His people, by referring to them as **“the sheep of your pasture.”** **“The name contains in itself an appeal to the compassion and tender care of the shepherd. Can the shepherd slay his sheep?”** [Perowne, 342].

The Psalmist pleads for the returned favor of God: **“Remember the nation you purchased long ago, the people of your inheritance, whom you redeemed—Mount Zion, where you dwelt”** (vs. 2). In his misery, the Psalmist appeals to God to remember His past blessing upon the children of Israel. **“In all judgements inflicted by whatsoever instruments, the Lord’s people must look first to God, and albeit wrath, and fear of utter wrath do stare them in the face, as hardly it can be otherwise when God puts hand in His own Temple, and takes away all the tokens of His presence from among a people, and seems to cast them utterly oft; yet must they make their address to God, how angry soever He seem to be”** [Dickson, 164]. It is a good thing in prayer to remind (so to speak) God of His past mercies toward us, because in doing so, we are reminding ourselves of God’s past work in our lives. **“Let all God’s people ever plead His relation to them, and their relation to Him”** [Plumer, 727].

The Psalmist, in speaking of God's past blessings on the children of Israel, calls Israel **"the nation [God] purchased"** and **"redeemed"** (vs. 2). This is somewhat ironic for, as we pointed out, the rejection by the people of the ultimate Redeemer, Jesus Christ, led to the destruction of the Temple. To regain God's blessing, the children of Israel need to seek again redemption through Jesus Christ, who paid the price for their sins. The Apostle Paul tells us that this will occur, the children of Israel will see Jesus as their Messiah: **"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: 'The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins'"** (Rom. 11:25-27).

The Psalmist next turns the attention of God to the destruction upon the house of God, the Temple in Jerusalem, by His enemies: **"Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins, all this destruction the enemy has brought on the sanctuary"** (vs. 3). Note the finality of the destruction: They are **"everlasting ruins."** This again speaks to the prophetic nature of this psalm. When the Temple was destroyed before the Babylonian captivity, Ezra and Nehemiah were back in Jerusalem a mere 70 years later to begin to rebuild the Temple. So, the ruins were by no means **"everlasting"** at that time. The Temple mount truly became **"everlasting ruins"** only after the destruction by the Romans in 70 AD. After that destruction, the Temple still to this day has not been rebuilt; only the remnants of retaining walls remain of those **"everlasting ruins."**

Psalm 74:4-11 - The Destruction

- ⁴Your foes roared in the place where you met with us; they set up their standards as signs.**
- ⁵They behaved like men wielding axes to cut through a thicket of trees.**
- ⁶They smashed all the carved paneling with their axes and hatchets.**
- ⁷They burned your sanctuary to the ground; they defiled the dwelling place of your Name.**
- ⁸They said in their hearts,
"We will crush them completely!"
They burned every place
where God was worshiped in the land.**
- ⁹We are given no signs from God;
no prophets are left,
and none of us knows how long this will be.**
- ¹⁰How long will the enemy mock you, God?
Will the foe revile your name forever?**
- ¹¹Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?
Take it from the folds of your garment
and destroy them!**

In the next verses, the Psalmist speaks specifically of the desecration and destruction of the Temple. He begins: **"Your foes roared in the place where you met with us; they set up their standards as signs"** (vs. 4). The enemies of God declared victory over God by placing their own victory banners in the Temple.

They destroyed the magnificent artwork and woodwork made by the children of Israel to honor God: **"They behaved like men wielding axes to cut through a thicket of trees. They smashed all the carved paneling with their axes and hatchets"** (vss. 5-6). The woodwork for the original Solomonic Temple is described in the book of I Kings:

“For the inner sanctuary he made a pair of cherubim out of olive wood, each ten cubits high. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing five cubits—ten cubits from wing tip to wing tip. The second cherub also measured ten cubits, for the two cherubim were identical in size and shape. The height of each cherub was ten cubits. He placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the temple, with their wings spread out. The wing of one cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the other touched the other wall, and their wings touched each other in the middle of the room. He overlaid the cherubim with gold. On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers. He also covered the floors of both the inner and outer rooms of the temple with gold” (I Kings 6:23-30). It’s a great loss for mankind to lose such beautiful tributes to the True and Living God.

The Temple buildings were defiled and burned: **“They burned your sanctuary to the ground; they defiled the dwelling place of your Name”** (vs. 7). The original burning of the Temple in 586 BC by Nebuchadnezzar is described in II Kings: **“He set fire to the temple of the Lord, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down”** (II Kings 25:9). The Temple was later defiled by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, bringing about the Maccabean revolt (168 BC). The Jewish historian Josephus describes this: “[Antiochus] compelled the Jews to dissolve the laws of their country, and to keep their infants uncircumcised, and to sacrifice swine’s flesh upon the altar” [Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 1:1:2]. Josephus (37 AD – c. 100 AD), who personally witnessed the Siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, also wrote of the burning and defiling of the Temple when the Romans destroyed it: “As the legions charged in, neither persuasion nor threat could check their impetuosity: passion alone was in command. Crowded together around the entrances many were

trampled by their friends, many fell among the still hot and smoking ruins of the colonnades and died as miserably as the defeated. As they neared the Sanctuary they pretended not even to hear Caesar’s commands and urged the men in front to throw in more firebrands. The partisans were no longer in a position to help; everywhere was slaughter and flight. Most of the victims were peaceful citizens, weak and unarmed, butchered wherever they were caught. Round the Altar the heaps of corpses grew higher and higher, while down the Sanctuary steps poured a river of blood and the bodies of those killed at the top slithered to the bottom” [Josephus, cited in *Wikipedia*, on the Siege of Jerusalem].

The burning of the Temple was not enough. The entire destruction of the children of Israel was sought. The Psalmist continues: **“They said in their hearts, ‘We will crush them completely!’ They burned every place where God was worshiped in the land”** (vs. 8). This reflects the utter destruction that the Roman Titus wished to inflict on the children of Israel in 70 AD: “It is important to note that Titus was bent on ending Judaism as a religion. He would slaughter their animals, kill their men, rape their women, enslave their children, and kill their God. When he finally did breach the walls, his soldiers set upon everyone - man, woman, child, the rich, the poor, those who stayed loyal to Rome, and those who did not, the aristocrats, the priests, the old, the sick. It made no difference. They burned everything. The whole city went up in flames” [*Wikipedia*, on Titus].

The Psalmist next speaks of the silence of God following the destruction of the Temple: **“We are given no signs from God; no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be”** (vs. 9). During the 70 years of Babylonian exile, when the Temple lay destroyed, there were prophets at work (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi, Ezra and Nehemiah). So again, as in other places in this psalm, this verse fits best the time after the Temple was destroyed by the Romans, even the time in which we live today. The last **“prophet”** sent by God to the children of Israel was John the

Baptist; the last **“sign from God”** for the children of Israel was the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the **“sign of Jonah”**, for **“as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man [was] three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”** (Matt. 12:40).

The Psalmist seeks vengeance on the enemies of God: **“How long will the enemy mock you, God? Will the foe revile your name forever? Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!”** (vss. 10-11). It is right to be upset at those who **“mock”** God, and **“revile His name”**, but in the Christian era, the Kingdom of God is expanded through the power of Christ’s love and God’s grace, not by the power of a conquering army. We are to **“overcome evil with good”** (Rom. 12:21).

Psalm 74:12-17 - God’s Past Work

**¹²But God is my King from long ago;
he brings salvation on the earth.**

**¹³It was you who split open the sea by your power;
you broke the heads of the monster in the waters.**

**¹⁴It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan
and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert.**

**¹⁵It was you who opened up springs and streams;
you dried up the ever-flowing rivers.**

**¹⁶The day is yours, and yours also the night;
you established the sun and moon.**

**¹⁷It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth;
you made both summer and winter.**

The Psalmist next remembers God’s work in the past on behalf of His people: **“But God is my King from long ago; he brings salvation on the earth”** (vs. 12). The

Psalmist speaks of how God brought **“salvation”** for the children of Israel through great and powerful works: **“It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters. It has you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert. It was you who opened up springs and streams; you dried up the ever-flowing rivers”** (vss. 13-15). The children of Israel always and ever sought **“salvation”** by the great and powerful works of God, but in the times after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans—even now when the children of Israel wander the earth looking for **“signs from God”** and **“prophets”** (see vs. 9)—their **“salvation”** is very near them, not in the form of great powerful works sent down from heaven, but in the simple turn of the heart, and whisper from the mouth. Paul explains: **“But the righteousness that is by faith says: ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’”** (that is, to bring Christ down) **‘or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’”** (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)—in other words, don’t look for great and heroic acts, such as ascending to heaven or descending into the deep, to bring about salvation. Paul continues: **“But what does it say? ‘The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,’ that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”** (Romans 10:6-10). This is the **“salvation”** sought by the Psalmist and by the children of Israel: to believe in and accept the work of **“salvation”** of their God-sent Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The Psalmist goes on to speak of God as creator and sustainer of all life on earth: **“The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon. It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter”** (vss. 16-17). “From the

wonders wrought by God on behalf of His people in their history, the Poet rises to the wider view of His ever-continued, ever displayed power and majesty in the world of nature" [Perowne, 347]. "From the miraculous interpositions of God, in behalf of his people, the church passes to those ordinary and standing evidences of his goodness towards us, the sweet vicissitudes of light and darkness, and the grateful succession of times and seasons; by which man is taught, in the most sorrowful night, to look for a joyful morning; and, during the severest winter, to expect a reviving spring. Thus is the revolving year our constant instructor and monitor; incessantly inculcating the duties of faith and hope, as well as those of adoration, gratitude, and praise" [Horne, 264].

Psalm 74:18-23 - An Appeal to God

- ¹⁸Remember how the enemy has mocked you, Lord,
how foolish people have reviled your name.**
- ¹⁹Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts;
do not forget the lives
of your afflicted people forever.**
- ²⁰Have regard for your covenant,
because haunts of violence
fill the dark places of the land.**
- ²¹Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace;
may the poor and needy praise your name.**
- ²²Rise up, O God, and defend your cause;
remember how fools mock you all day long.**
- ²³Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries,
the uproar of your enemies,
which rises continually.**

The Psalmist ends with a plea for God's mighty work to again be performed on behalf of His people: **"Remember**

how the enemy has mocked you, Lord, how foolish people have reviled your name. Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts; do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever. Have regard for your covenant, because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land" (vss. 18-20). The word translated **"Remember"** is better translated **"Keep in mind"** [UBS], for God, of course, does not forget. The Psalmist appeals to God's **"covenant"** with the children of Israel. "The enemies of God and of His Church may indeed destroy her outward sanctuaries, abolish her sacred seasons, forbid the assembling of the faithful, prevent and interrupt the service of God; but they cannot annul the covenant which God has ordained, nor prevent the outward restoration of the Church, when the day of her trial is over" [*Lange's*, 423].

So it is with the children of Israel. The **"covenant"** of God has by no means been annulled, for **"all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us"** (II Cor. 1:20, KJV). The Apostle Paul enlightens us on God's plan with respect to the children of Israel. First, Paul answers a question many have as to whether the children of Israel are still God's chosen people: **"I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew"** (Rom. 11:1-2). Next, Paul answers whether the rejection of Christ by the children of Israel has caused them to **"fall beyond recovery"**: **"Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!"** (Rom. 11:11-12). Finally, Paul speaks to the ultimate destiny for the children of Israel, His covenant people: **"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so**

that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way *all Israel will be saved...* As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, *for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.* Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all" (Romans 11:25-26, 28-32; italics mine). Paul is awed at greatness of God's wisdom, as demonstrated in the perfection of His plan, and bursts out into his famous doxology, celebrating these things:

Oh, the depth of the riches
of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!
"Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?"
"Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?"
For from him and through him
and for him are all things.
To him be the glory forever!
Amen.

(Romans 11:33-36)

We have applied this psalm (for the most part) as a psalm that should be sung by the children of Israel after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, a psalm that can be sung by the children of Israel even today. However, the children of God in the Kingdom of Christ can also find some application to their lives in this psalm by remembering

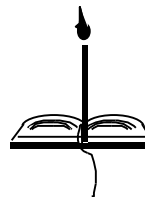
that our bodies are today's temples of the Holy Spirit, as Paul taught: **"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies"** (I Cor. 6:19-20). And just as the enemies of God ravaged the Temple in Jerusalem, so also, at times, the enemy devastates and desecrates the temple of our bodies. Our temples are laid waste by the ravages of sin and unbelief. "The desolation of the spiritual temple is worse still, and what most concerns us all. And the wasters of that are not wicked men who assail us from without, but spiritual foes whom we have sheltered within. It is unbelief which lays waste the spiritual temple. Worse than fire, or axe, or sword, it makes havoc of the soul. And wickedness following hard on its footsteps completes the work which it has begun." [*Pulpit Comm.*, 86-87]. At these times, when your temple of your body is ravaged, call on God for restoration, as the Psalmist did. And remember, God will restore and rebuild your temple, for **"God's gifts and His call are irrevocable"** (Rom. 11:28).

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All of these books, except for *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, can be downloaded free of charge from:
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A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist

A Meditation Upon Mixtures, by William Spurstowe (1666)

The wise God has so tempered the whole estate of Man in this life, as that it consists altogether of *mixtures*. There is no sweet without sour, nor sour without sweetness. All simples, in any kind, would prove dangerous, and be as uncorrected drugs, which administered unto the patient would not cure him, but destroy him. Constant sorrow without any joy would *swallow him up*; and simple joy without any grief would *puff us up*. Both extremes would agree alike in our ruin: he being in as dangerous a case who is swollen in pride, as he who is overwhelmed with sorrow. This *mixture* then, though it seem *penal* and prejudicial to our comfort, is yet *medicinal*, and is by God, as a wise physician, ordered as a diet most suitable to our condition; and if we did but look into the grounds of it, we shall find cause to acknowledge God's wise providence, and to frame our hearts to a submission of his will, without murmuring at what he does.

For have we not two natures in us: the *spirit* and the *flesh*; the *new* and the *old* man? Have we not *twins* in our womb, our counter-lustings, and our counter-willings? Are we not as plants that are seated between the two different soils of *Earth* and *Heaven*? Is there not then a necessity of a mixed diet, that is made up of two contraries? The physician is not less loyal to his prince if he give to him an unpleasing *vomit*, and to a poor man a cheering *cordial*, because his applications are not according to the dignity of the person, but to the quality of the disease: neither is God the less kind when he puts into our hand the bitter cup of affliction to drink of, than when he makes us to taste of the flagons of his sweetest wine.

Paul, his *thorn in the flesh*, whatever the meaning of it be, was useful to keep down that tumor of pride, which the abundance of revelations might have exposed him to; and so joined together they were like the *rod* and the *honey* which enlightened Jonathan's eyes: when he had tasted the sweetness of the one, God would have him feel the smart of the other. Likewise, at the same time also when God blessed Jacob, he crippled him, that he might not think above what was meet of his own strength, or ascribe his prevailing to the vehemency of his wrestling, rather than to God's gracious condescension.

Yea, who is it that has not experienced such *mixtures* to be the constant methods which he uses towards his dearest children? What are the lives of the best Christians but as a rainbow, which consists half of the moisture of a cloud, and half of the light and beams of the sun? **"Weeping"** (says David), **"may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"** (Ps. 30:5). And what other thing does the Apostle speak of himself, when he gives the Corinthians an account of his condition? **"As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, but yet possessing all things"** (II Cor. 6:9-10).

Blessed then is he who does without repining yield himself to the dispose of divine providence, rather than accuse it, and looks not so much to what at present is grateful to the sense, as to what for the future will be profitable to the whole. For in these *mixtures*, great advantages do lie hid, though not shine forth. Hereby, we are put upon the exercise of all those graces which are accommodated to our imperfect state here below, whose acts shall not be completed in Heaven, but shall all cease, as being not capacitated for a fruition: and yet are of great use while we are on this side of Heaven.

How necessary is *patience* to bear up the soul under trials, that it fret not against God who inflicts them? How greatly does *hope* temper any present sour by its expectation of some happy change that may and will follow, and so works joy in the midst of sadness? How even to wonder does faith mani-

fest its power in all distresses, when it apprehends that there are no degrees of extremity unrelieveable by the arm of God, or inconsistent with his compassions and friendship? Again, such *mixtures* serve to work in us a greater hatred of sin, and an earnest longing after glory; in which, our life, light, joys, are all pure, and everlasting; in which our life will be without any seed of death, our light without any shadow of darkness, and our joys endless *Hallelujahs*, without the interruption of one sigh.

Therefore, are we burdened in our earthly tabernacle, that we should the more groan to be clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven. Therefore yet have we the remainders of sin, by which we are unlike God; and the first-fruits only of the spirit, by which we resemble him; that we might long and wait for the *adoption* and *redemption*, wherein whatever is blended and imperfect shall be done away; when not to sin, which is here only our *duty*, shall be the top branch of our reward and blessedness.

O holy Lord, I complain not of my present lot, for though it be not free from mixture, yet it is greatly differing from what others find and feel, whose lines are not fallen in so fair a place: But still I say, when shall I dwell in that blessed country where sorrows die, and joys cannot? Into which enemy never entered, and from which a friend never parted? When shall I possess that inheritance which is a *kingdom* for its greatness, and a *city* for its beauty, where there is society without envy, and rich communications of good without the least diminution.

This article is taken from: Spurstowe, William. *The Spiritual Chymist: or, Six Decads of Divine Meditations on Several Subjects*. London: Philip Chetwind, 1666. A PDF file of this book can be downloaded, free of charge, at <http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

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**The Divine Authority
of the Bible**

"So, then, the efficacy and virtue of the Scripture to produce love for God and our enemies, to purify the heart, to pacify the conscience, to rectify both the whole constitution and conversation of a man, to take him off from the delights of the world and flesh, to make him glory in afflictions, sing in the flames, triumph over death; all these and more do necessarily conclude the Divine authority of the Scriptures."

— *John Trapp (1601-1669)*

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