

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

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Old Testament Study: Exodus 24



The Blood of the Covenant, by C. H. Mackintosh (1820-1896)

¹ And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. ² And Moses alone shall come near the Lord: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.

³ And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do. ⁴ And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. ⁶ And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. ⁸ And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.

⁹ Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: ¹⁰ And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. ¹¹ And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

¹² And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into

the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them. ¹³ And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God. ¹⁴ And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them. ¹⁵ And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. ¹⁶ And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. ¹⁸ And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights (KJV).

This chapter opens with an expression remarkably characteristic of the entire Mosaic economy. **“And he said unto Moses, ‘Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off... they shall not come nigh, neither shall the people go up with him”** (vss. 1, 2). We may search from end to end of the legal ritual, and not find those two precious words, **“draw nigh.”** Ah! no; such words could never be heard from the top of Sinai, nor from amid the shadows of the law. They could only be uttered at heaven’s side of the empty tomb of Jesus, where the blood of the cross has opened a perfectly cloudless prospect to the vision of faith. The words, **“afar off,”** are as characteristic of the law, as **“draw nigh”** are of the gospel. Under the law, the work was never done which could entitle a sinner to draw nigh. Man had not fulfilled his promised obedience; and the **“blood of calves and goats”** could not atone for his failure, or give his guilty conscience peace. Hence, therefore, he had to stand **“afar off.”** Man’s vows were broken and his sin unpurged; how, then, could he draw nigh? The blood of ten thousand bullocks could not wipe away one stain from the conscience, or give the peaceful sense of nearness to a reconciled God.

However, the *first covenant* is here dedicated with blood. An altar is erected at the foot of the hill, with **“twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel”** (vs. 4). **“And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar... And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you, concerning all these words”** (vs. 5, 8). Although, as the apostle teaches us, it was **“impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin”** (Heb. 10:4), yet did it **“sanctify to the purifying of the flesh”** (Heb. 9:13), and, as **“a shadow of good things to come”** (Heb. 10:1), it availed to maintain the people in relationship with Jehovah.

“Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God and did eat and drink” (vss. 9-10). This was the manifestation of **“the God of Israel,”** in light and purity, majesty and holiness. It was not the unfolding of the affections of a Father’s bosom or the sweet accents of a Father’s voice, breathing peace and inspiring confidence into the heart. No; the **“paved work of a sapphire stone”** told out that unapproachable purity and light which could only tell a sinner to keep off. Still, **“they saw God and did eat and drink.”** Touching proof of divine forbearance and mercy, as also of the power of the blood!

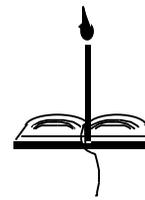
Looking at this entire scene as a mere illustration, there is much to interest the heart. There is the defiled camp *below* and the sapphire pavement *above*; but the altar, at the foot of the hill, tells us of that way by which the sinner can make his escape from the defilement of his own condition, and mount up to the presence of God, there to feast and worship in perfect peace. The blood which flowed around the altar furnished

man's only title to stand in the presence of that glory which "was like a devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel" (vs. 17).

"And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights" (vs. 18). This was truly a high and holy position for Moses. He was called away from earth and earthly things. Abstracted from natural influences, he is shut in with God, to hear from His mouth the deep mysteries of the Person and work of Christ; for such, in point of fact, we have unfolded in the tabernacle and all its significant furniture—"the patterns of things in the heavens" (Heb. 9:23). The Blessed One knew full well what was about to be the end of man's covenant of works; but He unfolds to Moses, in types and shadows, His own precious thoughts of love and counsels of grace, manifested in, and secured by, Christ.

Blessed, for evermore, be the grace which has not left us under a covenant of works. Blessed be He who has "hushed the law's loud thunders and quenched mount Sinai's flame" by "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and given us a peace which no power of earth or hell can shake. **"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen"** (Rev. 1:5-6).

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 4)

[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 4) – "My Servant Job", 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)

"My servant Job" (vs. 8): There is somewhat also to be considered in that phrase. When God speaks of his people by name, it notes two things in Scripture:

First, A special care that God has over them.

Second, A special love that God has to them.

So, when Jesus says, **"He calleth his own sheep by name"** (John 10:3); this denotes a special care Christ has for his sheep, and a special love that he bears to them. So in Isaiah 49:1: **"The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name"**, it notes the special care, and the special love that God had of and bore to Christ. See it eminently in that place, in Ex. 33:12, where Moses speaks thus to God, **"Yet thou hast said I know thee by name."** Now, what it is to know by name, is by way of exposition added in the end of the verse: **"And thou hast also found grace in my sight."** So that to be known by name, is in a special manner to find grace in the

sight of God. When it is said here, **“My servant Job,”** it shows that God did take an extraordinary care of, and did in an extraordinary manner, love Job above all that were upon the earth.

There is a great deal of difference between these two expressions; to know *the name of a man*, and to know *a man by name*. It is a truth, that God knows all your names, and the names of all the men in the world, but he does not know all *by name*. Therefore the Scripture assures us, that God has the names of none written, but the names of his own, as Moses said in the former chapter, **“If thou wilt not forgive the sin of this people, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy books which thou has written”** (Ex. 32:32). You know me by name; my name is written in your book. So also, in Luke 10, Christ bade his disciples that they should not *rejoice much that they had the spirits subject unto them, but in this they should rejoice, that their names were written in heaven* (Luke 10:20).

Note from hence: *That God takes care of his elect children and servants in a special manner above all other men in the world*. The names of princes or emperors or potentates, if they belong not to God, are not vouchsafed a place in his book, but the names of the meanest of his saints, are recorded forever, and shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

“Hast thou not considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth...” (vs. 8): We read before at the end of the 3rd verse, that Job in reference to his riches was **“the greatest of all the men of the East.”** Now, he goes beyond that, in reference to this holiness, he is the *greatest upon the earth*, there in **“none like him in the earth.”**

This we may understand first as a cause or reason why Job fell under the special consideration or observation of Satan: *Hast thou not considered my servant Job, because* (so some render that particle) *or in as much, or for that, there is not the like to him in the earth*. As if God should say, there is reason why he must needs be taken into your consideration, because there is not such another man as he in the earth. You know that a man is quickly taken notice of, when there are none like him, in the place or company where he is. If a man walk in the streets, or

come into a house, who is of an extraordinary height, some will ask the question, “Did you not observe that man?”, for there was never a man in the company, never a man in the street so tall as he. So one that is extraordinary in beauty, or extraordinary in rich apparel, everyone has an eye upon such. The reason why many are observed is because they are not *like to others*, or they are beyond others in quality or in habit. So here, **“Hast thou not considered my servant Job, that there is none like unto him in the earth,”** you must take notice of him.

Or again, it may be understood thus; as the matter which Satan should consider and observe in Job. *Hast thou not considered my servant Job*, in this thing, that there is not a man upon earth like to him? Have you not taken notice of this in him? You who have looked over all men, and have (as it were) sifted all men’s manners, have you not observed this much, that there is not such a man upon the earth as Job? Has not that fallen under your observation?

So now in the words, *There is none like him*, there is a secret advancing of the praise of Job, for there is nothing that can be spoken more to the praise of a man than this: to say that there is none like him. Though you say no more, you have said all. As the Scripture (we know) sets forth the wonderful praises of God, in Ex. 15:11, **“Who is like unto thee O Lord, amongst the gods? Who is like thee?”** (which is resolved into the negative, that there is none amongst the gods like unto thee; there is none like unto thee). **“This is the high praise of God. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?”** (Mic. 7:18). It is the highest commendation of God to say, there is none like him, to set him above all creatures. In like manner here in the text, when it is affirmed that there was none like Job, this sets him up in all praises and excellencies to the highest: though particulars be concealed, yet whatsoever may make for the honor of a man is included in this, that there is none like him.

But how should we understand this of Job, that there was none like to him upon the earth?

We must understand it, not only in reference to wicked

men, that there was no mere natural man, no wicked man like unto him—as if God had said to Satan, there is none in the earth which is thy inheritance, no earthly man *like my servant Job*, look over all your servants and you have not such a one in the earth. That's too low. We will take it therefore in reference to all the saints that were then upon the earth; there was not such a godly man upon the earth, none like him: and then we must expound *likeness* by a distinction. There is a double *likeness*: there is a *likeness of quality*, and there is a *likeness of equality*. When it is said here, that in the earth there was none like Job, you must not understand it of a likeness of quality, as if there were no man that had such qualities as Job had, for all the saints that are in the earth have the same kind of qualities. They are all alike in the main and in the general—namely in the *conformity of their nature to the will of God, which is holiness*; that is the general quality, and in this way, all the saints upon the earth are alike. There is not any man who can have any other likeness upon him than this; it is impossible. I say in this regard, the meanest and lowest saint upon the earth is like to the highest and greatest saint upon earth; yea not only so, but the meanest saint upon earth is like to Jesus Christ *in heaven*, in regard of quality. He has the same quality, the same nature. He is **“made partaker of the divine nature”** (II Pet. 1:4). And the apostle Paul exhorts the Philippians, **“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ”** (Phil. 2:5). The meanest saint has the same mind and the same quality in reference to his new nature that is in God himself or in Christ. He is like to God, *God begets all his own children in his own likeness*.

But in regard of the *likeness of equality*; thus Job was such a man as there was *none like him in the earth*; no man like him in the degrees of those qualities; they were not equal to him in this or that or the other grace. Job was a man above them all. As we know it is with wicked and natural men, all wicked men upon the earth are as like on to another as can be. **“As face answereth to face in water, so doth the heart of man to man”** (Prov. 27:19), that is, the heart of one natural man to the other: but yet, there are some wicked men so wicked, that there is *none like them in the earth*. We have the very same words

applied to Ahab in wickedness: **“But there was none like to Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord”** (I Kings 21:25). None like him not, I say (as in the former), that there were no wicked men that had the same sinful qualities, for all have the same sinful qualities. But there was none like him in equality of wickedness, *Ahab was a none-such*; he was a giant in wickedness; none were grown to such a stature of wickedness as Ahab. In the same manner, we must understand this concerning Job: none did reach to him in the *equality of his graces*, in the stature of the inward man. *Job had outgrown all the world in grace at that time*.

Yet a little further for the understanding of this: We find sometimes when the Scripture says of a man, that there is none like him, the speech is to be restrained to some one particular. And it may be a question whether we are to understand this of Job's pre-eminence in the general or in regard of some one particular grace. We read of Solomon that there was none like him: **“Among many nations was there no king like him who was beloved of God”** (Neh. 13:26). There was no king like Solomon, but he restrains it to this, **“who was beloved of God”**; none to whom God did so much communicate himself as to Solomon; none like Solomon in wisdom and knowledge; in those revelations and intimate communions that God had with him, he was as it were *God's darling*, as his other name Jedidiah imports. For another instance, it is said of Hezekiah: **“He trusted the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah”** (II Kings 18:5). Now this we must understand of some one particular especially, that is, of *his trusting in the Lord*. In regard of his trusting so firmly in God, he went beyond all the Kings that came after him; there was none did so perfectly trust in God, for it is said: **“He broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made, and stamped it to powder, trusting in the Lord”** (II Kings 18:4). Though some of his counsellors may have told him, “If you do those things you may bring a world of trouble upon yourself and the kingdom, if you change these ancient customs you will make your people mutiny; this serpent was of

God, it was made in the wilderness,” etc. Yet he would say, “I see it is abused to idolatry. I care not for all that you say. *I will trust in the Lord how ever it go.*” Here was a high and unparalleled act of confidence.

Yet afterward it was said concerning Josiah: **“Like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might”** (II Kings 23:5). Here it is said after Hezekiah, that Josiah was such a king as there was none before him; and it was said of Hezekiah that was before him, that he was such a one, that after there should be none like him. How shall we reconcile these two? We can do so only by applying those expressions to such and such particulars: Hezekiah was such a man, as there was no king after him for *trusting in God*; and Josiah was such a man, as there was no king before him for *desire, care and zeal in reforming the church of God*. Josiah’s reformation was the most perfect reformation that was made by all the kings of Judah, and so in that particular, in regard of his great zeal for God, there was no king before him, like him. How shall we understand this then concerning Job?

I answer in two conclusions. First, when it is said, *there was none like to Job*, we are to understand it in reference to that generation. Doubtless God had as great ones in grace as Job, both before and afterward. Noah and Abraham before him were eminent ones; and afterward, Moses, and Joshua, and David, and Samuel. But take Job in the time and the age wherein he lived, so there was none like unto him in equality, we may understand it so. For Job is conceived to be in the darker times, between Abraham and Moses, about the time that the people of Israel were in captivity in Egypt, so that in reference to that time Job lived in, he was the only man, the chief man, the greatest for grace in that age—as it is said of Noah, he was a *just man, and perfect in his generations*; he was the most just man of all that age; the most righteous of all that generation—so was Job in his.

Secondly, we may understand it, not only concerning some particular grace wherein he was most eminent (although it is true that he had one grace for which he was cried up in Scrip-

ture more than others, to wit, *patience*; have you not heard of the *patience* of Job?), but we may take it for the whole latitude of Job’s holiness and graces. In that respect, there was not at that time such a man upon the earth as Job, and so God himself seems to expound it. He does not confine this to some one point, but says, **“Hast thou not considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that fears God and eschews evil?”** God adds this by way of exposition, what he means by a man to whom there was none like, who had no match upon the earth. In those words the whole sum of godliness is comprised; whatsoever goes, or may be conceived to go toward the making up of a godly man, falls under one of those four members. And God says there is none like him; take him in any or in all these.

I shall only give you two or three brief observations from hence: *There is none like unto him in the earth*. Learn:

First, *that God has servants of all statures and degrees*. Not all his servants come up to the like pitch, to the like height. Here is one that is beyond them all, *my servant Job*; not a man like him upon the earth.

Secondly, note this, *we ought not to set up our rest in low degrees of grace, or content ourselves to be like others in grace*. We should labor (if it be possible) to go beyond all others in grace. It did not satisfy Job that he had gotten to such a degree, to such a frame and temper of heart, to such a course of holiness as his neighbors or brethren that were good, had attained to, but he labored to go beyond them all. *Not such a man upon the earth as Job*. It is a *holy ambition* to labor to exceed all others in grace and goodness. We have a great many in the world that desire to be so rich, as none should be like them; or to be so gay in their apparel, as none should be like them; or so beautiful, as none should be like them. But where are they that desire and endeavor to have such a portion or stock of grace, that none should be like them—to be above others in holiness, as Job was? True grace never rests in any degrees or measures of grace, but labors to increase. He that has any grace should desire to have more, does not think it enough when you are

like others. You ought to labor to be beyond others.

Then see the character that God gives of Job: *A perfect and upright man, one that fears God and eschews evil.*

These have been already opened in the first verse, and these are but a report of the history before going, therefore I shall not need to stay upon this place. Only, take these two observations from it.

The first is this, *God has a perfect character of every soul.* He knows fully and clearly what the temper of your hearts and spirits are, just as the history and relation of Job was, such is God's testimony of him to a tittle.

Secondly this, *God will give to every man a testimony according to his utmost worth.* God will not conceal any of your graces, or obscure your goodness; he will make it known to the world to the full, what you are. When God comes to give testimony, he gives it so as his saints can never lose by it. Often, man gives testimony short of his brother's goodness, and draws a curtain before another man's worth; but God will draw the curtain quite back, and unveil every soul to the whole world. You shall see and hear a testimony from God before men and angels concerning yourselves to the uttermost, what you are in all godly and gracious perfections.

Job was an excellent man, a man commended indeed, who was commended of God, as the Apostle concludes it, *not he that commends himself is approved, but he whom God commends* (II Cor. 10: 18). It is good for us to have our *Letters Testimonial from God*, to have our *Letters Commendatory from Heaven*. It is not what a man says in his own heart, how he flatters himself. It is not what your neighbors or others flatter you and say of you, but what God says of you, what testimony he gives of you. He is not approved that commends himself, or that other men commend only, but he whom the Lord commends. *And if God speak well of us, no matter though all the world be silent or slander.*

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



New Testament Study: Matthew 27:27-56

Matthew 27:27-30 - The Soldiers Mock Jesus

²⁷Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. ³⁰They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

Even after Jesus was flogged (see vs. 26), he had to continue to endure beatings and misuse: **"Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him"** (vs. 27). The soldiers were gathered to beat and mock Jesus, in advance of the crucifixion. A Roman **"company"** of soldiers was made up of as many as 600 men [Carson], so most likely, Jesus endured the mockery and the blows of many, many men.

Jesus had told the Twelve Apostles that he would be mocked and flogged: **"They will condemn [the Son of Man] to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified"** (Matt. 20:18-19). Hundreds of years prior, Isaiah had alluded to the misuse the Messiah would endure: **"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).

The charge for which Jesus was to be crucified was that he claimed to be King of the Jews (allegedly in defiance of Roman leadership), so the soldiers mocked him as king: **“They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ they said”** (vss. 28-29). The soldiers, most likely, knew nothing about Jesus, except that they were told the charges against him. Certainly, Jesus did not personally harm any of the soldiers. They could have no personal reasons for harming Jesus, yet this reflects the corrupt nature of men: to be able to so mercilessly beat and mock someone who has done them no harm. This is humanity at its worst, ironically perpetrated on the one who would save them from their sins.

And so it is in all generations: those who know nothing of the goodness and greatness of Jesus, mock him, and spit on him, and curse him.

For their mockery, they **“stripped”** Jesus and donned him with mock-*raiment* of a king: **“a scarlet robe”**, and **“a crown of thorns”**. All these things contained symbolism related to Christ’s mission of suffering for our sins. “The shame of nakedness came in with sin (see Gen. 3:7) – and therefore Christ, when he came to satisfy for sin, and take it away, was made naked, and submitted to that shame, that he might prepare for us white raiment to cover us (see Rev. 3:18)... Our sins were as scarlet and crimson (see Isa. 1:18), so Christ being clad in a scarlet robe, signified his bearing our sins, to his shame, in his own body upon the tree... Thorns came in with sin, and were part of the curse that was the product of sin (see Gen. 3:18). Therefore Christ being made a curse for us, and dying to remove the curse from us, felt the pain and smart of those thorns, nay, and binds them

as a crown to him (cf. Job 31:36). For his sufferings for us were his glory” [Henry, 242].

They gave mock-obedience to him: **“They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ they said”** (vs. 29). There is great irony in this, for Christ is actually the mocker’s Lord and King, and they will, at some point, bow to him. Paul tells us, concerning Jesus: **“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Phil. 2:9-11). “These here bowed the knee in scorn to him, who was soon after this exalted to the right hand of God, that in his name every knee might bow, or break before him; it is ill jesting with that which sooner or later will come in earnest” [Henry, 243]. “There is great irony as they hail the one person in the world who is truly their King” [Osbourne]. “And he who suffered all this bitter mockery was indeed a King—King of kings, and Lord of lords. At any moment throughout his long protracted agony he might, by one word, one look, have swept his torturers into utter death. He suffered in silence, patiently, calmly, setting us an example of meekness, of holy endurance. If the Lord most holy bore these outrageous insults, we sinful men may well take it patiently when we are called to suffer wrong when men speak ill of us” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 606]. Peter tells us of the dignity and patience Jesus demonstrated in the midst of the suffering: **“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. ‘He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed’”** (1 Peter 2:23-24).

In the end, when all was done—after the flogging, beatings and mockery—Jesus was all but unrecognizable as a man,

as Isaiah prophetically tells us of his appearance: **“Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness”** (Isa. 52:14).

Matthew 27:31-56 - The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

³¹ After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

³² As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ³³ They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). ³⁴ There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵ When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁶ And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷ Above his head they placed the written charge against him: **THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

³⁸ Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” ⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴² “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” ⁴⁴ In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

⁴⁵ From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon

Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split ⁵² and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!” ⁵⁵ Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. ⁵⁶ Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

Jesus’ suffering and shame did not end with the beatings and mockery of the soldiers: **“After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him”** (vs. 31). “Crucifixion was considered the ultimate in cruel, degrading punishments” [Osbourne]. D. A. Carson describes crucifixion, and what it meant to those who witnessed it: “Two thousand years of pious Christian tradition have largely domesticated the cross, making it hard for us to realize how it was viewed in Jesus’ time... Crucifixion was unspeakably painful and degrading. Whether tied or nailed to the cross, the victim endured countless paroxysms as he pulled with his

arms and pushed with his legs to keep his chest cavity open for breathing and then collapsed in exhaustion until the demand for oxygen demanded renewed paroxysms. The scourging, the loss of blood, the shock from the pain, all produced agony that could go on for days, ending at last by suffocation, cardiac arrest, or loss of blood. When there was reason to hasten death, the execution squad would smash the victim's legs. Death followed almost immediately, either from shock or from collapse that cut off breathing... Beyond the pain was the shame... Among Jews the horror of the cross was greater still because of Deuteronomy 21:23: **'Anyone who is hanged on a tree is under God's curse.'** In Israelite law this meant the corpse of a judicially executed criminal was hung up for public exposure that branded him as cursed by God. The words were also applied in Jesus' day to anyone crucified; and therefore the Jews' demand that Jesus be crucified rather than banished was aimed at arousing maximum public revulsion toward him" [Carson, 574].

And let us remember, whenever we hear or read of Christ's sufferings, that they were all carried out on our behalves, in order that we may not suffer for our sins. "We are intended to see this truth in every part of His passion. We may follow Him all through, from the bar of Pilate, to the minute of His death, and see him at every step as our mighty Substitute, our Representative, our Head, our Surety, our Proxy,—the Divine Friend who undertook to stand in our stead, and by the priceless merit of His sufferings, to purchase our redemption.—Was He scourged? It was that **'through His stripes we might be healed.'**—Was he condemned, though innocent? It was that we might be acquitted though guilty.—Did He wear a crown of thorns? It was that we might wear the crown of glory.—Was He stripped of His raiment? It was that we might be clothed in everlasting righteousness. —Was he mocked and reviled? It was that we might be honored and blessed.—Was He reckoned a malefactor, and numbered among transgressors? It was that we might be reckoned innocent, and justified from all sin. —

Was he declared unable to save Himself? It was that He might be able to save others to the uttermost. — Did He die at last, and that the most painful and disgraceful of deaths? It was that we might live for evermore, and be exalted to the highest glory.—Let us ponder these things well. They are worth remembering... Our sins are many and great. But a great atonement has been made for them." [Ryle, 391-392].

Normally, the prisoner carried the crosspiece on which he was to be crucified, to the place of crucifixion, and Jesus did carry it part way (see John 19:17). But the soldiers enlisted someone to carry it the rest of the way, presumably because Jesus was moving too slowly: **"As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross"** (vs. 32). Tradition has it that Simon the Cyrene became a Christian. This may be supported in the Bible. Mark tells us that he was **"the father of Alexander and Rufus."** Why would Mark include that information unless **"Alexander and Rufus"** were known in some way by Christian readers? Moreover, in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, as part of his greetings at the end of the book, he writes: **"Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord"** (Rom. 16:13). It's possible that both Mark and Paul are referring to the same **"Rufus"**. Whatever the case, carrying the cross of Christ must certainly have made a deep spiritual impact on Simon the Cyrene. Also, whatever the case, Simon the Cyrene "has become the type, the figure of faithful Christians. They must bear the cross; the cross of suffering, in one form or another, is surely laid upon them all; they bear it after Jesus" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 607].

The absence of Jesus' disciples is conspicuous. Should not one of Jesus' close followers have borne the cross? And yet they were nowhere to be seen. There is somewhat of an irony that the bearer of the cross is named **"Simon"**, the same name as Simon called Peter, who though he loudly boasted that he would go anywhere with Christ, denied him three times. Simon the Cyrene bore Christ's cross, some-

thing Simon Peter should have willingly done, given his boasts.

“They came to a place called Golgotha (which means ‘the place of the skull’)” (vs. 33). **“Golgotha”** was where Jesus was to be crucified. We get the term *Calvary* from the Latin word for “skull”. Presumably, **“Golgotha”** got its name because it was a rock, or clearing, that was shaped like a skull. There also may be a sly reference in the name of it as a place of execution, a generator of dead *skulls*.

“There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it” (vs. 34). The word translated here **“gall”**, seems to be a general term for a bitter or poisonous liquid [Broadus; Carson]. Mark specifically tells us that the wine was mixed with **“myrrh”** (see Mark 15:23). Reference to **“myrrh”** reminds the reader of the Magi, who worshiped Christ when he was an infant, and brought **“myrrh”** as one of their gifts. How greatly different the circumstances are on **“Golgotha”**.

“When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there” (vss. 35-36). The dividing of Jesus’ clothes was a partial fulfillment of the prophetic Psalm about the crucifixion, Psalm 22, as noted in John’s Gospel (see John 19:24). In fact, that prophetic Psalm gives us more specifics about the physical agony that Jesus experienced on the cross than the Gospel narratives give: **“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircle me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment”** (Ps. 22:14-18).

Those crucified typically had a sign, either around their necks or above them, telling passers-by what crime they

committed. So too Jesus: **“Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS”** (vs. 37). This is the only crime that they could charge Jesus with: being **“KING OF THE JEWS.”** The sign was objected to by the chief priests, who had trumped up the charge, and they asked Pilate to change the sign to say that Jesus *claimed* to be king of the Jews (see John 19:21). Pilate rejected their request, and did not change it. Pilate meant it to mock the Jews, as if to say, “Look at your king; bleeding and hung on a cross.” And yet, Jesus is king and Lord of all, so the sign was true, whether or not the chief priests ever acknowledged its truth. Pilate inadvertently wrote more truth than he realized.

By the way, there were four types of crosses/structures typically used for crucifixion: a stake in the ground; St. Andrew’s cross, shaped like an “X”; St. Anthony’s cross, shaped like a “T”, and the shape we normally call cross-shaped (“†”) [Osbourne]. That the sign was hung **“above his head”** (vs. 37) indicates that Jesus was crucified on a cross that we normally call cross-shaped (“†”), rather than the other types [Turner, 661].

Jesus was not the only one being crucified that day: **“Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left”** (vs. 38). The placement of the rebels on the right and left of Jesus evokes the request to Jesus by the mother of James and John (the two apostles): **“Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. ‘What is it you want?’ he asked. She said, ‘Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom’”** (Matt. 20:20-21).

Next Matthew lists some of the mocking directed at Jesus by those witnessing the crucifixion. “When malice hath done what it can to Christ’s body, Satan and his instruments make assault on his mind, by mocking his holiness and fellowship with God” [Dickson, 337]. Matthew begins

by relating the mocking of some passers-by: **“Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself!’”** (vss. 39-40). Apparently, these mockers heard the false testimony against Jesus at the trial (see Matt. 26:61), and mistakenly thought that Jesus threatened to destroy the Temple.

The mockers continued: **“Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”** (vs. 40). The mockers take up the temptation of Satan. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, Satan said: **“If you are the Son of God... If you are the Son of God...”** (Matt. 4:3,6). “They upbraid him with his saying that he was the Son of God; if thou be so, say they, **‘Come down from the cross.’** Now they take the devil's words out of his mouth, with which he tempted him in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:3, 6), and renew the same assault, **‘If thou he the Son of God.’** They think now, or never, he must prove himself to be the Son of God; forgetting that he had proved it by the miracles he wrought, particularly his raising the dead; nor willing to wait for the complete proof of it by his own resurrection, to which he had so often referred himself and them; which, if they had observed it, would have anticipated the offence of the cross. This comes of judging things by the present aspect of them, without a due remembrance of what is past, and a patient expectation of what may further be produced” [Henry, 245]. It is not surprising that Satan joins the mockery with the temptation **“Come down from the cross”**, for Jesus' death destroys Satan's power over death, as we are told by the writer of Hebrews: **“Since the children have flesh and blood, [Jesus] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death”** (Hebrews 2:14-15).

The members of the Sanhedrin join in the mockery of Jesus: **“In the same way the chief priests, the teachers**

of the law and the elders mocked him” (vs. 41). “It is surprising that people of this eminence should be present at a crucifixion, and the fact that they were is an indication of the depth of their hostility and vindictiveness toward Jesus” [Morris]. **“‘He saved others,’ they said, ‘but he can’t save himself!’”** (vss. 42). The mocking by the chief priests, etc., is inexcusable because they knew of Jesus' miracles, the grand and merciful healings he performed for others (they said, **“he saved others”**). Rather than glorifying Jesus for these great works, they use them to reproach and mock Jesus. “They acknowledged the truth of his miracles, his works of love; and in their blind wickedness they upbraided him with those very works, with that very love” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 610].

In mocking Jesus, they demonstrate that they have no understanding of Jesus' mission. They say, **“he can’t save himself.”** Yet, it was never Jesus' mission to **“save himself”**; his mission was to save others. Jesus said, **“For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost”** (Luke 19:10). “It is true that he was unable to come down from the cross and save himself, for then he would have been unable to save others. It was the power of love, not nails, that kept him there” [Mounce].

The mocking of the members of the Sanhedrin continues: **“He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him”** (vs. 42). The chief priests, etc., already had plenty of reasons to believe in Jesus, yet they did not. There is absolutely no reason to think that they would believe in Jesus if he came down from the cross. “They would have done no such thing. He had wrought miracles even more wonderful, and upon learning it they were only the more determined to kill him (see John 11:47-53)” [Broadus, 572]. “The words **‘Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him’** have several levels of meaning. They constitute a malicious barb directed at Jesus' helplessness, while having the effrontery to suggest that the leaders' failure to believe was his fault” [Carson, 577]. “The most vile and wicked reprobates will offer to believe, upon

such conditions as they themselves shall prescribe to God, as here these men do; but they who will not believe upon the grounds of faith offered to them, shall [never be satisfied]... It is the nature of misbelief to esteem little of whatsoever God has said or done, except he satisfy present demands, and take orders and directions from the misbeliever" [Dickson, 338]. "And yet Christ did a greater thing than come down alive from the cross; he rose from the dead; but they believed not in him" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 591].

The mocking of the Temple leaders continued: **"He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God'"** (vs. 43). "They did not know what to reproach Him with, except His piety, His benevolence, His trust in God" [Lavater, in Lange, 533]. "Both the devil (in Matt. 4:1-11) and the mockers focus on his identity and mission as God's Son. Both present Jesus with the alternative of ruling without suffering. And both times Jesus will have none of it. The mockery of the passage is palpably ironic, since Jesus really is the Son of God. The temple will indeed be destroyed within a generation. Jesus does in fact save others. He is the King of Israel who trusts in God, and God is well pleased with him. He does not come down from the cross, but he does overcome death by pouring out his own blood of the new covenant. Since every detail of the ridicule is eventually shown to be true, the mockers are unwitting evangelists... The irony of the mockery is not just that things are not always as they seem but that sometimes they are exactly the opposite of what they seem" [Turner, 663-664].

The extent of the range of mockers is made complete when even the rebels crucified with Jesus mock him: **"In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him"** (vs. 44).

As Jesus' death neared, the creation responded: **"From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land"** (vs. 45). This darkness was most likely a supernatural darkness, just as the darkness during the plagues of

Egypt, which preceded the first Passover, was a supernatural darkness. Now, preceding the death of our Passover Lamb, and **"the light of the world"**, darkness comes at noon. "Never were there three such hours since the day that God created man upon the earth, never such a dark and awful scene; the crisis of that great affair of man's redemption and salvation" [Henry, 246]. "The noonday sun should have been pouring its full light upon Jerusalem. But there was a horror of great darkness—a darkness that could be felt. It might well be so. He was hanging on the cross by whom all things were made. He was dying who upholdeth all things by the word of his power. So stupendous an event, the death of him who is the Life of the world, must be attended by wonders, by strange and awful signs. That fearful darkness was a stern rebuke to the cruel brutal mockers. Nature was mourning for the Lord of nature, whom man, his noblest creature, was thus maltreating" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 610-611]. "When Christ was born, night became bright by the shining of the miraculous star, as though it would pass into a heavenly day; when He died, the day darkened at the hour when the sun shone in fullest glory, as though it would sink into the awful night of Sheol" [Lange, 526]. Darkness is prophesied to accompany the judgment at the end times (see Amos 8:9; Joel 2:2,10,31; Zeph. 1:15); so appropriately here darkness accompanies the judgment borne by Christ, due all human-kind.

"About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' (which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?')" (vs. 46). As we pointed out above, Psalm 22 gives us more detail about Jesus' suffering on the cross than even the Gospel accounts. The words spoken here by Jesus, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**, open Psalm 22, as if confirming that the psalm was prophetic of Christ's sufferings on the cross. Jesus, as he spoke these words, was at the depth of his suffering. "This cry is one of agony... It culminates a major theme of the Passion Narrative, in which Jesus is abandoned by his disciples (26:56) and Peter (26:69-75), then condemned

by the high court of his own people (26:57-68) and taunted by his enemies — first the Roman soldiers (27:27-31) and then the Jewish people (27:39-40), the leaders (27:41-43), and the criminals crucified with him (27:44). Jesus stands alone, forsaken by all, and now he feels forsaken even by his Father... He has become the sin offering, and at this dark moment God must turn away from sin. As in Gethsemane Jesus is experiencing the depths of pain in his very soul” [Osbourne]. “He was bearing the sins of the whole world; the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all; there was no one to comfort him in his heaviness; and the light of God’s countenance was for the time withdrawn from him” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 593]. “Christ, our surety, beside all the sufferings which he suffered in his body, did suffer also sorrow, grief, anguish, torment, and desertion, in regard of comfort in his soul... Our sins deserved that we should have been utterly forsaken of God, and it behoved our Redeemer to taste a little of the hell of being forsaken, ere we could be redeemed” [Dickson, 341].

The bystanders misheard Jesus’ words, and thought he was **“calling Elijah”** (vs. 47). They misheard his words, just as they misunderstood his mission, and misinterpreted everything that happened on that day.

And then death came: **“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit”** (vs. 50). We are told in the Gospel of John, that Jesus had cried out, **“It is finished”** (John 19:30). The wording is significant — **“gave up his spirit.”** Jesus voluntarily gave himself for us, gave his body to suffering that we might not suffer, gave up his life that we might live, and finally **“gave up his spirit”** to bring us to God. “[The wording] **‘he gave up his spirit’** suggests Jesus’ sovereignty over the exact time of his own death. It was at this moment, when he was experiencing the abyss of his alienation from the Father and was being cruelly mocked by those he came to serve, that he chose to yield up his life a **‘ransom for man’**” [Carson, 580]. “It is to be noted that the death of Christ occurred at 3 p.m., the very time

when the Paschal lambs began to be slain in the temple courts. Thus the long-prepared type was at last fulfilled, when **‘Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us’** (I Cor. 5:7)” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 594].

The creation again responded, with a series of miraculous events at the time of Jesus’ death. “So many miracles being wrought by him in his life, we might well expect some to be wrought concerning him at his death” [Henry, 247]. First, **“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom”** (vs. 51). This event is highly symbolic. “The sudden rending of this veil from the top to the bottom (showing that it was not done by human agency) symbolized the complete opening for all of a way of access through Christ to the throne of divine mercy. Christ, our high priest, has entered the true Holy of Holies in heaven, offering once for all the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice of his own blood (see Heb. 9:11-28); and now in his name we may look without dread upon the very throne of God, and come with boldness to the throne of grace (see Heb. 4:16; 10:9)” [Broadus, 576]. The rending of the curtain symbolized “a new access to God, signifying the end of the sacrificial system and a direct relationship with God” [Osbourne]. “If the death of Jesus opened up a fresh access to God that made the OT sacrificial system and the Levitical high priesthood obsolete, then an entire change in the Mosaic covenant must follow. It is impossible to grapple with Matthew’s fulfillment themes (cf. esp. on 5:17-20; 11:11-13) and see how even the law points prophetically to Messiah and hear Jesus’ promise of a new covenant grounded in his death (26:26-29) without seeing that the tearing of the veil signifies the obsolescence of the temple ritual and the law governing it. Jesus himself is the New Temple, the meeting place of God and man (see on 26:61); the old is obsolete. The rent veil does indeed serve as a sign of the temple’s impending destruction — a destruction conceived not as a brute fact but as a theological necessity” [Carson, 580]. “The rending of the veil proclaimed the termination and passing away of the ceremonial law. It was a sign that the old dispensation of sacrifices and ordinances

was no longer needed. Its work was done. Its occupation was gone, from the moment that Christ died. There was no more need of an earthly high priest, and a mercy seat, and a sprinkling of blood, and an offering up of incense, and a day of atonement. The true High Priest had at length appeared. The true Lamb of God had been slain. The true mercy seat was at length revealed. The figures and shadows were no longer wanted" [Ryle, 396-397]. The rending of the curtain was also an ominous portent that the entire Temple was to be destroyed, as Jesus predicted (see Matt. 24:1-2).

More miracles occurred: **"The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open"** (vss. 51-52). "Christ had said, that if the children would cease to cry hosanna, the stones would immediately cry out; and now in effect they did so, proclaiming the glory of the suffering Jesus, and themselves more sensible of the wrong done him, than the hard hearted Jews were" [Henry, 248].

To show that Jesus conquered death by his death and resurrection, and to demonstrate that we who die in Christ will live again, a sign was given: **"The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people"** (vss. 52-53). "The statement that they did not appear till after our Lord's resurrection, is from this point of view significant. The disciples were thus taught to look on that resurrection, not as an isolated phenomenon; but as the first fruits of the victory over death (see I Cor. 15:20), in which not they themselves only, but those also whom they had loved and lost were to be sharers" [Broadus, 576].

The Roman soldiers reacted to the unusual events surrounding Jesus' death: **"When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'"** (vs. 54). "They saw the darkness, the earthquake, the rending of the rocks, the Divine meekness of the Sufferer; they heard his last

words, his loud cry, and marked his patient death. All these things contributed to their awe and fear" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 596]. "Profane soldiers are more easily gained unto Christ than misbelieving Rabbis, for we hear thus much of the one, but nothing of the other, that they were any whit moved" [Dickson, 344]. "(1.) They were soldiers, whose profession is commonly hardening, and whose breasts are commonly not so susceptible as some others of the impressions either of fear or pity. But there is no spirit too big, too bold, for the power of Christ to break and humble. (2.) They were Romans, Gentiles, who knew not the scriptures that were now fulfilled, yet they only were convinced. A sad presage of the blindness that should happen to Israel, when the gospel should be sent to the Gentiles to open their eyes. Here were the Gentiles softened, and the Jews hardened. (3.) They were the persecutors of Christ, and those that but just before had reviled him, as appears in Luke 23:36. How soon can God by the power he has over men's consciences, alter their language, and fetch confessions of his truths to his own glory, out of the mouths of those that have breathed nothing but threatenings, and slaughter, and blasphemies?" [Henry, 248].

"Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons" (vss. 55-56). Of the followers and disciples of Jesus, it was predominantly women who witnessed His sufferings on the cross (though it seems that the Apostle John was also among them, see John 19:25-27). "Against the background of the failure of the male disciples the devotion and the courage of the women shine out" [Morris]. "The fact that the women are mentioned in all four gospels and also are official witnesses of the empty tomb and resurrection (28:1, 5-10) shows their importance as remaining with Jesus to the end" [Osbourne]. "These pious women, who, with the courage of heroes, witnessed the dying moments of their Lord and Master, and sat over against the lonely sepulcher (see Matt.

26:61), are the shining examples of female constancy and devotion to Christ which we now can witness every day in all the churches, and which will never cease. Woman's love truly is faithful unto death. Women and children form the majority of the Church militant on earth, and, we may infer, also of the Church triumphant in heaven" [Schaff, in Lange, 529].

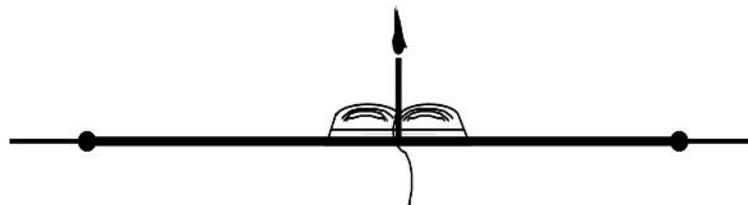
And so, as Jesus said, **"It is finished"** (John 19:30). The redemptive work of Christ, suffering for our sins, is complete. Through him, and only through him, we can live, and bypass the suffering for our sins that we deserve. "The cross, which to the old world was the symbol of deepest abhorrence, shame, infamy, and perdition, has now become for the new world the symbol of honor, blessing, and redemption. Even the superstition and vanity of the world have adopted this sign. It has risen to be the object of veneration. It is the original form of most of our orders of honor. But the glorification of the cross is the symbol and type of the transformation of death from a curse into salvation." [Lange, 531].

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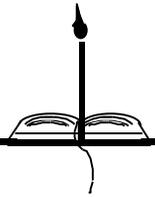
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All of these books, except Carson, Keener, Morris, Osbourne, Turner and Wilkins can be downloaded free of charge from:
<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



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. 3, 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).**

If you have all this to say to God, what should hinder you from saying it, from saying it every day? Why should not he hear your voice, when you have so many errands to him?

1. Let no distance hinder you from saying it. You have occasion to speak with a friend, but he is a great way off. You cannot reach him; you know not where to find him, nor how to get a letter to him, and therefore your business with him is undone. But this needs not keep you from speaking to God; for though it is true God is in heaven, and we are upon earth, yet he is nigh to his praying people in all that they call upon him for. He hears their voice wherever they are. **“Out of the depths I have cried unto thee,”** saith David (Ps. 130:1). **“From the ends of the earth I will cry unto thee,”** (Ps. 61:2). Nay, Jonah saith, **“Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice”** (Jonah 2:2). In all places we may find a way open heavenward, thanks to him who by his own blood has consecrated for us a new and living way into the holiest, and settled a correspondence between heaven and

earth.

2. Let not fear hinder you from saying what you have to say to God. You have business with a great man, it may be, but he is so far above you, or so stern and severe towards all his inferiors, that you are afraid to speak to him, and you have none to introduce you, or speak a good word for you, and therefore you choose rather to drop your cause; but there is no occasion for your being thus discouraged in speaking to God. You may come boldly to the throne of his grace; you have there a *liberty of speech*, leave to pour out your whole souls. And such are his compassions to humble supplicants, that even his terror need not make them afraid. It is against the mind of God that you should frighten yourselves. He would have you encourage yourselves, for you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, by which you are brought into this among the other glorious liberties of the children of God. Nor is this all: we have one to introduce us, and to speak for us, an advocate with the Father. Did ever children need an advocate with a father? But that by those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. We have not only the relation of a father to depend upon, but the interest and intercession of an advocate, a high Priest over the house of God, in whose name we have access with confidence.

3. Let not his knowing what your business is, and what you have to say to him, hinder you. You have business with such a friend, but you think you need not put yourselves to any trouble about it, for he is already apprised of it; he knows what you want and what you desire, and therefore it is no matter for speaking to him. It is true all you desire is before God; he knows your wants and burdens, but he wills to know them *from you*. He hath promised you relief, but his promise must be put in suit, and he will for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them (see Ezek. 36:37). Though we cannot by our prayers give him any information, yet we must by our prayers give him honor. It is true, nothing we can say can have any influence upon him,

or move him to show us mercy; but it may have an influence upon ourselves, and help to put us into a frame fit to receive mercy. It is a very easy and reasonable condition of his favors. **“Ask, and it shall be given you”** (Matt. 7:7). It was to teach us the necessity of praying, in order to our receiving favor, that Christ put that strange question to the blind men: **“What would ye that I should do unto you?”** (Matt. 20:32; Mark 10:36). He knew what they would have, but those that touch the top of the gospel sceptre must be ready to tell, what is their petition, and what is their request.

4. Let not any other business hinder our saying what we have to say to God. We have business with a friend, perhaps, but we cannot do it, because we have not leisure; we have something else to do, which we think more needful. But we cannot say so concerning the business we have to do with God, for that is without doubt the one thing needful, to which everything else must be made to truckle and give way. It is not at all necessary to our happiness that we be great in the world, or raise estates to such a pitch. But it is absolutely necessary that we make our peace with God, that we obtain his favor, and keep ourselves in his love. Therefore no business for the world will serve to excuse our attendance upon God; but, on the contrary, the more important our worldly business is, the more need we have to apply ourselves to God by prayer for his blessing upon it, and so take him along with us in it. The closer we keep to prayer, and to God in prayer, the more will all our affairs prosper.

Shall I prevail with you now to let God frequently hear from you; let him hear your voice, though it be but the voice of your breathing (see Lam. 3:56), that is a sign of life; though it be the voice of your groanings, and those so weak that they cannot be uttered (see Romans 8:26). Speak to him though it be in broken language, as Hezekiah did: **“Like a crane or a swallow so did I chatter”** (Isa. 38:14). Speak often to him, he is always within hearing. Hear him speaking to you, and have an eye to that in everything you say to him, as when you write an answer to a letter of business, you lay it before you.

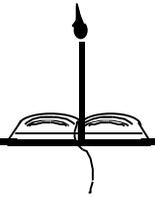
God’s word must be the guide of your desires, and the ground of your expectations in prayer. Do not expect he should give a gracious ear to what you say to him, if you turn a deaf ear to what he saith to you.

You see you have frequent occasions to speak with God, and therefore are concerned to grow in your acquaintance with him, to take heed of doing anything to displease him, and to strengthen your interest in the Lord Jesus, through whom alone it is that you have access with boldness to him. Keep your voice in tune for prayer, and let all your language be a pure language, that you may be fit to call on the name of the Lord (see Zeph. 3:9). And in every prayer remember you are speaking to God, and make it to appear you have an awe of him upon your spirits. Let us not be rash with our mouth, nor hasty to utter anything before God, but let every word be well weighed, because God is in heaven, and we upon earth (see Eccl. 5:2). And realize that if he had not invited and encouraged us to do it, it would be unpardonable presumption for such sinful worms as we are to speak to the Lord of Glory (see Gen. 18:27). Be concerned to speak the heart, heartily; for it is for our lives, and for the lives of our souls, that we are speaking to him.

[This study will continue in the next issue, D.V.]

This article is taken from: Henry, Matthew. *A Method for Prayer*. Glasgow: D. Mackenzie, 1834. (Originally published in 1710). A PDF file of this book can be downloaded, free of charge, at: <http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

A Study in Wisdom: Proverbs 2



Proverbs 2:1-22 – Seeking Wisdom, and the Rewards of Doing So, by Scott Sperling

- ¹ My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
² turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding –
³ indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
⁴ and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
- ⁵ Then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge
and understanding.
⁷ He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
⁸ for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.
- ⁹ Then you will understand
what is right and just and fair – every good path.
¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
¹¹ Discretion will protect you,
and understanding will guard you.

- ¹² Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men,
from men whose words are perverse,
¹³ who have left the straight paths
to walk in dark ways,
¹⁴ who delight in doing wrong
and rejoice in the perverseness of evil,
¹⁵ whose paths are crooked
and who are devious in their ways.
- ¹⁶ Wisdom will save you also
from the adulterous woman,
from the wayward woman with her seductive words,
¹⁷ who has left the partner of her youth
and ignored the covenant she made before God.
¹⁸ Surely her house leads down to death
and her paths to the spirits of the dead.
¹⁹ None who go to her return
or attain the paths of life.
- ²⁰ Thus you will walk in the ways of the good
and keep to the paths of the righteous.
²¹ For the upright will live in the land,
and the blameless will remain in it;
²² but the wicked will be cut off from the land,
and the unfaithful will be torn from it.

This chapter of Proverbs consists of a single, unified poem about attaining wisdom, and the benefits of doing so. “In this chapter, we are taught both how to get wisdom and how to use it when we have it, that we may neither seek it, nor receive it, in vain” [Henry, 798].

In the original Hebrew, the entire chapter is a single, somewhat complicated sentence. The first four verses express conditional “if”s—“if you accept...”, “if you call out...”, “if you look for it...” This is followed in verse 5, through the rest of the poem, with the results of carrying out these conditions, with the “then”s which correspond to the conditional “if”s. So, we have conditions, then results, all concerning an age-old, nearly universal endeavor: seeking true wisdom.

Solomon begins: **“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding...”** (vss. 1-2). Solomon addresses the poem to **“My son”**. Possibly Solomon is writing literally to his son, but even so, he is also addressing us all generally, with an emphasis on addressing those who are young and who are developing their morals and philosophies.

The exhortations that Solomon gives in these verses have an increasing intensity: first, **“accept”**; then, **“store up”**; then, **“turn your ear”**; then, **“apply your heart”**. The first step is to merely **“accept”** his words of wisdom. As we read the Proverbs in this book, and also more generally, the Bible itself, we are often somewhat skeptical about what we read, asking ourselves, “Does this really apply to me?” Solomon here tells us that our first inclination should be one of **“acceptance”** of the words written in the Bible. “The children of Wisdom **‘accept’** her words. They do not shut their ears against them. They do not slight them. They do not hastily and thoughtlessly disregard them. They give them what they are entitled to, a serious and deliberate attention. They listen, they remember, they meditate, they examine, they accept, they lay up for use.—The words of divine wisdom are now in the Bible. There the voice of Wisdom, and of God, addresses you. In reading the Bible, you should consider yourselves as listening to God. And it is a blessed privilege to have this Word in your possession,—to have God addressing you in it” [Wardlaw, 53]. “We must be convinced that the words of God are the fountain and standard of wisdom and understanding, and that we need not desire to be wiser than they will make us” [Henry, 799].

First, **“accept my words”**, and then, **“store up my commands within you.”** To **“store up”** suggests that the reader considers the words valuable, worthy of meditation and deeper understanding. We can **“store up”** God’s word in a passive manner, by reading it so much that His word naturally becomes part of us. We can also actively **“store up”**

God’s word by devoting ourselves to the memorization of it. Many people memorize certain favorite verses in the Bible, and this is well and good. I recommend also that you devote yourself to memorize entire chapters, even entire books of the Bible. I can personally testify that the memorization of an entire book of the Bible will give you an understanding of that book, far beyond what you get from merely reading it. I have, at various times in my life, had the books of Ecclesiastes, Ephesians, Hebrews, I John, various Psalms, etc., stored up. Currently as I write this, I have in **“stored up”** in my head and heart, Romans 1 through 9, and the entire books of Philippians, Galatians and I Peter. Let me testify: the work I have put in to memorize these books has been well worth it. “It is not enough for us to attend the public ordinances of God, and to read a chapter or two of the Bible at home every day, but we are required to receive the words of wisdom, to keep them in our hearts, and to apply our souls to them... When we give due attention to the word of truth, it will dwell in our minds, dispelling ignorance and error, and communicating that light which is necessary to direct the whole of our conduct; in our memories, affording a constant supply for spiritual meditation, ready for use on every emergency; in our wills, to guide their choice and inclination; in our affections, to direct their motions, to curb their extravagance, and to inflame their ardour towards spiritual objects; and in our consciences, to preserve alive the impressions of the divine law, and to direct them in judging of the spiritual state of the soul.” [Lawson, 28].

Moving on from this, Solomon tells us to be **“turning your ear to wisdom.”** This suggests a full attention, rather than a passing notice. “We attend to our friends or neighbors when they are informing us of some new thing; we count it a piece of good manners to listen, when nothing is to be heard but dullness and insipidity: shall we not, then, attend to Him that made the ear, when he condescends to speak to us, and to disclose truths of eternal moment?” [Lawson, 29]. And beyond this, we are told to be **“applying your heart to understanding.”**

Hearing is fine and good, but yet worthless unless what we hear is applied to our hearts and lives.

Solomon continues: **“...indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding...”** (vs. 3). To **“call out”** and **“cry aloud”** suggest earnest, even desperate, seeking. “We must cry after knowledge, as one that is ready to perish for hunger begs hard for bread. Faint desires will not prevail; we must be importunate, as those that know the worth of knowledge and our own want of it” [Henry, 799]. “Men may be offended with the fervor of an earnest soul—God never” [Arnot]. To **“call out”** and **“cry aloud”** also imply that prayer is to be involved. We are to **“call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding”** to God. To fully understand the word of God and wisdom of God, prayer must be employed. “There may be attention and earnestness; yet not one spiritual impression upon the conscience, not one ray of Divine light in the soul. Earthly wisdom is gained by study; heavenly wisdom by prayer. Study may form a Biblical scholar; prayer puts the heart under a heavenly tutorage, and therefore forms the wise and spiritual Christian. The word first comes into the ears, then it enters into the heart... But prayer must not stand in the stead of diligence. Let it rather give life and energy to it” [Bridges, 14]. **“Cry aloud”**, as resolved to give God no rest till thou hast it” [Trapp, 5].

Beyond the earnestness of **“crying aloud”** for wisdom, we are to value it: **“...and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,...”** (vs. 4). The reader surely knows the value that we humans attach to silver, gold and riches, and with what diligence we seek those things. Oh that we would be as diligent in seeking the truth and wisdom of God! “The miner’s indefatigable pains; his invincible resolution; his untiring perseverance; seeking, yea, searching for hid treasures,— such must be our searching into the sacred storehouse” [Bridges, 14-15]. “We draw out the very bowels of the earth, that we may get the gem that we desire. Shall we not do as much for this pearl of price, the knowledge of God and his will, of ourselves, and our duties?... What man, finding

a rich mine of gold or silver, is content with the first ore that offers itself to his view, and doth not dig deeper and deeper till he become owner of the whole treasure?” [Trapp, 5].

The mid-to-late 19th century was a time of various gold and silver rushes. William Arnot, a contemporary to those events, speaks of the widespread search for hidden treasure: “Multitudes of young and old, from every occupation, and every rank, have left their homes, and traversed stormy seas, and desert continents, to the place where the treasure lies. Not a few have perished on the way; others sink under privations on the spot. The scorching sun by day, and the chill dews at night; labouring all day among water, and sleeping under the imperfect shelter of a tent; the danger of attack by uncivilized natives on the one hand, and by desperately wicked Europeans on the other, all these, and a countless multitude more, are unable to deter from the enterprise, or drive off those who are already engaged. To these regions men flock in thousands, and tens of thousands” [Arnot, 70]. In seeking the wisdom of God, this is the desire and perseverance that we should show. “We everyday see with what anxious diligence men seek for silver. They fatigue their bodies, and waste their spirits; they destroy their health, and expose their lives; they even wound their consciences, and expose themselves to shameful deaths and everlasting misery, that they may load themselves with shining clay. Shall the professed disciples of the great Teacher set less value upon knowledge, than other men set upon silver?... It is therefore highly reasonable, that we diligently and carefully use all those means which God hath appointed for this end; that we hear sermons with earnest attention; that we read and search the word of God, and make it the subject of our frequent meditation; that we make use of edifying conversation; that we go to the wise, who have the law of God in their hearts, whose mouths speaks wisdom, and tongues talk of judgment. To the use of such means of improvement as these, we must add prayer for the divine blessing, to render them effectual to our instruction and salvation” [Lawson, 30]. “Divine knowledge is an unexhaustible mine of precious ore” [Wardlaw].

Let us note again, the increasing earnestness in the exhortations in verses 1 through 4: first, **“accepting”** and **“storing up”**; then **“turning one’s ear”** and **“applying to the heart”**; then, **“calling out”** and **“crying aloud”**; finally, **“looking for as for silver”** and **“searching as for hidden treasure.”** “The search for Divine wisdom must be maintained with increasing earnestness. The verses before us describe a progressive intensity of spiritual effort—receiving, hiding the commandment, inclining the ear, applying the heart, crying after, lifting up the voice, seeking, searching as for hid treasure... It is, moreover, the characteristic of Divine truth that a little knowledge of it kindles the thirst for deeper draughts. Thus we are led on to the most energetic search” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 43].

So, we have enumerated the **“if”**s of seeking wisdom, now we come to the resolutions and payoffs of doing so, the **“then”**s of the conditional: **“...then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God”** (vs. 5). Knowing wisdom and living wisely are intimately intertwined with our relationship to God. The first benefit of earnestly seeking wisdom is to **“understand the fear of the Lord.”** **“Fear”** and reverence for the Lord is essential to living wisely. **“Fearing”** the Lord will keep us from temptation, delivering us from all kinds of trouble, and direct our steps to the paths of righteousness.

The next benefit of earnestly seeking wisdom is to **“find the knowledge of God.”** In Hebrew, the phrase **“knowledge of God”** denotes more than just *book-learning* about God. Such **“knowledge”** goes beyond mere intellectual understanding. “Quite differently, the Hebraic expression for **‘knowledge of God,’** points to a reality which at once includes and transcends intellectual disquisition. It designates the involvement of man’s total personality in the presence of Yahweh through the prophetic word, the cultic celebration, and the psychological mode of communion in faith” [Terrien, in Waltke, 323].

Solomon continues: **“For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding”** (vs. 6).

Here in these first chapters of Proverbs, we find a bit of a paradoxical circularity in the seeking and finding of wisdom: wisdom shouts in the street to be heard (1:20ff), the pupil must cry aloud (v. 3); if the pupil seeks wisdom, then he will understand the fear of the Lord (v. 5), yet the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (1:5-6); he will find the knowledge of God (v. 5), yet the Lord gives wisdom (v. 6). “This is the circular paradox: Seek wisdom, find God; seek God, find wisdom” [Longman]. “The two ideas of **‘the fear of the Lord’** and **‘the knowledge of God’** act reciprocally on each other. Just as without reverence of God there can be no knowledge of him in its true sense, so the knowledge of God will increase and deepen the feeling of reverence” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 35]. “The chapter is an extended appeal by the father to his son to acquire wisdom. This appeal has a paradox at its center: Wisdom is something the son must strive vigorously to achieve, but it is a gift from God. Murphy states it thus: ‘One must strive for the goal, but also realize that wisdom remains a divine gift. Ultimately we have a picture of the acquisition of wisdom by means of human industry and divine aid and generosity’” [Longman, 126].

Note the directness with which we receive wisdom and knowledge from God: **“...from his mouth come knowledge and understanding”** (vs. 6). This is a testament of the direct, divine inspiration of the Bible. The Bible does not consist of human reasoning and philosophy concerning what God may or may not say or do. On the contrary, the Bible writers were divinely and directly inspired by God to write their words, as if those words came **“from his mouth.”**

Solomon next speaks of the practical improvements that God gives to one’s life, which are a result of seeking godly wisdom: **“He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones”** (vs. 7-8). “The way of the saints is indeed fraught with danger; beset with temptation; yet it is safe—kept and preserved by Almighty power, even on the very edge of the ene-

my's ground" [Bridges, 16]. "As the son stores up and treasures wisdom to know piety and ethics, so also God stores up as a hidden treasure the protection inherent in that knowledge" [Waltke, 325].

Solomon continues enumerating the results of seeking wisdom, the "then"s to the corresponding "if"s above: **"Then you will understand what is right and just and fair – every good path"** (vs. 9). A fruit of gaining wisdom is to understand how to deal fairly with others. So many people look to get an edge, to gain an advantage over their neighbor. We as God's people should seek to be **"right and just and fair."** To be so, is to walk **"every good path."** A traveler, going to an unknown place, seeks **"every good path"** – efficient paths, safe paths, paths without difficulties. Such a path, as we travel through life, entails being **"right and just and fair"** to those with whom we have dealings.

Solomon continues with the results of seeking wisdom: **"For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul"** (vs. 10). Once wisdom **"enters our hearts"**, it becomes an integral part of our being. Wisdom then becomes second-nature to us. We then naturally choose the wise path, when faced with decisions. This leads to contentment in life, for **"knowledge will be pleasant to your soul."**

In leading us to **"every good path"**, wisdom naturally helps us avoid the *bad* paths: **"Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you"** (vs. 11). This entails *physical* protection, and just as importantly, *spiritual* protection – protections from the ravages of sin. In the next two sections, Solomon specifically elaborates on *spiritual* protection.

"Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who have left the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways" (vss. 12-15). "Solomon here proceeds to show, that true religion—the wisdom of which he celebrates the excellence and recommends the cultivation—not only has a positively, but also a negatively

beneficial influence; inasmuch as, while it conducts in every **'good path,'** it at the same time is a preservative from paths that are evil" [Wardlaw, 64].

In this section, the tempter is represented as **"wicked men."** These men were, at one time, instructed in the paths of righteousness, but have **"left the straight paths to walk in the dark ways."** "The ways of sin are ways of darkness, uncomfortable and unsafe; what fools are those that leave the plain, pleasant, lightsome paths of uprightness, to walk in those ways!" [Henry, 801]. The protection that wisdom provides is crucial, for we are fallen, and as fallen human beings, our sinful nature draws us to the **"dark ways."** "We need an antidote to temptation. It is not enough to trust to our own spiritual health to throw off the poison. We are already diseased with sin, and have a predisposition to yield to temptation in the corruption of our own hearts" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 44].

If wisdom has entered our hearts, then we will delight in **"what is right and just and fair"**, unlike the **"wicked men"** who **"delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil"** (vs. 14). "To take pleasure in sin is a characteristic of fallen humanity; to delight in seeing others sinning is altogether devilish" [Arnot, 74].

In the next section, the tempter is personified as *the adulterous woman*: **"Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. Surely her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life"** (vss. 16-19). Whereas the **"wicked men"** sought to draw the young man into a life of corruption and deceit, the **"adulterous woman"** preys on the lusts of the young man, and seeks to draw him into adultery and (thus symbolically) idolatry (adultery is representative in the Bible of turning to other gods, away from the true and living God).

To a young man, the draw of the **"adulterous woman"** is powerful, for she uses **"seductive words."** She herself was

drawn into such a life, for she left her husband, **“the partner of her youth,”** and violated her wedding vows, **“the covenant she made before God.”** Succumbing leads to a vortex from which few can recover: **“Surely her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life”** (vss. 18-19).

The archetype in the Bible for one who resisted the **“seductive words”** of the **“adulterous woman”**, is Joseph, who fled from the seductions of Potiphar’s wife (see Gen. 39:6ff). Those who are similarly seduced, need to follow Joseph’s example, and actively *flee*. Seduction is so easy a trap to be ensnared. It’s a gravity that draws from afar. So then, flee while still at a distance, where its pull is still weak.

Ironically, and sadly, the archetype in the Bible for one who falls into this seductive trap is the writer of these words, Solomon himself. “How striking that he should utter beforehand a warning which he afterwards himself disregarded!” [JFB, 418]. Solomon’s descent into the vortex of seduction led not only to physical lasciviousness, but also into spiritual adultery: idolatry and the worship of false gods. We are told of Solomon’s descent: **“King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, ‘You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.’ Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not fol-**

low the Lord completely, as David his father had done. On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods” (1 Kings 11:1-8). “Solomon’s words in this Divinely inspired book are an antidote to the poison of his own vicious example” [Wordsworth, in *Lange’s*, 56].

If Solomon fell in such a way, can we not all say, “There but for the grace of God, go I”? All the more reason to hold fast to Godly wisdom, to store it up in one’s heart, to seek it as silver, to value it as hidden treasure, to let it permeate one’s entire being. To do so, will generate rewards, far better than the fleeting rewards of the life of sin, as Solomon concludes: **“Thus you will walk in the ways of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be torn from it”** (vss. 20-22). “The temporal rewards of piety in the Old Testament dispensation shadow forth both the millennial rewards of it here on earth in the coming age, and also the eternal rewards in the final state” [JFB, 418]. The rewards of the righteous, of those who have accepted the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ, have been guaranteed, given to us in promises by our Lord Himself: **“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”** (John 14:1-3, NKJV).

Notes on the Structure of the Entire Chapter

This chapter was written as a complete, unified poem, and is a beautiful example of Hebrew poetry, in its structure and intricate parallelisms. In the original Hebrew, the entire chapter is actually one, very complex, sentence (for ease of reading, the translators have broken it up into multiple sentences in English). As in the translation, the original contains twenty-two verses (twenty-two is the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, suggesting a *completeness* of sorts for the entire poem). Each half of the poem (verses 1 through 11, and 12 through 22) is broken up into three stanzas. In each half, the first and second stanzas consist of four verses, and the third stanza consists of three verses. Each stanza in the first half (verses 1 to 11) starts with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet *aleph* (excluding the prologue “my son”—the words translated “**if**”, “**then**”, and “**then**” begin with *aleph*), while each stanza in the second half (verses 12 to 22) starts with the twelfth consonant in the Hebrew alphabet *lamed* (the words translated “**will save you**” in verses 12 and 16 begins those stanzas in the original Hebrew, and start with *lamed*; in verse 20, the word translated “**thus**” begins with *lamed*). [Waltke, 316].

So, the first half of the poem (vss. 1 through 11) is *parallel* to the second half of the poem (vss. 12 through 22) by the structure of the stanza, and subtly by the beginning letter of each stanza. Within the first half and second half there are also parallelisms between stanzas. In each half, the stanza that closest to the center (stanzas 2 and 3, and stanzas 4 and 5) are parallel in content to each other. For instance, both stanza 2 (vss. 5-8) and stanza 3 (vss. 9-11) start with the words “**then you will understand**”, then they speak of gaining wisdom, then they speak of wisdom’s protection. Likewise, and more obvious, the content of stanza 4 (vss. 12-15) and stanza 5 (vss. 16-19) are parallel to each other. Both stanzas start with “**wisdom will save you**”, then say from whom (“**the wicked**

men” / “**the adulterous woman**”); then say “**who have left**”; and then speak of the “**paths**” of each.

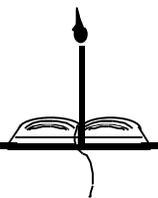
One could go on and study the additional ways that this poem speaks to us, just by its structure, and how the structure re-enforces what the words say (I’ll leave this as an exercise for the reader). The beautiful structure of this poem illustrates that our study of the Bible will never be complete. God’s Word has layer upon layer of depths and meanings, far beyond what we absorb from a cursory reading. Dear reader, your study of the Bible can and should be a life-long endeavor, and such is the depth of this Book, that you will ever and always be finding new treasures.

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All of these books, except Kidman, Longman, and Waltke, can be downloaded free of charge from:
<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist



Upon a Physician's Feeling the Pulse, by William Spurstowe (1666)

How often and how exactly do physicians feel the pulse of their patients? Not a day passes without a strict observation of the motions that it makes, according to which they judge both of the greatness and danger of the distemper, and what the issues are like to be both in respect of life and death. They do not as other visitors, merely ask the patient how he is doing, but inform him rather how he is, and from the report which they make of his malady, the patient's fears and hopes are the more or less. And yet, how rarely do they feel their own pulse, who are so seemingly anxious about another's? Days, weeks, months do elapse, and pass away without any such studious heeding of themselves, as they continually in their profession exercise towards others.

They occasion me to think of the practice of many who cannot so easily be acquitted: those who are severe observers of other men's ways and actions, and as great neglectors of their own; who are far more glad that they can espy a fault in others, than grieved that it is committed; who presume to look into the breast, and to discover how the affections, which are the pulse of the soul, do beat and work in every duty. In some they mistake the heat of their zeal as too much resembling a high and vehement pulse, whose strength and quickness comes not from *health*, but from a *fever*. In others they condemn lukewarmness, an indifferency, whose affections they judge to be as a weak and slow pulse, or as the spring of a watch that is well-nigh down, which clicks and moves very faintly. In some again, they observe an inequality in their pro-

fession, which is accompanied with frequent stands and pauses that they make. Like asthmatical and short-breathed persons, they run a while and blow longer, before they can move again. And upon these, they look with as sad a countenance as a physician does upon his patient that has a false and intermitting pulse. Few or none can be found to escape their censure, who observe the failings of others, as some ancient critics did the imperfect verses of Homer, which they learned by heart, not at all regarding the many good.

But what can be more contrary to the law and rule of Christianity than such practices? How many prohibitions are gone out of the court of heaven to stay such irregular proceedings? Are we not by Christ forbid to *judge lest we be judged*? To judge nothing before the time until the Lord come? And yet what if any man could know the true temper of the affections of others, as fully as a physician can distinguish a well and a sick pulse, would this knowledge be any advantage to him which he is both ignorant and regardless of his own estate? Would he thereby find such joy and comfort in himself, as he that by an impartial examination of himself can discover the truth and sincerity of his own heart to Christ, though he can say nothing of others? Surely this man, as the *hungry*, would be filled with good things, when the other, as the *rich*, should be sent empty away. He, as the humble *publican*, would be justified, when the other, the proud *Pharisee*, should be condemned.

Let others then, physician-like, study the condition of others, I shall look upon it as my duty, and make it my work, not to find out what others are, but what I am in regard of my unfeigned love and affection to Christ, who has transcendently merited my love, though I am wholly unworthy of his. Erastriatus is famed in history for discovering the love of Antiochus to his mother-in-law which shame forced him to conceal, by the motion of his pulse, which he observed to move differently in her presence from what it did at other times. O how happy should I deem myself if I could find the pulse of my

affections always working more quick and lively in me whenever I behold my Savior present in the feast of love, in which he is pleased not only to let me see him, but to enjoy him; or when I hear his name mentioned in a duty, or when I read his name written in his Word, which is therefore the sweeter because his name is so often in it; but I have cause to be ashamed at the uneven temper of my heart, which discovers itself in those intermissions of love and affection that I too often labor under. How often am I chill and cold in the same duty? At what poor trifles do I often stick, when my love to him should blush at the name of difficulty? Can I ever do, or suffer for him too much, whose perfections render him wholly incapable of being loved too much? If I were melted in the flames and ardors of divine love, might I not say still there are degrees and intentions of heart, which I want, and others have? Christians should be the rivals of Seraphim; whose name expresses them to be of a flaming nature, and whose employment, in Isaiah's mysterious vision, is to cry one to another, *holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts*. He is the object to which those flames that warm them do aspire and tend. O that my heart, like the prophet's lips, were touched by some *Seraphim*, that I might love Christ, which is the best of duties, with a heart flaming with the fire of heavenly love, which is the best of tempers.

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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**Knowledge Worthless
Without God**

"He who pursues any [field] of knowledge, however good and honorable in itself, while he forgets God, is ... emphatically a 'fool'. He may be admired by men, as a very prodigy of science, or philosophy, or literature, and may be adorned with all the titles of human honor, and send down his name to future ages with a halo of the light of this world around it; but in the eye of God, he stands the object of deep and merited condemnation; and, while eulogized and extolled on earth, is pitied and deplored in heaven."

-- *Ralph Wardlaw (1779-1853)*

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