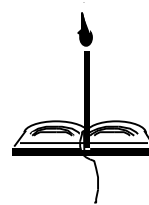


"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord..." Isaiah 1:18

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Old Testament Study: Exodus 25

A Study by C. H. Mackintosh (1820-1896)

Exodus 25 - The Furniture of the Tabernacle

¹ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ² Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. ³ And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, ⁴ And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, ⁵ And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, ⁶ Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, ⁷ Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. ⁸ And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

¹⁰ And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. ¹¹ And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. ¹² And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. ¹³ And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴ And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. ¹⁵ The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. ¹⁶ And thou shalt put into

the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. ¹⁷ And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. ¹⁸ And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. ²⁰ And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. ²¹ And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. ²² And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

²³ Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. ²⁴ And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. ²⁵ And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. ²⁶ And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. ²⁷ Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. ²⁸ And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. ²⁹ And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them. ³⁰ And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway.

³¹ And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. ³² And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one

side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: ³³ Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. ³⁴ And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. ³⁵ And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick. ³⁶ Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold. ³⁷ And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it. ³⁸ And the tongs thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. ³⁹ Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. ⁴⁰ And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount. (KJV)

This chapter forms the commencement of one of the richest veins in Inspiration's exhaustless mine—a vein in which every stroke of the mattock brings to light untold wealth. We know the mattock with which alone we can work in such a mine, namely, the distinct ministry of the Holy Ghost. Nature can do nothing here. Reason is blind—imagination utterly vain—the most gigantic intellect, instead of being able to interpret the sacred symbols, appears like a bat in the sunshine, blindly dashing itself against the objects which it is utterly unable to discern. We must compel reason and imagination to stand without, while, with a chastened heart, a single eye, and a spiritual mind, we enter the hallowed precincts and gaze upon the deeply-significant furniture. God the Holy Ghost is the only One who can conduct us through the courts of the Lord's house, and expound to our souls the true meaning of all that there meets our view. To attempt the exposition, by the aid of intellect's unsanctified powers, would be infinitely more absurd than to set about the repairs of a watch with a blacksmith's tongs and hammer. **“The patterns of things in**

the heavens” (Heb. 9:23) cannot be interpreted by the natural mind, in its most cultivated form. They must all be read in the light of heaven. Earth has no light which could at all develop their beauties. The One who furnished the patterns can alone explain what the patterns mean. The One who furnished the beautiful symbols can alone interpret them.

To the human eye there would seem to be a desultoriness in the mode in which the Holy Ghost has presented the furniture of the tabernacle; but, in reality, as might be expected, there is the most perfect order, the most remarkable precision, the most studious accuracy. From chapter 25 to chapter 30, inclusive, we have a distinct section of the Book of Exodus. This section is divided into two parts, the first terminating at chapter 27:19, and the second at the close of chapter 30. The former begins with the ark of the covenant, inside the vail, and ends with the brazen altar and the court in which that altar stood. That is, it gives us, in the first place, Jehovah’s throne of judgment, whereon He sat as Lord of all the earth; and it conducts us to that place where He met the sinner, in the credit and virtue of accomplished atonement. Then, in the latter, we have the mode of man’s approach to God—the privileges, dignities, and responsibilities of those who, as priests, were permitted to draw nigh to the Divine Presence and enjoy worship and communion there. Thus the arrangement is perfect and beautiful. How could it be otherwise, seeing that it is divine? The ark and the brazen altar present, as it were, two extremes. The former was the throne of God, established in **“justice and judgment”** (Ps. 89:14). The latter was the place of approach for the sinner where **“mercy and truth”** went before Jehovah’s face. Man, in himself, dared not to approach the ark to meet God, for **“the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest”** (Heb. 9:8). But God could approach the altar of brass, to meet man as a sinner. **“Justice and judgment”** could not admit the sinner in; but **“mercy and truth”** could bring God out; not, indeed, in that overwhelming brightness and majesty in which He was wont to shine forth from between those mystic supporters of His throne—**“the cherubim of glory”**— but in that gracious ministry which is symbolically

presented to us in the furniture and ordinances of the tabernacle.

All this may well remind us of the path trodden by that blessed One, who is the Antitype of all these types—the substance of all these shadows. He travelled from the eternal throne of God in heaven, down to the depths of Calvary’s cross. He came from all the glory of the former down into all the shame of the latter, in order that He might conduct His redeemed, forgiven, and accepted people back with Himself, and present them faultless before that very throne which He had left on their account. The Lord Jesus fills up, in His own Person and work, every point between the throne of God and the dust of death, and every point between the dust of death and the throne of God. In Him God has come down, in perfect grace, to the sinner; in Him the sinner is brought up, in perfect righteousness, to God. All the way, from the ark to the brazen altar, was marked with the footprints of love; and all the way from the brazen altar to the ark of God was sprinkled with the blood of atonement; and as the ransomed worshipper passes along that wondrous path, he beholds the name of Jesus stamped on all that meets his view. May that name be dearer to our hearts! Let us now proceed to examine the chapters consecutively.

It is most interesting to note here, that the first thing which the Lord communicates to Moses is His gracious purpose to have a sanctuary or holy dwelling-place in the midst of His people—a sanctuary composed of materials, which directly point to Christ, His Person, His work, and the precious fruit of that work, as seen in the light, the power, and the varied graces of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, these materials were the fragrant fruit of the grace of God—the voluntary offerings of devoted hearts. Jehovah, whose majesty, **“the heaven of heavens could not contain”** (I Kings 8:27), was graciously pleased to dwell in a boarded and curtained tent, erected for Him by those who cherished the fond desire to hail His presence amongst them. This tabernacle may be viewed in two ways: first, as furnishing **“a pattern of things in the heavens”** (Heb. 9:23); and, secondly, as presenting a deeply signifi-

cant type of the body of Christ. The various materials of which the tabernacle was composed will come before us, as we pass along; we shall, therefore, consider the three comprehensive subjects put before us in this chapter, namely, the ark; the table; and the candlestick.

The ark of the covenant occupies the leading place in the divine communications to Moses. Its position, too, in the tabernacle was most marked. Shut in within the veil, in the holiest of all, it formed the base of Jehovah's throne. Its very name conveys to the mind its import. An ark, so far as the word instructs us, is designed to preserve *intact* whatever is put therein. An ark carried Noah and his family, together with all the orders of creation, in safety over the billows of judgment which covered the earth. An ark, at the opening of this book, was faith's vessel for preserving "a proper child" (Heb. 11:23), from the waters of death. When, therefore, we read of "**the ark of the covenant,**" we are led to believe that it was designed of God to preserve His covenant unbroken, in the midst of an erring people. In it, as we know, the second set of tables were deposited. As to the first set, they were broken in pieces, beneath the mount, showing that man's covenant was wholly abolished—that his work could never, by any possibility, form the basis of Jehovah's throne of government. "**Justice and judgment are the habitation of that throne**" (Ps. 89:14), whether in its earthly or heavenly aspect. The ark could not contain, within its hallowed enclosure, broken tables. Man might fail to fulfil his self-chosen vow; but God's law must be preserved in its divine integrity and perfectness. If God was to set up His throne in the midst of His people, He could only do so in a way worthy of Himself. His standard of judgment and government must be perfect.

"**And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them**" (vss. 13-14). The ark of the covenant was to accompany the people in all their wanderings. It never rested while they were a travelling or a conflicting host. It moved from place to place in the wilderness. It went before them into

the midst of Jordan; it was their grand rallying point in all the wars of Canaan; it was the sure and certain earnest of power wherever it went. No power of the enemy could stand before that which was the well-known expression of the divine presence and power. The ark was to be Israel's companion in travel, in the desert; and "**the staves**" and "**the rings**" were the apt expression of its travelling character.

However, it was not always to be a traveler. *The afflictions of David*, as well as the wars of Israel, were to have an end. The prayer was yet to be breathed and answered, "**Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength**" (Ps. 132:8). This most sublime petition had its partial accomplishment in the palmy days of Solomon, when "**the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark, and the staves thereof above. And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day**" (I Kings 8:6-8). The sand of the desert was to be exchanged for the golden floor of the temple (I Kings 6:30). The wanderings of the ark were to have an end; there was *neither enemy nor evil occurrent*, and, therefore, *the staves were drawn out*.

Nor was this the only difference between the ark in the tabernacle and in the temple. The apostle, speaking of the ark in its wilderness habitation, describes it as "**the ark of the covenant, overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant**" (Heb. 9:4). Such were the contents of the ark, in its wilderness journeyings—the pot of manna, the record of Jehovah's faithfulness, in providing for His redeemed in the desert, and Aaron's rod, "**a token against the rebels,**" to "**take away their murmurings**" (Compare Exod. 16:32-34, and Num. 17:10). But when the moment arrived in the which "**the staves**" were to be

“drawn out,” when the wanderings and wars of Israel were over, when the “**exceeding magnificent**” house was completed (I Chron. 22:5), when the sun of Israel’s glory had reached, in type, its meridian, as marked by the wealth and splendour of Solomon’s reign, then the records of wilderness need and wilderness failure were unnoticed, and nothing remained save that which constituted the eternal foundation of the throne of the God of Israel, and of all the earth. **“There was nothing in the ark, save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb”** (I Kings 8:9).

But all this brightness was soon to be overcast by the heavy clouds of human failure and divine displeasure. The rude foot of the uncircumcised was yet to walk across the ruins of that beautiful house, and its faded light and departed glory were yet to elicit the contemptuous *biss* of the stranger. This would not be the place to follow out these things in detail; I shall only refer my reader to the last notice which the Word of God affords us of **“the ark of the covenant,”**—a notice which carries us forward to a time when human folly and sin shall no more disturb the resting-place of that ark, and when neither a curtained tent, nor yet a temple made with hands, shall contain it. **“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.’ And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, ‘We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth.’ And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple *the ark of his covenant*: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail”** (Rev.

11:15-19).

The mercy-seat comes next in order. **“And thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy-seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end; even of the mercy-seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel”** (vss. 17-22).

Here Jehovah gives utterance to His gracious intention of coming down from off the fiery mount to take His place upon the mercy-seat. This He could do, inasmuch as the tables of testimony were preserved unbroken beneath, and the symbols of His power, whether in creation or providence, rose on the right hand and on the left—the inseparable adjuncts of that throne on which Jehovah had seated Himself—a throne of grace founded upon divine righteousness and supported by justice and judgment. Here the glory of the God of Israel shone forth. From hence He issued His commands, softened and sweetened by the gracious source from whence they emanated, and the medium through which they came—like the beams of the mid-day sun, passing through a cloud, we can enjoy their genial and enlivening influence without being dazzled by their brightness. **“His commandments are not grievous”** (I John 5:3) when received from off the mercy-seat, because they come in connection with grace, which gives the ears to hear and the power to obey.

Looking at the ark and mercy-seat together, we may see in them a striking figure of Christ, in His Person and work. He having, in His life, magnified the law and made it honourable, became, through death, a propitiation or mercy-seat for every one that believeth. God's mercy could only repose on a pedestal of perfect righteousness. **"Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Rom. 5:21). The only proper meeting place between God and man is the point where grace and righteousness meet and perfectly harmonize. Nothing but perfect righteousness could suit God; and nothing but perfect grace could suit the sinner. But where could these attributes meet in one point? Only in the cross. There it is that **"mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other"** (Ps. 85:10). Thus it is that the soul of the believing sinner finds peace. He sees that God's righteousness and his justification rest upon precisely the same basis, namely, Christ's accomplished work. When man, under the powerful action of *the truth* of God, takes his place as a sinner, God can, in the exercise of *grace*, take His place as a Saviour, and then every question is settled, for the cross having answered all the claims of divine justice, mercy's copious streams can flow unhindered. When a righteous God and a ruined sinner meet, on a blood-sprinkled platform, all is settled for ever—settled in such a way as perfectly glorifies God and eternally saves the sinner. God must be true, though every man be proved a liar; and when man is so thoroughly brought down to the lowest point of his own moral condition before God as to be willing to take the place which God's truth assigns him, he then learns that God has revealed Himself as the righteous Justifier of such an one. This must give settled peace to the conscience; and not only so, but impart a capacity to commune with God and hearken to His holy precepts, in the intelligence of that relationship into which divine grace has introduced us.

Hence, therefore, *the holiest of all* unfolds a truly wondrous scene. The ark, the mercy-seat, the cherubim, the glory! What a sight for the high priest of Israel to behold as, once a year, he went in within the vail! May the Spirit of God open the eyes of

our understandings, that we may understand more fully the deep meaning of those precious types.

Moses is next instructed about **"the table of show-bread"** (vs. 30), or bread of presentation. On this table stood the food of the priests of God. For seven days those twelve loaves of *fine flour with frankincense* were presented before the Lord, after which, being replaced by others, they became the food of the priests who fed upon them in the holy place. (See Lev. 24:5-9). It is needless to say that those twelve loaves typify *the man Christ Jesus*. The **"fine flour"** of which they were composed mark His perfect manhood, while the **"frankincense"** points out the entire devotion of that manhood to God. If God has His priests ministering in the holy place, He will assuredly have a table for them, and a well-furnished table too. Christ is the table and Christ is the bread thereon. The pure table and the twelve loaves shadow forth Christ, as presented before God, unceasingly, in all the excellency of His spotless humanity, and administered as food to the priestly family. The **"seven days"** set forth the perfection of the divine enjoyment of Christ; and the **"twelve loaves"** the administration of that enjoyment in and by man. There is also, I should venture to suggest, the idea of Christ's connection with the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The candlestick of pure gold comes next in order, for God's priests need *light* as well as *food*; and they have both the one and the other in Christ. In this candlestick there is no mention of anything but pure gold. **"All of it shall be one beaten work of pure gold"** (vs. 36). **"The seven lamps,"** which **"gave light over against"** the candlestick (vs. 37), express the perfection of the light and energy of the Spirit, founded upon and connected with the perfect efficacy of the work of Christ. The work of the Holy Ghost can never be separated from the work of Christ. This is set forth, in a double way, in this beautiful figure of the golden candlestick. **"The seven lamps"** being connected with **"the shaft"** of **"beaten gold,"** points us to Christ's finished work as the sole basis of the manifestation of the Spirit in the Church. The

Holy Ghost was not given until Jesus was glorified. (Comp. John 7:39 with Acts 19:2-6). In the third chapter of Revelation, Christ is presented to the church of Sardis as **“having the seven spirits.”** It was as **“exalted to the right hand of God,”** that the Lord Jesus **“shed forth”** the Holy Ghost upon His Church, in order that she might shine, according to the power and perfection of her position, in the holy place, her proper sphere of being, of action, and of worship.

Then, again, we find it was one of Aaron’s specific functions to light and trim those seven lamps. **“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ‘Command the children of Israel that they bring unto thee pure oil olive, beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. Without the vail of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning, before the Lord continually: it shall be a statute forever in your generations. He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the Lord continually”** (Lev. 24:1-4). Thus we may see how the work of the Holy Ghost in the Church is linked with Christ’s work on earth and His work in heaven. **“The seven lamps”** were there, no doubt; but priestly energy and diligence were needed in order to keep them trimmed and lighted. The priest would continually need **“the tongs and snuff-dishes”** for the purpose of removing aught that would not be a fit vehicle for the **“pure beaten oil.”** Those tongs and snuff-dishes were of **“beaten gold”** likewise, for the whole matter was the direct result of divine operation. If the Church shine, it is only by the energy of the Spirit, and that energy is founded upon Christ, who, in pursuance of God’s eternal counsel, became, in His sacrifice and Priesthood, the spring and power of everything to His Church. All is of God. Whether we look within that mysterious vail, and behold the ark with its cover, and the two significant figures attached thereto; or if we gaze on that which lay without the vail, the pure table and the pure candlestick, with their distinctive vessels and instruments—all speak to us of God, whether as revealed to us in connection with the Son or the Holy Ghost.

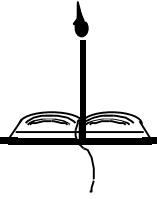
Christian reader, your high calling places you in the very

midst of all these precious realities. Your place is not merely amid **“the patterns of things in the heavens,”** but amid **“the heavenly things themselves”** (Heb. 9:23). You have **“boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”** (Heb. 10:19). You are a priest unto God. **“The show-bread”** is yours. Your place is at **“the pure table”** to feed on the priestly food, in the light of the Holy Ghost. Nothing can ever deprive you of those divine privileges. They are yours forever. Let it be your care to watch against everything that might rob you of the enjoyment of them. Beware of all unhal- lowed tempers, lusts, feelings, and imaginations. Keep nature down—keep the world out—keep Satan off. May the Holy Ghost fill your whole soul with Christ. Then you will be practically holy and abidingly happy. You will bear fruit, and the Father will be glorified, and your joy shall be full.

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 1:9-11 (part 1)



[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.]

A Study by Joseph Caryl (1644)

Job 1:9-11 (part 1) – “Doth Job Fear God for Naught?”

⁹Then Satan answered the Lord and said, **‘Doth Job fear God for naught? ¹⁰Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. ¹¹But put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.’**” (KJV)

In the former verse, Job received testimony from God himself; in this, though Satan cannot deny it, yet he calumniates and misinterprets what he cannot contradict. Satan grants indeed that Job fears God, but the latter words debase the former, and fasten insincerity upon all his services. **“Doth Job fear God for naught?”** (vs. 9). Fear is worth nothing unless in this sense it be for naught. I have already showed you what it is to fear God; I shall now clear the other term, and show how much evil Satan charges Job with, when he questions, **“Doth Job fear God for naught?”**

Satan accuses with a question, **“Doth Job fear God for naught?”** The question may be resolved into this accusation: *Job does not fear God for naught.* The word which we translate *for naught*, has a threefold sense from the Hebrew.

First, some render it *in vain*. So: *Doth Job fear God in vain?* We are then said to do a thing in vain, when we cannot attain the end which we propose in doing of it. **“The Egyptians help in vain”** (Isa. 30:7), that is, they cannot procure that salvation and deliverance which was desired or intended. And so, the sense here may be, *“Doth Job fear God in vain?”* No, he does not; he has his end; he looked for riches, that he intended in taking up the service of God, and that he has attained.

Secondly, it is interpreted as, *without cause*. So: *Doth Job fear God without cause?* So the word is translated in Psalm 35:7, where David, complaining of his enemies, said, **“Without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.”** As if he should say, I never gave them any cause as to why they should lay snares for me; I never wronged or hurt any of them. According to this sense, when Satan said, **“Doth Job fear God for naught?”**, namely, *without cause*, it is as if he had said, *“The Lord has given Job reason enough; he has given him cause enough to do what he does; Job sees reason in his hocks and in his herds, in his many children, and in his great household, in his substance, and in his honor, he sees reason in all these; why, he should fear God, and be a very obedient servant, having so bountiful a matter. Does Job fear God without cause?”*

Or thirdly, the word is translated by *gratis* (as we express it), to do a thing *gratis*; that is, to do a thing without any reward, without any price, or without pay. I shall cite scriptures wherein the word is rendered in that sense. In Gen. 29:15, Laban said to Jacob, when he had come to him, to serve him, **“Thou art my kinsman, shouldest thou therefore serve me for naught?”**, that is, shouldest thou serve me *gratis*, or without wages, as he explains his meaning in the next words, **“Tell me what shall thy wages be?”** So that to do a thing for naught, is to do a thing without wages, without price. And so there is the same interpretation of the word in Ex. 21:11, where Moses speaking of the maid that was taken into the family and was not married, said, **“If he does not these three unto her, then she shall go out free without money”**; she shall pay nothing; she shall go out *gratis*, or for naught. So

here we may take in this sense to fill up the form, *Doth Job serve God gratis? Doth he serve God without price or without pay? Surely no, thou hast given him sufficient hire, wages sufficient for all his service; Job does not serve thee gratis, out of good will and affection to thee, but he serves thee for hire, because thou payest him so plentifully.*

So the general sense of the words, **“Doth Job fear God for naught?”**, is as if Satan had bespoken the Lord in such words as these: *Lord, thou dost enquire of me whether I had considered thy servant Job? I confess I have, and I must needs acknowledge that he is a man very diligent and zealous in thy worship and service neither do I wonder that he is so, seeing thou hast out-bid all his labours and endeavours by heaps of benefits. There is no question but thou mayest have servants enough upon such terms, at such rates as these: no marvel if Job be willing to do whatsoever thou commandest, whenas thou bestowest upon Job whatsoever he desireth. Thou seemest as it were to neglect all other men, and only to intend the safety and prosperity of thy darling Job. Is it any great matter, that he who hath received a flock of seven thousand sheep from thee, should offer a few, seven or ten, to thee in sacrifice? Is it any great matter that he should give some of his fleeces to clothe the poor, who hath received from thee so many thousands to clothe and enrich himself? Is it a strange thing that he should feed a few that hath 500 yoke of oxen? Is not Job well hired to work for thee? Doth he fear God for naught, who hath received all these?*

First note, that Satan implies that riches will make any man serve God, that it is no great matter to be holy when we have abundance; a man that prospers in the world cannot choose but be good. This Satan implies, and this is an extreme lie. For as there is no affliction, so there's no outward blessing that can change the heart or bring it about unto God: **“They did not serve the Lord in the abundance of all things”** (Deut. 28:47). Abundance does not draw the heart to God. Yet Satan would infer that it does. This might well be retorted upon Satan himself: Satan, why did you not serve God, then? You once received more outward blessings from God than ever Job did, the blessedness of an angel; yet that glorious angelical estate wherein you were created, could not keep you in the compass of obedience. You rebelled in the abundance of all blessings, and left your habitation. Satan,

you should not have served God for naught. Why then did you not serve him? Your own apostasy refutes your error in making so little of Job's obedience, because he had received so much.

Secondly, there is this in it: by asking, *“Doth Job fear God for naught?”*, Satan intimates that God could have no servants for love, none unless he did pay them extremely; that God is such a master and his work such as none would meddle with, unless allured by benefits. It is as if Satan should say, “You have indeed one eminent servant, but you should not have had him unless you had been at double cost with him.” Here is another lie Satan winds up closely in this speech, for the truth is, God's servants follow him for himself. The very excellencies of God, and sweetness of his ways, are the argument and the wages by which his people are chiefly moved and hired to his service. God indeed makes many promises to those that serve him, but he never makes any bargains to hire men to his service, as Satan did with Christ: **“All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me”** (Matt. 4:9). God makes many large and gracious promises, but he never makes any such bargain and agreement with men for their obedience.

Then there is a third sense full of falsehood, which Satan casts upon Job, *Doth Job fear God for naught?*: that is, Satan implies that Job has a bias in all that he does; that he is carried by the game of godliness, not by any delight in godliness thus to serve God. Job is mercenary, he serves God for hire; Job has not any desire to please God, but to benefit himself; Job does not seek the glory of God, but he seeks his own advantage. This is the sense which the words have in reference to the person of Job; that as once Satan accused God unto man, so now he accuses this man unto God; he accused God unto man in Gen. 3: When God had forbidden him to eat of the Tree of knowledge of good and evil, and told him that in the day he did eat thereof he should surely die: **“Ye shall not surely die,”** said Satan, **“for God knoweth that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods knowing good and evil”** (Gen. 3:4-5). As

if he should say, *God has not forbidden this tree, because it will do you any hurt, but because he would be God alone; he would have all the knowledge to himself; he has an ill intent: he knows that if you eat of it, you will be like him, as gods knowing good and evil.* So here he accuses man to God: *Job serves you indeed and offers you sacrifice and obeys you, but it is that he may get by you, that he may receive more and more from you; he likes the pay, the reward, not the work; he cares not for God, but for the good that comes from him.* This is the accusation which here the slanderer casts upon all the holy services and duties of Job.

Thus in brief you see the sense; I shall give you some observations from it.

The first is this: *It is an argument of a most malignant spirit, when a man's actions are fair, then to accuse his intentions.* The devil has nothing to say against the actions of Job, but he goes down into his heart and accuses his intentions. Malice misinterprets the fairest actions, but love puts the fairest interpretation it can upon soul actions. Malice will say when a man does well, it is true he does it, but it is for vain glory, it is to be seen of men, it is for his own ends, it is for game. But when a man does ill, love will say, this he has done through ignorance, or inadvertency or violent temptations. Love covers a multitude of sins as fairly as possibly it may with wisdom and with justice. How fair a cover did Christ himself put upon the foulest act that ever was in the world, upon his own crucifying, **“Father forgive them, they know not what they do”** (Luke 23:34); they do it indeed, but they do it ignorantly. So also Peter afterward, **“I wot that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers”** (Acts 3:17). Love excuses what is ill done in another, and malice accuses what others do well. Let such men learn from hence, that in so doing they are the mouth and tongue of Satan.

Secondly, we may observe from hence: *That it is an argument of a base and an unworthy spirit to serve God for ends.* Had this been true in Satan's sense, it had indeed spoiled and blemished all that Job had done. Those that come to God upon such terms are not holy, but crafty; they make a trade with God; they do not serve God; it is not obedient, but mercantile; it is

merchandizing with God, not obeying him. There is reward enough in God himself; there is reward enough in the very duties themselves; work and wages go together. Therefore, for any to be carried out to the service of God upon outward things, argues a base and an earthly spirit. As sin is punishment enough unto itself, though there were no other punishment, though there were no hell to come after, yet to do evil is or will be hell enough to itself, so to do good is reward enough unto itself. A secular poet observed it as a brand of infamy upon the age wherein he lived, that most did repent that they had done good or were good *gratis* or for naught, that the price of all good actions fell in their esteem, unless they could raise themselves. If a non-Christian condemned this, how damnable is it among Christians?

But here a question will arise, and I shall a little debate it, because it does further clear the main point, *May we not have respect to our own good or unto the benefit we shall receive from God?* Is it unlawful to have an eye to our own advantage, while we do our duty? Must we serve God for naught in that strict sense, or else will God account nothing of all our services?

I shall clear that in five brief conclusions, and these will (I suppose) fully state the sense of this text and of this speech.

The first is this, *There is no man does or possibly can serve God for naught.* God has by benefits already bestowed, and by benefits promised out-vied and outbid all the endeavors and services of the creature. If a man had a thousand pair of hands, a thousand tongues and a thousand heads, and should set them all on work for God, he were never able to answer the engagements and obligations which God has already put upon him. Therefore, this is a truth, that no man can in a strict sense serve God for naught. God is not beholden to any creature for any work or service that is done unto him.

Again secondly, this is further to be considered. The more outward blessings anyone does receive, the more he ought to serve God, and the more service God looks for at his hands. That is another conclusion. Therefore, we find still, that when God has bestowed outward blessings upon any, either persons or nations, he charges an acknowledgement upon

them: **“She did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold which she bestowed upon Baal, therefore I will come and recover it,”** said God (Hos. 2:8). You having received this, you ought to have served me with it. You see how God upbraids David: **“I anointed thee King of Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy Master’s house and thy Masters wives into thy bosom, and if this had been too little, I would moreover have given thee such and such things. How is it then that thou hast despised the Commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?”** (II Sam. 12:7-8). As if he should say, the more I bestowed upon thee, the more obligations you should feel yourself under to obey me faithfully.

In the third place, *it is lawful to have some respect to benefits* both received and promised by way of motive and encouragement to stir us up and quicken us, either in doing or in suffering for God. **“Moses had respect to the recompense of reward”** (Heb. 11:26), therefore it is not unlawful; and Christ himself was **“looking at the joy that was set before him”** (Heb. 12:2). These are examples beyond all exceptions, that respect may be had to benefits and blessings received and expected.

Fourthly, then *reference to benefits is sinful, when we make it either the sole and only cause, or the supreme and chief cause of our obedience.* This makes anything we do smell so of ourselves that God abides it not: when we respect ourselves, either alone or above God, God has no respect at all to us. As Christ taxes those, *you did not seek me but the loaves* (John 6:26), to have respect to the loaves more than to Christ, or as much as to Christ, is to have no respect at all to Christ.

Thus when the Shechemites, in Gen. 34:22ff, admitted of circumcision, and so gave up themselves as a covenant people to God, here was all the argument they proposed to themselves, **“Shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours?”** (Gen. 34:23). What beasts were these Shechemites? What shadows of religion, who would take upon them this badge of religion for the gain of beasts

and worldly substance? Such pure respects to ourselves, defile all our services and render our persons odious unto God.

Therefore, in all our duties and holy services, we must set the glory of God in the throne, that must be above; and then we may set our desires of heaven and glory on the right hand; we may set the fear of hell and the avoiding of misery on the left hand, we may set our desire of enjoying outward comforts here in the world at the footstool. Thus we must arrange and rank respect to God and ourselves. And thus we may look upon outward things, as motives and encouragements; we must not make them ends and causes; we may make them as occasions, but not as ground of our obedience.

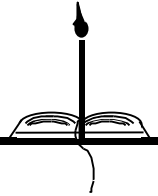
Lastly, *we may look upon them as fruits and consequences of holiness*, yea as encouragements unto holiness, but not as causes of our holiness; or we may eye these as *media*, through which to see the bounty and goodness of God, not as *objects* on which to free and terminate our desires.

So much for the clearing of the first part of Satan’s answer, **“Doth Job serve God for naught?”** Wherein you see, he casts dirt upon Job’s sincerest duties, and how we may carry our respects in the service of God to outward blessings, whither received or promised.

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



New Testament Study: Matthew 27:57-66



A Study by Scott Sperling

Matthew 27:57-66 - The Burial of Jesus

⁵⁷ As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

⁶² The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

⁶⁵ "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Jesus had died, and was hanging on the cross. In other societies, the Romans would commonly leave crucified criminals on the cross, to rot there, and to serve as a warning to

others. However, in Israel, because leaving a body on the cross was against the Jewish Law (see Deut. 21:23), crucified criminals would be buried, typically in a common grave [Osbourne].

The body of Jesus was given a more honorable burial, due to the actions of Joseph of Arimathea: **"As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him"** (vss. 57-58). Apparently, no family members of Jesus, nor any of his close followers, the Apostles, had the courage to ask for the body of Jesus. Instead, Joseph of Arimathea asked for, and did receive the body of Jesus. Joseph was a rich man, and because of this, perhaps, he could gain access to Pilate to ask for the body. Pilate did not refuse the request.

Joseph was a follower of Christ, though not a close follower (John in his gospel tells us that he followed Jesus **"secretly"**, see John 19:38). He was also a prominent member of the Sanhedrin (see Mark 15:43), which explains why he followed Jesus *secretly*. But in this passage, to serve Jesus, and give his body a proper burial, Joseph boldly revealed himself as a follower of Jesus, not fearing any repercussions. "At a time when the apostles had forsaken our Lord,—at a time when it was a dangerous thing to confess regard for Him,—at a time when there seemed to be no earthly advantage to be gained by confessing His discipleship,—at such a time as this, Joseph comes boldly forward, and begs the body of Jesus, and lays it in his own new tomb." [Ryle, 400-401]. "The crucifixion that sent most of Jesus' followers into hiding had the opposite effect on Joseph and brought him out into the open" [Morris]. "It was highly dangerous for such a man to avow himself a Christian. But the privilege of burying the body of his beloved Master encouraged him to run the risk. We are best known as Christ's by what we will do for him, especially when our service in-

volves sacrifice” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 619]. “Joseph was a fit man; for he had wherewithal to bury Christ’s body, being a rich man; most of Christ’s disciples were poor men, and as such, were most fit to go about the country to preach the gospel; but here was one that was a rich man, ready to be employed in a piece of service which required a man of estate. Note, worldly wealth, though it is to many an obstruction in religion’s way, yet in some services to be done for Christ, it is an advantage and an opportunity, and it is well for those who have it, if withal they have a heart to use it for God’s glory.” [Henry, 249].

Certainly, being a member of the Sanhedrin, Joseph felt some responsibility for Jesus’ death (though Luke tells us that Joseph did not consent to the Sanhedrin decisions about Jesus, see Luke 23:51). And indeed, we all should have the awareness of blame for the death of Jesus (though none of us were part of the Sanhedrin decisions). We all share blame for Christ’s death, because we all have sinned, and the penalty for our sins was paid by Christ on the cross.

We are not certain of where “**Arimathea**” was, but because of Joseph’s noble actions, honor will be brought to that unknown town forever.

Joseph, with the help of Nicodemus (see John 19:39), another of Jesus’ *secret* disciples, prepared the body, and then buried it: **“Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away”** (vss. 59-60). To prepare the body, we are told by John, that Nicodemus **“brought a mixture of myrrhs and aloes, about seventy-five pounds”** (John 19:39). This was an expensive burial, fit for a king. “After all the abusive treatment endured by Jesus, the manner of his burial is surprising. The ignominy of having his body hang on the cross after sundown on Sabbath eve during the Feast of Unleavened Bread is avoided by the action of Joseph, who brings the story of Jesus’s horrible death to an end by giving him a decent burial” [Turner, 677].

It was necessary that the body of Christ be buried, and to stay in the tomb until the third day, in order to more clearly testify to the truth of the resurrection. “The infinite wisdom of God foresaw the objections of unbelievers and infidels, and provided against them.—Did the Son of God really die? Did he really rise again? Might there not have been some delusion as to the reality of His death? Might there not have been imposition or deception, as to the reality of His resurrection?—All these, and many more objections, would doubtless have been raised, if opportunity had been given! But He who knows the end from the beginning, prevented the possibility of such objections being made. By His over-ruling providence, He ordered things so that the death and burial of Jesus were placed beyond a doubt.—Pilate gives consent to His burial. A loving disciple wraps the body in linen, and lays it in a new tomb hewn out of a rock, wherein was never man yet laid. The chief priests themselves set a guard over the place where His body was deposited. Jews and Gentiles, friends and enemies, all alike testify to the great fact, that Christ did really and actually die, and was laid in a grave. It is a fact that can never be questioned” [Ryle, 398-399]. “Buried our Saviour was: 1. That none might doubt his death. 2. That our sins might be buried with him. 3. That our graves might be prepared and perfumed for us, as so many beds of roses. He was buried in Calvary, to note that he died for the condemned; and in a garden, to expiate that first sin committed in the garden; and in another man’s sepulchre to note that he died for other men’s sins” [Trapp, 278].

After the preparation of the body, the body was laid in the tomb, and a large stone moved in front of the entrance. “The typical Jewish tomb also had: (1) a heavy wheel-shaped stone, four to six feet in diameter, rolled into a shallow trough and kept in place by a short wall on both sides of the opening; (2) a burial chamber with a preparation room encircled with a stone bench on which the body was readied; (3) burial niches (six feet long and two feet high) cut into the wall either above the bench or in a separate chamber; (4) a decorated limestone

'bone box' (ossuary) on the floor to gather the bones after the body had decomposed. A wealthy tomb especially would have a groove sloping down into the doorway, with the heavy stone rolled into it; while it was easy to roll in, it would take several men to roll it up the slope" [Osbourne].

Jesus was laid in a tomb that was not his own, and as we shall see, the tomb is merely borrowed by Christ, not owned. "When we go to the grave, we go to our own place; but our Lord Jesus, that had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own; dying under imputed sin, it was fit he should be buried in a borrowed grave... He was laid in a new tomb, which Joseph, it is likely, designed for himself; but it would be never the worse for his lying in it, who was to rise so quickly" [Henry, 249].

Jesus, eminent though he is, did not have a funeral fit for his eminence. Besides Joseph and Nicodemus, only his most faithful followers attended, those who were with him throughout his suffering, the women: **"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb"** (vs. 61). "Here were none of the relations in mourning to follow the corpse, no formalities to grace the solemnity, but some good women that were true mourners, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary. These, as they had attended him to the cross, so they followed him to the grave, as if they composed themselves to sorrow; they sat over against the sepulchre, not so much to fill their eyes with the light of what was done, as to empty them in rivers of tears" [Henry, 250].

Though dead and buried, Jesus worried the Jewish leaders: **"The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 'Sir,' they said, 'we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, "After three days I will rise again." So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first'"** (vss. 62-64). As stated, this took place on the day **"after Preparation**

Day," which is the Sabbath day after Passover. This is somewhat ironic, because the Pharisees often quarreled with Jesus concerning doing work on the Sabbath, and yet here, they work to see that a guard is posted and that the tomb of Jesus is sealed. "The restless enmity of these unhappy men could not sleep, even when the body of Jesus was in the grave" [Ryle, 400].

Significantly, these Jewish leaders remembered, and took to heart, that Jesus predicted that he would rise again: **"'Sir,' they said, 'we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, "After three days I will rise again'"**" (vs. 63). These leaders remembered and took to heart what Jesus' own disciples did not understand nor take to heart, though they were told by Jesus numerous times that he would rise from the dead. "There is a powerful irony in the fact that they **'remember'** Jesus' teaching about being raised on the third day, for his disciples have remembered nothing about Jesus' prediction. It is a strange quirk of history that the only ones who realize what Jesus really meant are his enemies, not his followers! The leaders place a guard at the tomb when they do not need to, for the disciples are too ignorant even to think of such a thing as stealing the body!" [Osbourne]. "The fear of the religious leaders that the disciples will steal Jesus's body and deceive people with false resurrection claims seems to be irrational. They overestimate the scattered, terrified disciples, yet their worse mistake is to underestimate Jesus. They rule out any possibility that God would make good on Jesus's repeated promises of resurrection" [Turner, 677].

They ask that the tomb **"be made secure"**, and Pilate acquiesces to their request: **"'Take a guard,' Pilate answered. 'Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.' So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard"** (vss. 65-66). There is further irony here, for by posting a guard and sealing the tomb, the Jewish leaders ensured beyond doubt that no fraud or mischief could be perpetrated with respect to Jesus' body. So, by posting the guard, they strengthen the evi-

dence that Jesus, indeed, did rise from the dead. “Thus carefully did Christ’s enemies obviate the possibility of any fraud or collusion; thus did they themselves prove unanswerably the truth and reality of the resurrection of that same Jesus whose dead body they so carefully guarded” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 600]. “They little thought what they were doing. They little thought that unwittingly they were providing the most complete evidence of the truth of Christ’s coming resurrection. They were actually making it impossible to prove that there was any deception or imposition. Their seal, their guard, their precautions, were all to become witnesses, in a few hours, that Christ had risen” [Ryle, 401].

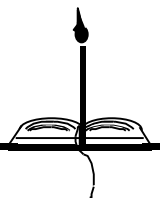
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<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



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. 4, 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).**

We must *direct our prayer unto God*. He must not only hear our voice, but we must with deliberation and design address ourselves to him. In the original, it is no more but I will direct unto thee; it might be supplied, *I will direct my soul unto thee*, agreeing with Psalm 25:1: **“Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.”** Or, *I will direct my affections to thee*; having set my love upon thee, I will let out my love to thee. Our translation supplies it very well, *I will direct my prayer unto thee*.

That is,

1. When I pray to thee, I will *direct* my prayers: it denotes a fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind, to the duty of prayer. We must go about it solemnly, as those that have something of moment much at heart, and much in view therein, and therefore dare not trifle in it. When we go to pray, we must not give the sacrifice of fools, that think not either what is to be done, or what is to be gained, but speak the words of the wise, who aim at some good end in what they say, and suit it to that end. We must have in our eye God’s glory, and our own true happiness; and so well

ordered is the covenant of grace, that God has been pleased therein to twist interests with us; so that in seeking his glory, we really and effectually seek our own true interest. This is directing the prayer, as he that shoots an arrow at a mark directs it, and with a fixed eye and steady hand takes aim aright. This is engaging the heart to approach to God, and in order to that, disengaging it from everything else. He that takes aim with one eye, shuts the other; if we would direct a prayer to God, we must look off all other things, must gather in our wandering thoughts, must summon them all to draw near and give their attendance; for here is work to be done that needs them all, and is well worthy of them. Thus we must be able to say with the Psalmist, **“O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed”** (Ps. 57:7).

2. When I direct my prayer, I will direct it to *thee*. And so it speaks,

a. The sincerity of our habitual intention in prayer. We must not direct our prayer to men, that we may gain praise and applause with them, as the Pharisees did, who proclaimed their devotions as they did their alms, that they might gain a reputation, which they knew how to make a hand of. Verily they have their reward; men commend them, but God abhors their pride and hypocrisy. We must not let our prayers run at large, as they did that said, “Who will show us any good?” Nor are we to direct them to the world, courting its smiles, and pursuing its wealth, as those that are therefore said not to cry unto God with their hearts, because they assembled themselves for corn and wine (see Hos. 7:14). Let not self, carnal self, be the spring and center of your prayers, but God; let the eye of the soul be fixed upon him as your highest end in your applications to him; let this be the habitual disposition of your souls, to be to your God for a name and a praise; and let this be your design in all your desires, that God may be glorified, and by this let them all be directed, determined, sanctified, and, when need is, over-ruled. Our Saviour hath plainly taught us this in the

first petition of the Lord's prayer, which is, "**Hallowed be thy name**" (Luke 11:2). In that we fix our end, and other things are desired in order to that; in that, the prayer is directed to the glory of God, in all that whereby he has made himself known, the glory of his holiness: and it is with an eye to the sanctifying of his name, that we desire his kingdom may come, and his will be done, and that we may be fed, and kept, and pardoned. An habitual aim at God's glory is that sincerity which is our gospel perfection: that single eye, which, where it is, the whole body, the whole soul, is full of light. Thus the prayer is directed to God.

b. It speaks the steadiness of our actual regard to God in prayer. We must direct our prayer to God; that is, we must continually think of him as one with whom we have to do in prayer. We must direct our prayer, as we direct our speech to the person we have business with. The Bible is a letter God hath sent to us; prayer is a letter we send to him. Now you know it is essential to a letter that it be directed, and material that it be directed right; if it be not, it is in danger of miscarrying, which may be of ill consequence. You pray daily, and therein send letters to God: you know not what you lose if your letters miscarry. Will you therefore take instructions on how to direct prayer to him?:

(1). Give him his titles, as you do when you direct to a person of honour; address yourselves to him as the great Jehovah, God over all, blessed for evermore; the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; as the Lord God, gracious and merciful; let your hearts and mouths be filled with holy adorings and admirings of him, and fasten upon those titles of his which are proper to strike an holy awe of him upon your minds, that you may worship him with reverence and godly fear. Direct your prayer to him as the God of glory, with whom is terrible majesty, and whose greatness is unsearchable, that you may not dare to trifle with him, or to mock him in what you say to him.

(2). Take notice of your relation to him, as his children,

and let not that be overlooked and lost in your awe-stricken adoration of his glories. I have been told of a good man, among whose experiences, (which he kept a record of), after his death, this among other things was found: that at such a time, in secret prayer, his heart at the beginning of the duty was much enlarged in giving to God those titles which are full of awe and tremendous, in calling him the Great, the Mighty, and the Terrible God; but going on thus, he checked himself with this thought: And why not my Father? Christ hath, both by his precept and by his pattern taught us to address ourselves to God as Our Father; and the spirit of adoption teacheth us to cry Abba Father. A son, though a prodigal, when he returns and repents, may go to his Father, and say unto him, "Father, I have sinned;" and though no more worthy to be called a Son, yet humbly bold to call him Father. When Ephraim bemoans himself as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, God bemoans him as a dear son, a pleasant child (see Jer. 31:18-20); and if God is not ashamed, let us not be afraid to own the relation.

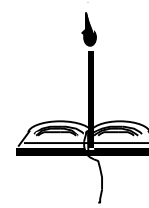
3. Direct your prayer to him *in heaven*; this our Saviour has taught us in the preface to the Lord's prayer. "**Our Father which art in heaven**" (Matt. 6:9). Not that he is confined to the heavens, or as if the heaven, or heaven of heavens, could contain him, but there he is said to have prepared his throne; not only his throne of government, by which his kingdom ruleth over all, but his throne of grace, to which we must by faith draw near. We must eye him as God in heaven, in opposition to the gods of the heathen, which dwelt in temples made with hands. Heaven is a high place, and we must address ourselves to him as a God infinitely above us. It is the fountain of light, and to him we must address ourselves as the Father of lights. It is a place of prospect, and we must see his eye upon us, from thence beholding all the children of men. It is a place of purity, and we must in prayer eye him as a holy God, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. It is the firmament of his power, and we must depend upon him as one to

whom power belongs. When our Lord Jesus prayed, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, to direct us whence to expect the blessings we need.

4. Direct this letter to be left *with the Lord Jesus*, the only Mediator between God and man; it will certainly miscarry if it be not put into his hand, who is that other angel that puts much incense to the prayers of the saints, and, so perfumed, presents them to the Father (see Rev. 8:3). What we ask of the Father must be in Jesus' name; what we expect from the Father must be by his hand; for he is the High Priest of our profession, who is ordained for men to offer their gifts (Heb. 5:1). Direct the letter to be left with him, and he will deliver it with care and speed, and will make our service acceptable.

[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: Psalm 75

A Study by Scott Sperling

Psalm 75 – Thanksgiving for God's Justice and Salvation

To the choirmaster. According to Do Not Destroy. A psalm of Asaph. A song.

- ¹ We give thanks to you, O God;
we give thanks, for your name is near.
We recount your wondrous deeds.
- ² "At the set time that I appoint
I will judge with equity.
- ³ When the earth totters,
and all its inhabitants,
it is I who keep steady its pillars. Selah
- ⁴ I say to the boastful, 'Do not boast,
and to the wicked,
'Do not lift up your horn;
⁵ do not lift up your horn on high,
or speak with haughty neck.'"
- ⁶ For not from the east or from the west
and not from the wilderness comes lifting up,
⁷ but it is God who executes judgment,
putting down one and lifting up another.

**⁸ For in the hand of the LORD
there is a cup with foaming wine,
well mixed, and he pours out from it,
and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it
down to the dregs.**

**⁹ But I will declare it forever;
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.**

**¹⁰ All the horns of the wicked I will cut off,
but the horns of the righteous
shall be lifted up. (ESV)**

This is a psalm of thanksgiving to God, by his people, for his righteous judgment. In this case, the thanksgiving is in anticipation that God will deliver his people. The faith that God will deliver is based on knowledge of God's character: he is a righteous and just God who works on behalf of his people.

The theme of God as savior for his people is a common one in the psalms, as well as in the rest of the Old Testament (in fact, this psalm is very similar to Hannah's song, found in I Sam. 2:1-11). In the Old Testament, the salvation of God is sought out against the physical enemies of God's people. This salvation prefigures the salvation that Jesus brought, salvation from sin. And the battles with the physical enemies of the Psalmists prefigure the spiritual battles that we face. As Paul said, **"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"** (Eph. 6:12). God is one God, and the Bible, Old and New Testaments, is one book which speaks of God's dealings with his people. His people ever and always seek his deliverance and his salvation. And God is ever and always ready to deliver his people, and lead them to the way of salvation.

The Psalmist begins: **"We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount your**

wondrous deeds" (vs. 1). Thanksgiving to God should be a constant, oft-performed activity of his people. We have so much to be thankful for. This psalm is, as the inscription implies, a **"song"** for the congregation of his people, to give thanks collectively (the Psalmist wrote **"We give thanks"**).

The Psalmist specifically cites the **"near"**ness of God, and his past **"wondrous deeds,"** as reasons for thanksgiving. "The reason for rejoicing lies in the manifest presence of God proclaimed and celebrated in the stories of God's mighty acts. In the remembrance and retelling of the history of salvation lies the comforting affirmation of God's closeness to his people" [VanGemeren]. The righteous delight, and give thanks, that God is **"near."** The nearness of God is a comfort to his people. Only his enemies flee God.

God is known by **"name"** to his people. This suggests familiarity, to know by **"name."** In the original Hebrew, it suggests even more. One's **"name"** in that culture represented his entire character. So the Psalmist is giving thanks that God himself is **"near,"** as well as his attributes of providence, care, wisdom, righteousness and love.

The impetus for thanksgiving is the **"recount"**ing of God's **"wondrous deeds"** (vs. 1). It is a good thing to reflect and recount how God has worked in our lives. Such reflection will lead to thanksgiving. I write this, appropriately, during Thanksgiving week in America, a holiday where families gather to give thanks to God. But the giving of thanks, based on the reflection and the recounting of God's wondrous deeds, should be an oft-performed activity, not just an annual one. "We should praise God again and again. Stinted gratitude is ingratitude. For infinite goodness there should be measureless thanks" [Spurgeon, 293]. "Giving thanks in the Bible is not simply saying 'thank you,' but rather publicizing the divine benefit so that others may know and acknowledge the excellence of the benefactor... The entire assembly is invited to **'give thanks,'** that is, to proclaim publicly what God has done. Such proclamations widen the circle of God's admirers. By giving

praise one returns the gracious act that God has done” [Clifford]

In verse 2 of the psalm, the speaker changes. God himself speaks to his people: **“At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity. When the earth totters and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars”** (vs. 2-3). In the original Hebrew, there is no direct indication that it is God who speaks in verse 2. There is no, “And God said...”, nor is there even quotation marks, denoting a change of voice (the quotation marks in the above translation, the ESV, were added by the translator). This lack of indication of who the speaker is, is not unusual in Hebrew poetry. However, we can infer that it is God speaking by what is said: **“At the set time that I appoint, I will judge with equity,”** and then, **“When the earth totters and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars.”** It is God who is ultimately the judge of all; and it is God who steadies the earth’s foundations.

Note that, God’s judgment will occur **“at the set time.”** “God is ever the righteous judge, but He executes his sentence, not according to man’s impatient expectations, but at the exact instant which He has Himself chosen” [Perowne, 350]. God is in control. His judgment will come on his timeline, not ours.

The **“tottering”** earth and the **“tottering”** inhabitants of the earth speak figuratively of how messed up this world is, due to the sin of man. If God did not **“steady its pillars”**, the world would completely fall apart. At this point in the psalm, there is a **“Selah”**, which indicates a pause. We should reflect on these words of God.

I think the **“Selah”** also indicates a change back in speaker to the Psalmist (the translation here does not agree with me, though, for it has God’s quote extending through verse 5). It seems to me that verses 4 and 5 are connected with verse 6 and 7, because of the **“For...”** in verse 6. Verse 7 is spoken by the Psalmist, because of the reference to **“God”**. And so, with my interpretation, the Psalmist encourages humility (verses 4 and 5), because it is God who will

“execute judgement” and exalt those who deserve exalting, by **“putting down one and lifting up another”** (vs. 7).

More specifically, the Psalmist exhorts: **“I say to the boastful, ‘Do not boast,’ and to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up your horn; do not lift up your horn on high, or speak with haughty neck”**” (vss. 4-5). “Lifting its horn is the means by which an animal expresses its will and its power, of which its horn is thus a symbol, and the image becomes a metaphor for the assertion of human power” [Goldingay, 296]. “The **‘horn’** is the organ and symbol of power and also of pride. Horned animals when high-spirited and half furious throw high the horn” [Cowles, 310]. To exalt oneself is to implicitly deny God the credit he deserves for his great work. “The higher a man holds himself, the further is he from God” [Guenther, in *Lange’s*, 428]. As Peter tells us: **“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time”** (I Pet. 5:5-6).

The Psalmist gives the reason that we have no right to exalt ourselves: **“For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another”** (vss. 6-7). We may get help from others; we may find allies in looking to **“the east”** and to **“the west”**, but ultimately, it is God who delivers us, whether directly, or using human agents. “The world is full of practical atheism. Few men really believe that Jehovah governs this world, that everything happens by his ordering, and that all causes, agents and means are nothing without him. Forgetfulness of God is as common as it is dreadful” [Plumer, 732].

The Psalmist metaphorically of God’s coming judgment: **“For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs”** (vs. 8). The **“foaming wine”** is the *cup of God’s wrath*. This is a metaphor that is commonly used in the Bible (see Isa 51:17, 22; Jer

25:15; 49:12; Hab 2:15-16; Jer 51:7; Ezek 23:31-33; Zech 12:2; Rev 14:10; 16:19; 17:4; 18:6). This *cup of wrath* is prepared beforehand by God. It is **“well-mixed,”** suggesting that it is mixed with spices, to improve the taste, and the make it more intoxicating. A **“foaming wine, well mixed”** sounds enticing, and so the recipients of God’s wrath drink it willingly, **“down to the dregs.”** The **“dregs”** of a spiced wine are typically extremely bitter, and so certainly, the end of God’s wrath is a **“bitter”** poison. “At first it may seem to be a cup for a festival crowd, ready to celebrate and enjoy blessings received. But it is not. It is the cup of the wrath of God... Yahweh holding a great cup in his hand is ready to pour out its foaming wine of judgment —into the throats of all the world’s boastful till the last dregs are downed” [Fate, 342-343]. “Calamity and sorrow, fear and trembling, infatuation and despair, the evils of the present life, and of that which is to come, are the bitter ingredients which compose this most horrible cup of mixture. It is entirely in the hand and disposal of God, who, through every age, has been pouring out, and administering of its contents, more or less, in proportion to the sins of men. But much of the strength and power of the liquor still remains behind, until the day of final vengeance” [Horne, 267].

The Psalmist responds to God’s coming righteous judgment: **“But I will declare forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob”** (vs. 9). “Thus will the saints occupy themselves with rehearsing Jehovah’s praises, while their foes are drunken with the wrath-wine.” [Spurgeon, 295].

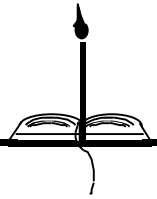
I believe the final verse of the psalm is again spoken by God, a concluding statement of his righteousness and justice: **“All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up”** (vs. 10). We often think of God’s righteous judgment negatively, and only destructive. But there is a positive aspect of God’s righteous judgment: **“The horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.”** For us who rest in righteousness, imputed to us through Jesus Christ, we have nothing to fear from God’s righteous judgment.

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A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist



Upon Contentment and Satisfaction by William Spurstowe (1666)

It is our Savior's maxim, that, **"Man's life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesseth"** (Luke 12:15). If there be any happiness upon earth, it resides in that which we call *contentment*, which comes from the *mind within*, and not from *the things without*. Perfect *satisfaction* is to be had only in heaven, where we shall be happy, not by the *confinement*, but by the *fruition* of our desires. Then, said David, **"I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness"** (Ps. 17:15). How happy therefore is every godly man's condition, who are the only persons that are instructed in the mystery of contentment while they live on earth, and shall be in heaven the sole possessors of perfect and everlasting blessedness? True it is, that *philosophy* hath greatly prized, and earnestly sought this rich jewel of contentment; but only *Christianity* has found it.

The *Moralists* have exercised their wits in giving of rules to attain it, and have let fall some sentences that may deserve to be put in the Christian's *register*, but they could never look into the true grounds from whence sound *contentment* does arise, and upon which it is to be built. The highest of their *precepts* have not (as I may say) the root of the matter in them, and are therefore insufficient wholly to compose the mind to such a calm and even temper, as may, in the variety of changes, show and discover itself to be so reconciled to its present condition, as not to lose its *inward peace* and *serenity*, whatsoever the storms and cross accidents are from without.

What are the considerations which they prescribe as a support against poverty, sickness, imprisonment, loss of friends,

banishment, and such like evils? Are they not persuasions drawn from the dignity of man, from the vanity and uncertainty of all *outward things*; from the shortness and frailty of *life*, from the befalling of the same things unto others? But alas! What slender props are these to bear the stress and weight of those armies of trials, which at once may assault the life of man. These may haply serve as secondary helps to alleviate the bitterness of some afflictions, when we are apt to think them greater than what others have felt, or longer than what others have endured. But to keep the mind in peace in the midst of all situations from without, there must be more effectual remedies than either *nature* or *morality* can suggest.

From whence then can true *contentment* arise but from *godliness*, which has a *sufficiency* to establish the heart? It is that alone which brings a man home to God, away from whom neither *contentment*, nor *satisfaction* can ever be had. It is that which acquaints a man with that great secret, of God's *special providence* over his children, who rules the world, not only as a Lord, to make them sensible of his *power*, but as a loving Father to make them confident of his *goodness*, whereby he disposes all things for the best. O when faith has once apprehended this, how firmly can it rest upon the promises which are made to godliness, both of this life and that which is to come? How can it work far more *contentment* with the meanest *food*, than others have with the costliest *delicacies*; with the poorest *raiment*, than others have with their richest *ornaments*? It is faith only that teaches a Christian like a skillful *musician*, to let down a string a peg lower, when the tune requires it; or like an experienced *chef* to remit, or intend his fire as occasion serves. Such a one was Paul, who learned this heavenly art, not at *Gamaliel's feet*, but in *Christ's School*, the Holy Spirit of God being his teacher, so that he knew both how to be in need and how to abound, and in whatsoever state he was therewith to be content (see Phil. 4:11-13).

Let none then so far admire those heathen sages in those speculations of theirs concerning this mystery, as if they had

attained to hit that mark at which they leveled, and had arrived at the utmost boundaries of it. Whenas in all their essays, they have fallen as far short of true *contentment*, as sick men's *slumberings* and dreams, do of a found and healthful rest. Of all their *precepts* and *rules* I may say as Erasmus did of Seneca, in an epistle of his, "If you read them as the sayings of heathens, they speak Christianly; but if you look upon them as the sayings of Christians, they speak paganly." And how could it be that they should ever do otherwise? They being wholly destitute of the *light of grace*, and the *guidance of the Spirit*, which are both requisite to this high and holy learning? The one as a *principle*, and the other as a *teacher*. But yet this I must say also, that they have done enough to shame many, who, enjoying the benefit of *divine revelation*, and living in the open sunshine of the Gospel, have profited thereby in so small a proportion beyond them.

Who can forbear blushing to see those who profess to be Christians, to live so contrary to the law and rule which they should walk by? To seek contentment, not by *moderating their desires*, but by *satisfying* them, which will still *increase*, as things *come on*: like to rivers, which the more they are fed, and the further they run, the wider they spread. Can it rationally be deemed by any, that those things which are *sums* in the *desire*, and *ciphers* in the *fruition*, should ever effect contentedness in the mind? Is not the deficiency that men see in their abundance the ground of their multiplying it? And can they ever, by the additions which they make, heal its deficiency? Why then should any try and attempt such fruitless projects, which cannot but end in disappointment?

Methinks I should not need to expostulate the matter with Christians: that anointing which teaches them all things, should instruct them in this, that Godliness is the only way to *contentment* in this life, and *satisfaction* in the other. But Lord, however others live, help me to bring my mind to my condition, which is as well my duty as my happiness while I am on earth; and to rest assured that in heaven thou

wilt bring my estate to my mind, which is that I may enjoy thee in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

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>



Judging Yourself

“Acquaint yourselves with those marks that are proper only to a true Christian. Overlook all those that are common with hypocrites, such as outward profession, constant attendances, some affections in duties. Let us not judge ourselves by outward acts: A player is not a prince, because he acts the part of a prince. But we must judge ourselves by what we are in our retirements, in our hearts. He only is a good man, and does good, that does it from a principle of goodness within, and not from fear of Laws, or to gain a good opinion in the world... The great accusation the devil brings against Job was that he served not God for naught, that his service was not sincere, that he acted a righteous part for his own ends, and to preserve his worldly prosperity (Job 1:9,10). But if our ends be right, and our actions in the course of them according to His rule, if our hearts in them respect God’s Law, and His glory, how the devils arrows will drop down, as shot against a brazen wall.”

~ Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)