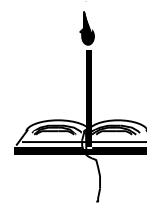


"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord..." Isaiah 1:18

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Old Testament Study: Exodus 26

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

Exodus 26 - The Curtains and the Vail

¹ Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them. ² The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. ³ The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another. ⁴ And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second. ⁵ Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. ⁶ And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle. ⁷ And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make. ⁸ The length of one curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains shall be all of one measure. ⁹ And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle.

¹⁰ And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the sec-

ond. ¹¹ And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. ¹² And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the backside of the tabernacle. ¹³ And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it. ¹⁴ And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins. ¹⁵ And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. ¹⁶ Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board. ¹⁷ Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. ¹⁸ And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. ¹⁹ And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. ²⁰ And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards: ²¹ And their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. ²² And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards.

²³ And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. ²⁴ And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring; thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. ²⁵ And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. ²⁶ And thou shalt make bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, ²⁷ And five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward. ²⁸ And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end. ²⁹ And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou

shalt overlay the bars with gold. ³⁰ And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount.

³¹ And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: ³² And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. ³³ And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. ³⁴ And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. ³⁵ And thou shalt set the table without the vail, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side. ³⁶ And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework. ³⁷ And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them. (KJV)

The section of our book which now opens before us contains the instructive description of the curtains and coverings of the tabernacle, wherein the spiritual eye discerns the shadows of the various features and phases of Christ's manifested character. **"Moreover, thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them"** (vs. 1). Here we have the different aspects of *the man Christ Jesus*. The **"fine twined linen"** prefigures the spotless purity of His walk and character; while the **"blue, the purple, and the scarlet"** present Him to us as **"the Lord from heaven,"** who is to *reign* according to the divine counsels, but whose royalty is to be the result of His *sufferings*. Thus we have a spotless man, a heavenly man, a royal man, a suffering man. These materials were not confined to the **"curtains"** of the tabernacle, but were also used in making **"the vail"** (vs.

31), **“the hanging for the door of the tent”** (vs. 36), **“the hanging for the gate of the court,”** (27:16), **“the cloths of service and the holy garments for Aaron”** (39:1). In a word, it was Christ everywhere, Christ in all, Christ alone.

“The fine twined linen,” as expressive of Christ’s spotless manhood, opens a most precious and copious spring of thought to the spiritual mind; it furnishes a theme on which we cannot meditate too profoundly. The truth respecting Christ’s humanity must be received with scriptural accuracy, held with spiritual energy, guarded with holy jealousy, and confessed with heavenly power. If we are wrong as to this, we cannot be right as to anything. It is a grand, vital, fundamental truth, and if it be not received, held, guarded, and confessed, as God has revealed it in His holy word, the entire superstructure must be unsound. Nothing can be more deplorable than the looseness of thought and expression which seems to prevail in reference to this all-important doctrine. Were there more reverence for the word of God, there would be more accurate acquaintance with it; and, in this way, we should happily avoid all those erroneous and unguarded statements which surely must grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whose province it is to testify of Jesus.

When the angel had announced to Mary the glad tidings of the Saviour’s birth, she said unto him, **“How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”** (Luke 1:34). Her feeble mind was utterly incompetent to enter into, much less to fathom, the stupendous mystery of **“God manifest in the flesh.”** But mark carefully the angelic reply—a reply, not to a sceptic mind, but to a pious, though ignorant, heart. **“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; wherefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”** (Luke 1:35). Mary, doubtless, imagined that this birth was to be according to the principles of ordinary generation. But the angel corrects her mistake, and, in correcting it, enunciates one of the grandest truths of revelation. He declares to her that divine power was about to form *a real man*—**“the second man — the Lord from heaven”** (I Cor. 15:47)—one whose nature was divinely pure, utterly incapable of receiving or communicating any taint.

This Holy One was made **“in the likeness of sinful flesh”** (Rom. 8:3), without sin in the flesh. He partook of real *bona fide* flesh and blood without a particle or shadow of the evil thereto attaching.

This is a cardinal truth which cannot be too accurately laid hold of or too tenaciously held. The incarnation of the Son, the second Person in the eternal Trinity—His mysterious entrance into pure and spotless flesh, formed by the power of the Highest, in the virgin’s womb, is the foundation of the **“great mystery of godliness”** (I Tim. 3:16), of which the topstone is a glorified God-man, in heaven, the Head, Representative, and Model of the redeemed Church of God. The essential purity of His manhood perfectly met the claims of God; the reality thereof met the necessities of man. He was a Man, for none else would do to meet man’s ruin. But He was such a man as could satisfy all the claims of the throne of God. He was a spotless, real man, in whom God could perfectly delight, and on whom man could unreservedly lean.

I need not remind the enlightened reader that all this, if taken apart from death and resurrection, is perfectly unavailable to us. We needed not only an incarnate, but a crucified and risen, Christ. True, He should be incarnate to be crucified; but it is death and resurrection which render incarnation available to us. It is nothing short of a deadly error to suppose that, in incarnation, Christ was taking man into union with Himself. This could not be. He Himself expressly teaches the contrary. **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”** (John 12:24). There could be no union between sinful and holy flesh, pure and impure, corruptible and incorruptible, mortal and immortal. Accomplished death is the only base of a unity between Christ and His elect members. It is in beautiful connection with the words, **“Rise, let us go hence,”** that He says, **“I am the vine, ye are the branches”** (John 15:5). **“We have been planted together in the likeness of his death”** (Rom. 6:5). **“Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed”** (Rom. 6:6). **“In whom also ye are**

circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:11-12). I would refer my reader to Romans 6 and Colossians 2 as a full and comprehensive statement of the truth on this important subject. It was only as dead and risen that Christ and His people could become one. The true corn of wheat had to fall into the ground and die ere a full ear could spring up and be gathered into the heavenly garner.

But while this is a plainly revealed truth of Scripture, it is equally plain that incarnation formed, as it were, the first layer of the glorious superstructure; and the curtains of **"fine twined linen"** prefigure the moral purity of **"the man Christ Jesus."** We have already seen the manner of His conception; and, as we pass along the current of His life here below, we meet with instance after instance of the same spotless purity. He was forty days in the wilderness, tempted of the devil, but there was no response in His pure nature to the tempter's foul suggestions. He could touch the leper and receive no taint. He could touch the bier and not contract the smell of death. He could pass unscathed through the most polluted atmosphere. He was, as to His manhood, like a sunbeam emanating from the fountain of light, which can pass, without a soil, through the most defiling medium. He was perfectly unique in nature, constitution, and character. None but He could say, **"Thou wilt not suffer thine holy One to see corruption"** (Acts 13:35). This was in reference to His humanity, which, as being perfectly holy and perfectly pure, was capable of being a sin-bearer. **"His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree"** (I Pet. 2:24). Not *to* the tree, as some would teach us; but **"on the tree."** It was on the cross that Christ was our sin-bearer, and only there. **"He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"** (II Cor. 5:21).

"Blue" is the ethereal colour, and marks the heavenly character of Christ, who, though He had come down into all the

circumstances of actual and true humanity—sin excepted—yet was He **"the Lord from heaven"** (I Cor. 15:47). Though He was **"very man,"** yet He ever walked in the uninterrupted consciousness of His proper dignity, as a heavenly stranger. He never once forgot whence He had come, where He was, or whither He was going. The spring of all His joys was on high. Earth could neither make Him richer nor poorer. He found this world to be **"a dry and thirsty land, where no water is"** (Ps. 63:1); and, hence, His spirit could only find its refreshment above. He was entirely heavenly. **"No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven"** (John 3:13).

"Purple" denotes royalty, and points us to Him who **"was born King of the Jews"** (Matt. 2:2); who offered Himself as such to the Jewish nation, and was rejected; who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, avowing Himself a king, when, to mortal vision, there was not so much as a single trace of royalty. **"Thou sayest that I am a king"** (John 18:37)). And **"hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"** (Mark 14:62). And, finally, the inscription upon His cross, **"in letters of Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin"**—the language of religion, of science, and of government—declared Him to the whole known world to be **"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."** Earth disowned His claims—so much the worse for it—but not so heaven; there His claim was fully recognized. He was received as a conqueror into the eternal mansions of light, crowned with glory and honour, and seated, amid the acclamations of angelic hosts, on the throne of the majesty in the heavens, there to wait until His enemies be made His footstool. **"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in**

his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*" (Ps. 2)

"Scarlet," when genuine, is produced by death; and this makes its application to a suffering Christ safe and appropriate. **"Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh"** (I Pet. 4:1). Without death, all would have been unavailing. We can admire **"the blue,"** and **"the purple,"** but without **"the scarlet"** the tabernacle would have lacked an all-important feature. It was by death that Christ destroyed him that had the power of death. The Holy Ghost, in setting before us a striking figure of Christ—the true tabernacle—could not possibly omit that phase of His character which constitutes the groundwork of His connection with His body the Church, of His claim to the throne of David, and the headship of all creation. In a word, He not only unfolds the Lord Jesus to our view, in these significant curtains, as a spotless man, a royal man, but also a suffering man; one who, *by death*, should make good His claims to all that to which, as man, He was entitled, in the divine counsels.

But we have much more in the curtains of the tabernacle than the varied and perfect phases of the character of Christ. We have also the unity and consistency of that character. Each phase is displayed in its own proper perfectness; and one never interferes with, or mars the exquisite beauty of another. All was in perfect harmony beneath the eye of God, and was so displayed in **"the pattern which was showed to Moses on the mount"** (Heb. 8:5), and in the copy which was exhibited below. **"Every one of the curtains shall have one measure."**

The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another" (vss. 2-3). Such was the fair proportion and consistency in all the ways of Christ, as a perfect man, walking on the earth, in whatever aspect or relationship we view Him. When acting in one character, we never find aught that is, in the very least degree, inconsistent with the divine integrity of another. He was, at all times, in all places, under all circumstances, the perfect man. There was nothing out of that fair and lovely proportion which belonged to Him, in all His ways. **"Every one of the curtains shall have one measure."**

The two sets of five curtains each, may symbolize the two grand aspects of Christ's character, as acting toward God and toward man. We have the same two aspects in the law, namely, what was due to God, and what was due to man; so that, as to Christ, if we look in, we find **"thy law is within my heart"** (Ps. 40:8); and if we look at His outward character and walk, we see those two elements adjusted with perfect accuracy, and not only adjusted, but inseparably linked together by the heavenly grace and divine energy which dwelt in His most glorious Person.

"And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain, from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second... And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches; and it shall be one tabernacle" (vss. 4-6). We have here displayed to us, in the **"loops of blue,"** and **"taches of gold"** that heavenly grace and divine energy in Christ which enabled Him to combine and perfectly adjust the claims of God and man, so that in responding to both the one and the other, He never, for a moment, marred the unity of His character. When crafty and hypocritical men tempted Him with the enquiry, **"Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?"** His wise reply was, **"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"** (Mark 12:14-17).

Nor was it merely Caesar, but man in every relation that

had all His claims perfectly met in Christ. As He united, in His perfect Person the nature of God and man, so He met in His perfect ways the claims of God and man. Most interesting would it be to trace, through the gospel narrative, the exemplification of the principle suggested by the **“loops of blue,”** and **“taches of gold;”** but I must leave my reader to pursue this study under the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, who delights to expatiate upon every feature, and every phase of that perfect One whom it is His unvarying purpose and undivided object to exalt.

The curtains, on which we have been dwelling, were covered with other **“curtains of goats’ hair”** (vs. 7, 14). Their beauty was hidden from those without by that which bespoke roughness and severity. This latter did not meet the view of those within. To all who were privileged to enter the hallowed enclosure, nothing was visible save **“the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and fine twined linen”** (vss. 31, 36), the varied yet combined exhibition of the virtues and excellences of that divine Tabernacle in which God dwelt within the veil—that is, of Christ, through whose flesh, the antitype of all these, the beams of the divine nature shone so delicately, that the sinner could behold without being overwhelmed by their dazzling brightness.

As the Lord Jesus passed along this earth, how few really knew Him! How few had eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve to penetrate and appreciate the deep mystery of His character! How few saw **“the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and fine twined linen”**! It was only when faith brought man into His presence that He ever allowed the brightness of what He was to shine forth—ever allowed the glory to break through the cloud. To nature’s eye there would seem to have been a reserve and a severity about Him which were aptly prefigured by the **“covering of goat’s hair.”** All this was the result of His profound separation and estrangement, not from sinners personally, but from the thoughts and maxims of men. He had nothing in common with man as such, nor was it within the compass of mere nature to comprehend or enjoy Him. **“No man,”** said He, **“can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him”** (John 6:44); and when one of those **“drawn”**

ones confessed His name, He declared that **“flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”** (Matt. 16:17). He was **“a root out of a dry ground,”** having neither **“form nor comeliness”** (Isa. 53:2) to attract the eye or gratify the heart of man. The popular current could never flow in the direction of One who, as He passed rapidly across the stage of this vain world, wrapped Himself up in a **“covering of goats’ hair.”** Jesus was not popular. The multitude might follow Him for a moment, because His ministry stood connected, in their judgment, with **“the loaves and fishes”** which met their need; but they were just as ready to cry, **“Away with him!”** as **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”** Oh! Let Christians remember this! Let the servants of Christ remember it! Let all preachers of the gospel remember it! Let one and all of us ever seek to bear in mind the **“covering of goats’ hair!”**

But if the goats’ skins expressed the severity of Christ’s separation from earth, **“the rams’ skins dyed red”** (vs. 14) exhibit His intense consecration and devotedness to God, which was carried out even unto *death*. He was the only perfect Servant that ever stood in God’s vineyard. He had one object which He pursued, with an undeviating course, from the manger to the cross, and that was to glorify the Father and finish His work. **“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”** (Luke 2:49) was the language of His youth, and the accomplishment of that **“business”** was the design of His life. His **“meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work”** (John 4:34). **“The rams’ skins dyed red”** formed as distinct a part of His ordinary habit as the **“goats’ hair.”** His perfect devotion to God separated Him from the habits of men.

The **“badgers’ skins”** (vs. 14) may exhibit to us the holy vigilance with which the Lord Jesus guarded against the approach of everything hostile to the purpose which engrossed His whole soul. He took up His position for God, and held it with a tenacity which no influence of men or devils, earth or hell, could overcome. The covering of badgers’ skins was **“above”** (vs. 14), teaching us that the most prominent feature in the character of **“the man Christ Jesus”** was an invincible

determination to stand as a witness for God on the earth. He was the true Naboth (see I Kings 21), who gave up His life rather than surrender the truth of God, or give up that for which He had taken His place in this world.

The goat, the ram, and the badger, must be regarded as exhibiting certain natural features, and also as symbolizing certain moral qualities; and we must take both into account in our application of these figures to the character of Christ. The human eye could only discern the former. It could see none of the moral grace, beauty, and dignity which lay beneath the outward form of the despised and humble Jesus of Nazareth. When the treasures of heavenly wisdom flowed from His lips, the inquiry was, **"Is not this the carpenter?"** (Mark 6:3), or **"How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"** (John 7:15). When He asserted His eternal Sonship and Godhead, the word was, **"Thou art not yet fifty years' old"** (John 8:57), or **"They took up stones to cast at him"** (John 8:59). In short, the acknowledgment of the Pharisees, in John 9 was true in reference to men in general. **"As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is"** (John 9:29).

It would be utterly impossible, in the compass of a volume like this, to trace the unfoldings of those precious features of Christ's character through the gospel narratives. Sufficient has been said to open up springs of spiritual thought to my reader, and to furnish some faint idea of the rich treasures which are wrapped up in the curtains and coverings of the tabernacle. Christ's hidden being, secret springs and inherent excellences—His outward and unattractive form—what He was in Himself, what He was to Godward, and what He was to manward—what He was in the judgment of faith, and what in the judgment of nature—all is sweetly and impressively told out to the circumcised ear, in the curtains of **"blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen,"** and the **"coverings of skins."**

"The boards for the tabernacle" were made of the same wood as was used in constructing **"the ark of the covenant."** Moreover, they were upheld by the sockets of silver formed out of the atonement; their hooks and chapiters being of the same. (Compare attentively chap. 30:11-16, with chap. 38:25-28). The whole framework of the tent of the tabernacle was

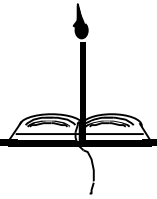
based on that which spoke of atonement or ransom, while the **"hooks and chapiters"** at the top set forth the same. The sockets were buried in the sand, and the hooks and chapiters were above. It matters not how deep you penetrate, or how high you rise, that glorious and eternal truth is emblazoned before you, **"I have found a ransom"** (Job 33:24). Blessed be God, **"we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"** (I Pet. 1:18-19).

The tabernacle was divided into three distinct parts, namely, **"the holy of holies," "the holy place,"** and **"the court of the tabernacle."** The entrance into each of these was of the same materials, **"blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen."** (Compare chapter 36:31,36; 27:16). The interpretation of which is simply this: Christ forms the only doorway into the varied fields of glory which are yet to be displayed, whether on earth, in heaven, or the heaven of heavens. **"Every family, in heaven and earth,"** will be ranged under His headship, as all will be brought into everlasting felicity and glory, on the ground of His accomplished atonement. This is plain enough, and needs no stretch of the imagination to grasp it. We know it to be true: and when we know the truth which is shadowed forth, the shadow is easily understood. If only our hearts be filled with Christ, we shall not go far astray in our interpretations of the tabernacle and its furniture. It is not a head full of learned criticism that will avail us much here, but a heart full of affection for Jesus, and a conscience at rest in the blood of His cross.

May the Spirit of God enable us to study these things with more interest and intelligence! May He **"open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of his law"** (Ps. 119:18).

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 1:10



[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 1:10 – God's Hedge of Protection about Job

10th "Hast 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." (KJV)

Here Satan more fully expounds himself, and what he means by Job's not serving God for naught. You shall see it is not for naught. He casts up the particulars of God's benefits conferred on Job, and they amount to a great sum: 1. He has a *hedge* about him, that is somewhat; 2. He has *blessed* him, that's more; 3. He does *increase* and *multiply*, there's the highest degree of outward happiness. Here are three degrees of God's dealing with Job. These Satan reckons up in this verse, that he may make Job's goodness of no account, and leave his person in no degree of acceptance with God.

Here is first *protection* in the *hedge*: **"Hast thou not made an hedge about him...?"**

Secondly, here is a *benediction* upon that which was protected: It was not a bare keeping of that from spoiling, *but it was a blessing of it*.

Thirdly, here is also an *increase* or multiplication: he was not only blessed to keep himself and all he had in the state and plight wherein he stood, but there was a daily increase

and an augmentation. *Thou protectest him, thou blessed him, and thou doest increase all that he hath*, he is **"increased in the land."** That is the sum and sense of the words. I shall now open them a little more distinctly.

First, he speaks here of his protection: **"Hast thou not made an hedge about him?"** Some render it, *Hast thou not made a wall about him?* Or, *Hast thou not made a trench about him?* It is an elegant metaphor frequent in Scripture, showing that as when a field is well hedged, or a town well walled and entrenched, then it is safe. So when God is said to make a hedge or a wall about a man or about a nation, the safety of that man or nation is assured by it. We have this word used, where God speaks of his vineyard: *He planted a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, and he fenced it, or he made a wall or a hedge about it* (see Isa. 5:2). So Isa. 5:5, when God is angry with his vineyard and will destroy it, it is thus expressed, **"I will"** (said He) **"take away the hedge thereof,"** that is, I will take away my protection from it. In the same sense, in Zech. 2:5, **"I will be"** (said God) **"take away the hedge thereof,"** that is, I will be a defense for it. So when it is said here that God had made a *hedge about* Job, it notes divine protection: he was under the wing and safeguard of the Almighty.

This hedge of protection is two-fold. It is said God made this hedge, **"Hast thou not made an hedge about him?"** First, there is a hedge which is made immediately by the hand of God. Sometimes God makes the hedge immediately, yea sometimes God expresses himself to be the hedge or wall, like in Zech. 2:5. So also, in Psalm 18:2: **"Thou art my rock and my fortress, my deliverer, my strength, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower,"** etc. There God was the hedge; here God makes the hedge; God has not put out this hedge to others to make, but he makes it himself; Satan observes as much. **"Hast not thou made an hedge about him?"**

Secondly, sometimes the hedge of protection is made by the hands of others. God sends out his angels to guard his people: **"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him"** (Ps. 34:7). Encamping and hedging are

to the same purpose, God's hedge is as strong for safety as any wall, as any trench. Sometimes, God makes one man to be a hedge or a defense to another. The servants of Nabal said of David: That he had been **"a wall unto them both by night and day"** (I Sam. 25:16); that is, he had been a protection and a guard to them; he had defended them all the while his army was quartered in those parts. God makes a good man to be as a wall to a wicked man. How much more will he make men and angels to be walls and hedges for the security of his own people?

The text further goes on and shows the compass of this hedge, what ground it takes in, how far it reaches: and here we shall find that it was a very large hedge of a great extent. We know there are some cities that have not only a single wall, but a double wall, yea some strong cities and places have a treble wall about them: So we find a three-fold hedge made about Job, and they are all expressed here in this text.

Here was a hedge, first about his *person*, that was the inmost hedge, or the inmost wall, in these words, **"Hast thou not made an hedge about him?"**, that is, a hedge about the very person of Job; a hedge about his body lest any sickness, diseases or dangers should invade it, and a hedge about his soul, lest snares and temptations should take hold of, or prevail against that; *thou hast made a hedge about him*, so that I cannot come at the person of Job to hurt him.

Again, besides this inmost wall, and the nearest about his person, there is a second wall or hedge, and that is expressed to be about his family: **"Hast thou not made an hedge about him and about his house?"** By house, we are not to understand the material house of stone or timber, the edifice in which Job and his family, as often-times in Scripture, the house is put for the family. **"This day"** (said Christ to Zaccheus) **"is salvation come to thy house"** (Luke 19:9); and it is said of the jailer, **"that he believed and all his house"** (see Acts 16:29ff), that is, all his household; so here, **"thou hast made an hedge about him, and about his house,"** that is, about his family, about his children especially: hence the Hebrew word for a child, for a son, does signify a house, because

children build up the house or keep up the name of their fathers. So that the house hedged about is the children, the family and the followers and servants of Job; as if Satan should say, *thou hast made a hedge not only about his person, but about all that belong to him, about his children and servants; I may not meddle with them either.* There is a second hedge.

Lastly, there is a third hedge or wall, **"Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath?"** That is about his goods, about his cattle and about his lands: so far as ever anything of Job's does extend, so far the hedge goes; if Job has but the least thing abroad, God makes a hedge about it, he has not the meanest thing belonging to him, but is under guard and protection. That is the meaning of it.

There is yet another thing to be observed in the words to make it more full. *Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?* It is not only said, *thou hast made a hedge about him*, but thou hast made a hedge about him *on every side*, which is a redundancy of speech. It was a sign of God's care of job, when he made a hedge about him, but to say he made a *hedge about him on every side*, here is expressed an extraordinary care, that God had not left the least gap for Satan or for any annoyance to come in unto Job, his family and estate is set out under the protection of God. That for the opening of those words.

First, we may observe from the manner of this speech, *Hast thou not made an hedge about him?* Satan speaks very angrily. Questions as they ever express quickness of spirit, so they many times express much trouble of spirit. Here Satan in questioning, speaks as if he were vexed, *Hast thou not made an hedge about him?* Hence note:

That the protection which God gives to his people and servants is the vexation of Satan and of all his instruments. It troubles them extremely that God so guards and hedges up his people, that they cannot come at them. No man can endure to see that defended, which he wishes were destroyed.

Then again, if we consider the matter of Satan's speech, it is a truth and a most comfortable truth, a truth full of conso-

lation to the people of God, *Hast thou not made an hedge about him and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?* We may note hence,

That Satan the father of lies sometimes speaks truth for his own advantage. For as it is said concerning Judas about his care for the poor, when he would have had the ointment sold and given to the poor, *This he said* (says the text) *not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag and bore what was put therein.* So we may say here, Satan sets forth the care of God over his people in most exact terms; and why does he do this? Not that he cares to speak well of God, or to advance God in the eyes of his people, by telling his people and servants how watchful he is over them: but he does this only for his own advantage, that hereby he may lessen the service and blemish the obedience of Job, because he received so much care and love from God. As it is many times with ungodly men, they will do good, not that they care to do good, but only for some other end: So Satan will sometimes speak that which is true, not that he regards the truth, or that he would speak a word of truth (for he has nothing but lies in his heart, there is a lie in his heart when there is truth in his mouth). He never speaks truth, but to deceive and do hurt by it.

Thirdly, we may observe this, which lies plain in the words: *That the people and servants of God dwell in the midst of enemies, in the midst of dangers.* Why else need there be a hedge, a wall about them? What need there be a guard about them, unless there were dangers about them? There are none in the world so envied and spited, so aimed at and persecuted as the people and servants of God; you may see it by the wall that is made about them; God will not bestow cost and care in preserving and guarding where there is no danger of invading. If you should come to a city and see it mightily fortified, and see men make wall after wall about it, and bulwark after bulwark, you will presently conjecture, that city stands in great danger and is in the midst of enemies: so when we read that God was fain to make wall after wall, to make hedge after hedge about the person, the family, the estate of Job, it shows that the devil had an ill eye upon Job and upon all that was Job's; Satan and

his instruments, had it not been for this hedge, would quickly have fallen upon him. No godly man should live a quiet moment, did not the Lord stretch forth his hand to save and protect him.

Fourthly, we may observe, *that God himself undertakes the guarding and protecting of his people.* **"Thou hast made an hedge about him and about all that he hath."** God himself either does it immediately, or he puts those to do it to whom he gives his power, strength and wisdom. There is no mere creature that could be strength and security enough for us against our great malicious and mighty enemies, therefore God himself either is or makes the hedge. There is no strength in man but Satan can over-match it; Satan can overpower all the strength, and outwit all the wisdom that is in the creature. Flesh and blood are no match for a spirit. **"And we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places"** (Eph. 6:12). But if God makes a hedge about us, it is not in the power of all the enemies in the world, whether men or devils to make a gap in it; they are sure that are under the protection of God. **"They that dwell in the secret place of the most high, they shall abide"** (safely) **"under the shadow of the Almighty"** (Ps. 91:1).

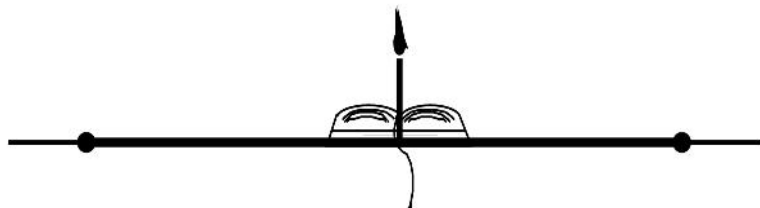
Fifthly, you see here *how far the hedge goes*, a hedge not only about his person and household, but about all that he has. Take the meanest thing that Job has: God protects it and hedges it about. Then we may note this, *that God has an especial care, and does exceedingly prize even the meanest thing that belongs to one of his servants.* God would not bestow a hedge about it, if he did not prize it: A man will not hedge or wall that about which he does not value. God highly values the meanest thing that belongs to one of his servants. The psalmist said, **"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints"** (Ps. 116:15). But not only is the blood, the life of the saints, precious in the sight of God, but every member, every hair of their head is precious. God numbers these. Not only are their children precious, but everything that's called theirs, their servants, their household, their cattle, their oxen, what-

soever they have is all precious in the sight of God.

Lastly, observe, *that Satan has a deadly spite not only against the persons of the godly, but against everything that belongs to a godly man.* Satan would not only hurt and annoy them in their persons, but in everything that is theirs. If God (if we may so speak with reverence) should leave but a dog that belongs unto one of his servants unguarded, Satan would do it a mischief; Satan would be going at the least thing, rather than not do mischief. If he cannot destroy our souls, he would be at the very hair of our heads; therefore Christ to comfort the disciples in the time of trouble assures them, *that the very hairs of their heads were numbered* (Luke 12:7): As if he should say, God will have an account of every hair, the enemies cannot pull off a hair, but God will call them to a reckoning for it.

And it notes too that the enemies will take hold of anything that belongs to the people of God. If they cannot get all, they will get a hair if they can. Why else is it expressed that the very hairs of their heads are numbered? Those words at once intimate, *God's care of all, and Satan's malice against all.*

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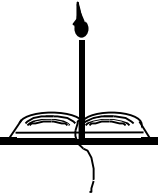


God's Protection of His People

"For what else can be said where heat and cold bring equal danger? Then, in what direction soever you turn, all surrounding objects not only may do harm, but almost openly threaten and seem to present immediate death. Go on board a ship, you are but a plank's breadth from death. Mount a horse, the stumbling of a foot endangers your life. Walk along the streets, every tile upon the roofs is a source of danger. If a sharp instrument is in your own hand, or that of a friend, the possible harm is manifest. All the savage beasts you see are so many beings armed for your destruction. Even within a high-walled garden, where everything ministers to delight, a serpent will sometimes lurk. Your house, constantly exposed to fire, threatens you with poverty by day, with destruction by night. Your fields, subject to hail, mildew, drought, and other injuries, denounce barrenness, and thereby famine. I say nothing of poison, treachery, robbery, some of which beset us at home, others follow us abroad. Amid these perils, must not man be very miserable, as one who, more dead than alive, with difficulty draws an anxious and feeble breath, just as if a drawn sword were constantly suspended over his neck?... But when once the light of Divine Providence has illumined the believer's soul, he is relieved and set free, not only from the extreme fear and anxiety which formerly oppressed him, but from all care. For as he justly shudders at the idea of chance, so he can confidently commit himself to God. This, I say, is his comfort, that his heavenly Father so embraces all things under his power—so governs them at will by His nod—so regulates them by His wisdom, that nothing takes place save according to His appointment; that received into His favour, and entrusted to the care of His angels, neither fire, nor water, nor sword, can do him harm, except in so far as God their master is pleased to permit."

— John Calvin (1509–1564)

New Testament Study: *Matthew 28:1-15*



A Study by Scott Sperling

Matthew 28:1-15 - The Resurrection of Christ

¹ After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

¹¹ While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the

soldiers a large sum of money,¹³ telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

And so now we come to the resurrection of Jesus Christ: the event that is central to the Christian religion and, without which, there would be no Christian Church nor Christian religion. As Paul teaches: **"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain"** (I Cor. 15:14, KJV). Moreover, one could say that the Fall of man, and the Resurrection of Christ are the two most significant events in all of human history. Through the former, sin is brought into the world and man is separated from God. Through the latter, the sins of all mankind are atoned for, and the way is made open for anyone to again establish a relationship with God, being imparted with the righteousness of Christ, through faith in his finished work on the cross. "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not merely the greatest event of history, it is the hinge on which all history turns" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 621].

The significance of the resurrection as a historical event cannot be overstated. One could possibly imagine a Christian belief system without it, a belief that Jesus did pay the price for our sins on the cross, but without the resurrection, how would we know that God accepted Christ's sacrifice? And besides, Jesus had predicted that he would be raised from the dead, and so, without the resurrection, how could we believe anything that Jesus said? Without the resurrection, our religion would be empty, and Lord-less. As Paul tells us: **"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied"** (I Cor. 15:19-20).

In fact, Paul teaches us the significance of the resurrection in many places. We would not be assured of our justifi-

cation without it: “[Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). Through the resurrection, we can have a new life: **“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life”** (Rom. 6:3-4). Because of the resurrection, we can be assured that Jesus is interceding to the Father on our behalf: **“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us”** (Rom. 8:33-34, ESV). Through belief in the resurrection we are saved: **“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved”** (Rom. 10:9-10). Through the resurrection, we know that we too can be raised from the dead: **“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”** (I Cor. 15:12). The resurrection reverses the effects of the curse of man through Adam: **“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive”** (I Cor. 15:21-22). Because of the resurrection, we are inspired to reprioritize our life, in the service of our Lord: **“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things”** (Col. 3:1-3). Through the resurrection, we know that we also will have life after death: **“For we believe that**

Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him” (I Thess. 4:14).

“It is the resurrection of Jesus that establishes a clear and close connection between this world and the unseen and spiritual world. If he rose from the dead, then the world into which he is gone is real, and his invitation to us to join him there is one we may confidently trust to” [*Pulpit Comm.*]. “The resurrection of Christ establishes the divine origin of his mission and teachings; it gives God’s sanction to all his claims, and he claimed to be the Messiah, to speak by divine authority, to be one with God. Jesus had publicly periled his reputation as the Christ of God, on the occurrence of this event. When challenged to give some sign in support of his pretensions, it was to his future resurrection from the dead, and to it alone, that he appealed. Often, and that in terms incapable of misconstruction, had our Lord foretold his resurrection. It carried thus along with it a triple proof of the divinity of our Lord’s mission. It was the fulfillment of a prophecy, as well as the working of a miracle; that miracle wrought, and that prophecy fulfilled, in answer to a solemn and confident appeal made beforehand by Christ to this event as the crowning testimony to his Messiah-ship” [Broadus, 589]. “The resurrection not only culminates the passion narrative but also is at the center of redemption itself. Without it one can only pity Jesus as a martyr whose lofty ideals were sadly misunderstood. With it one must stand in awe of the Messiah, the Son of the living God, who gave his life as a ransom for many and who will one day return in glory to judge humanity” [Turner, 682-683]. And so the historical fact of the resurrection is crucial to the Christian religion. Again, without it, our faith is in vain, and we are **“of all people most to be pitied.”**

Despite being told numerous times by Jesus that he would rise from the dead, the disciples of Christ apparently had no expectation of this coming true. If they did, they would have all been waiting at the tomb for this momentous event to oc-

cur. "The disciples, who promised undying loyalty, are still scattered" [Turner, 680]. Instead, just a few of Christ's followers, all women, came to the tomb on the next morning, the third day: **"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb"** (vs. 1). And knowing the faith of these women, and their true and demonstrated devotion to Christ, perhaps there was a germ of faith in their minds that Jesus would be risen from the dead, as he promised. Their primary purpose, though, in going was to anoint Jesus' body with spices (see Mark 16:1).

Their devotion did not go unrewarded. They were the first people, of all people in history, to know of the resurrection of their Lord. **"There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men"** (vss. 2-4). The timing of our Lord's resurrection, the earthquake, and the rolling away of the stone, with respect to when the women arrived at the tomb is not specified in Matthew's text. Mark, Luke and John tell us that the stone was already rolled away when the women arrived at the tomb (see Mark 16:4, Luke 24:2, and John 20:1). And being that it was **"a violent earthquake"**, the women would have felt it wherever they were. Perhaps the earthquake woke up the women and caused them to decide to return to the tomb at that time. To inhabitants of the area, the earthquake would have been considered as an aftershock to the one that occurred the night before. These earthquakes were not only related geologically, but they were both tied to the death and resurrection of our Lord. "The earth shook both at Christ's passion and at his resurrection; then, to show that it could not bear his suffering; now, to show that it could not hinder his rising" [Trapp, 280].

The appearance of the angel put the guards into some sort of shocked state, a paralyzing terror. And if their mission was to guard the body of Jesus, they did fail, though not because anyone stole the body. No one, no thing, no power could prevent the raising of Christ from the dead. "The detachment of guards and the imperial seal cannot prevent the removal of Jesus's body because it is not stolen by the disciples but raised by the Father" [Turner, 681].

The women, though afraid (see Luke 24:5), fared better than the Roman guards, and were able to receive and understand the message that the angel told them. "By the same means the Lord can terrify his adversaries, and comfort his people" [Dickson, 349]. The appearance of the angel in physical form, though a rare event with respect to human history, was not so rare with respect to the events surrounding Jesus' incarnation on earth. "The angels frequently attended our Lord Jesus: at his birth, in his temptation, in his agony, but upon the cross we find no angel attending him. When his Father forsook him, the angels withdrew from him. But now he is resuming the glory he had before the foundation of the world, and now behold the angels of God worship him" [Henry, 252].

The angel had good news to impart to the women, the first communication of the Gospel good news that Jesus rose from the dead: **"The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you'"** (vss. 5-7). Can we even begin to imagine the emotions of the women as they heard this message? They had come there with the depressing task of anointing a dead body with spices; they arrive to learn that there is no dead body: the Lord has risen. "We might have expected that the good news would be given first

to Peter or John or some other member of the eleven. But God's ways are not our ways, and the message was given first to a couple of women" [Morris]. "[The men] had deserted Christ in his hour of need, had not stood by the cross, nor aided in his burial; so they were not to be honored with the vision of angels or the first sight of the risen Lord. This was reserved for the faithful women, who thus received their mission to carry a message to the messengers—a foretaste of the ministry which they should perform in the Church of Christ" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 641]. "The women are sent to tell it them, and so are made as it were the apostles of the apostles. This was an honor put upon them, and a recompense for their constant, affectionate adherence to him, at the cross, and in the grave, and a rebuke to the disciples who forsook him" [Henry, 253].

As stated, the angel was the first to preach the Gospel message, bringing hope and joy to the lost and sorrowful. In essence, his message is one we also could preach, and would do well to repeat anytime and anywhere we can: **"Do not be afraid... He has risen, just as he said."** "These words were spoken with a deep meaning. They were meant to cheer the hearts of believers in every age, in the prospect of the resurrection. They were intended to remind us, that true Christians have no cause for alarm, whatever may come on the world" [Ryle, 406]. "The servants of the word should exercise the office of comforting angels, or God's messengers of consolation, unto the anguished" [Canstein, in *Lange's*, pg. 550].

The angel proves the resurrection of Christ by showing the women the empty tomb: **"Come and see the place where he lay"** (vs. 6). So we see here that the stone was rolled away for our benefit, so that there would be witnesses that, indeed, the body of Christ was no longer in the tomb. "The stone was rolled away from the tomb not so that Christ could emerge; he could pass through doors and walls (Luke 24:36; John 20:19) and did not need the stone re-

moved. The stone was rolled away so that the women and others could see the tomb was empty." [Osbourne]. "The positive evidence [of the resurrection] is in the appearance of Christ to his disciples; the negative evidence is in the empty tomb. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, men could have pointed to his sealed tomb, could even have torn it open and shown the corpse within... Jesus did not only appear after his death, as ghosts are said to have appeared, startling nervous people in haunted places. His tomb was left vacant. His body had disappeared. This is an important fact in regard to the Resurrection" [Pulpit Comm., 654].

The women responded with excitement at the good news, setting out to do what the angel asked: **"So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples"** (vs. 8). Note, they believed the truth of the resurrection even before they saw the risen Lord, based on the testimony of the angel, and the witness of the empty tomb.

The women were not only the first to receive the news about the risen Lord, but they were also the first to see the risen Lord: **"Suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him"** (vs. 9). In seeing Jesus, the women **"clasped his feet."** "Jesus is not a spirit but has been raised bodily — but with new meaning. Before there were resuscitations, but those raised had to die again. Jesus is raised for eternity" [Osbourne].

As they clasped his feet, they **"worshiped him."** "In thus taking hold of his feet the women symbolically recognized Jesus' kingship; indeed, it may indicate that they had come to realize that he was more than mortal" [Morris]. "That belief in the divinity of Christ, which was partly slumbering during His state of humiliation, is awakened in all, as with one blow, through this miraculously imposing view of the risen Savior" [*Lange's*, 563]. "Jesus's initial post-resurrection appearance sets the tone for the proper worshipful response to him for the future. The women are evidently prostrated before Jesus with

their faces to the ground and arms outstretched with hands grasping Jesus's feet." [Turner, 682].

"Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me'" (vs. 10). Jesus told the women to remind the disciples that he would meet them in Galilee. Jesus made this promise on the night of his arrest (see Matt. 26:32). "This promise had been originally made in connection with Jesus's prediction that the disciples would desert him (26:31). The power of the resurrection will transform the deserters back into disciples (28:16)" [Turner, 681].

Significantly, though now he is the risen Lord, proven worthy of our worship, Jesus calls the disciples **"brothers."** "The 'family' metaphor shows much love and patience, since the disciples have just run away from home, as it were, when they deserted Jesus. But Jesus welcomes the prodigals back" [Turner, 682]. "They had shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive and forget, and to teach us to do so, he not only continues his purpose to meet them, but calls them *brothers*" [Henry, 254]. "[**'Brothers'** is] a new designation of the disciples, which declares to them His consoling sympathy, and makes known to them that He, as the Risen One, had not been alienated from them by their flight and treachery, but that rather they are summoned by Him to become partners in His resurrection" [Lange's, 546]. The writer of the book of Hebrews expands on Jesus' use of the term **"brothers"** in referring to his disciples, then and now: **"In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters"** (Hebrews 2:10-11). Jesus, by living as a man, understands our struggles as fallen humans. And so, he is **"not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters."**

What the women saw as good news was not-so-good news to others: **"While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, 'You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble'"** (vss. 11-14). "When the women were going to bring that news to the disciples, which would fill their hearts with joy, the soldiers went to bring the same news to the chief priests, which would fill their faces with shame" [Henry, 254]. Rather than accepting the good news of a risen Lord, the good news that Jesus really is the Messiah sent to save them—rather than investigating this extraordinary event, and responding to the truth of the resurrection with awe, wonder and excitement—the chief priests devise an absurd, last-ditch attempt to suppress and smother the truth of the Gospel. In doing so, they are battling against the sovereign God whom they profess they serve. Moreover, the testimony to them by the soldiers that they saw an angel, and that Jesus did rise from the dead, renders the chief priests inexcusable: they cannot claim ignorance of proof that Jesus is the Messiah. "They had said, **'Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him'** (Matt. 27:42); behold, he has done something still more wonderful, yet they do not believe, no, nor make further inquiry, but simply bribe the witnesses to report a stupid falsehood... The story must have excited great surprise and alarm, but it wrought no repentance" [Broadus, 588]. "Those who were guarding Jesus's tomb now become evangelists" [Turner, 685].

"Ironically, the same guards who were to be an asset in *preventing* a resurrection hoax become a liability *necessitating* a hoax" [Turner, 685]. The hoax is not an improvised, seat-of-the-pants plan; it is devised in a meeting between the chief

priests and elders. This is pre-meditated rebellion against God. “Christ’s malicious enemies are of the devil’s nature, they will never cease to oppose him, though they know him to be the Son of God” [Dickson, 352]. “No multiplication of evidence will convince those who are stubbornly resolved not to believe” [Broadus, 589].

The soldiers, who were in a bit of a sticky situation since they failed at their duty to keep Jesus’ body in the tomb, took the bribe and went along with the deception: **“So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day”** (vs. 15). First, thirty pieces of silver are given to Judas, now **“a large sum of money”** is given to the guards: the enemies of Christ spare no expense in battling the Gospel truth. “The Jesus whom they had caused to be slain and put into the tomb was now a living reality; all their bribes and lies could do nothing to alter the facts” [Morris].

Of course, the story devised by the chief priests is absurd on many levels: If the guards were asleep, how did they know it was the disciples who took the body? And how in heaven’s name would *all* of these specially trained soldiers fall asleep at the same time? And why weren’t any of them aroused by the arduous work of rolling the stone away from the tomb’s opening? No. Certainly the truth of what happened is far more believable than this concocted story: Jesus rose from the dead, just as he said he would.

Alternate Views of the Resurrection

Because of the strong historical evidence for the truth of Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and the resistance of many to accept that Jesus did rise bodily from the dead, there have been attempts to interpret the evidence in other ways that still take the evidence into account. Grant Osbourne has

summarized the main alternative views, and also why each falls short of the most straight-forward explanation of what happened: that Jesus did rise from the dead. Here is Dr. Osbourne’s summary

There are seven different theories propounded through the centuries to explain what may have happened behind the resurrection story; let us consider each one in turn.

The early Jewish apologetic against its truthfulness said the disciples stole the body and made up a story about the resurrection (28:13); yet this is exactly what Matthew’s account intends to refute.

The political theory of Hermann Samuel Reimarus in the eighteenth century stated that the disciples concocted the resurrection story to establish a movement that would bring them fame and power. However, this has never been widely accepted because of the high ethical content of the NT. The disciples could hardly be so base as to make up such a story for personal gain and then create a Christian movement based on selflessness and filled with persecution for them.

The swoon theory of Friedrich Schleiermacher and K. A. Hase asserted that Jesus fainted on the cross and revived in the tomb (also the theory in the Koran, which says Jesus later preached in India and died in Kashmir). The gospels themselves combat this theory by stressing the observers and the reality of Jesus’ wounds. The Romans were expert executioners, and the team that put Christ on the cross would have done so numerous times. There is simply no way they would have mistaken someone who had fainted for a corpse.

The mythical view of David R Strauss and Rudolf Bultmann, which hypothesizes that the stories were created by the early church along the lines of Greco-Roman myth in order to explain the existential (Bultmann) impact of Jesus on the lives of the disciples (i.e., he “still lives” in their hearts). There was insufficient time for this to develop (most accept that the tradition behind 1 Cor 15:3-8 was developed within five years of Jesus’ ascension). The disciples would hardly have been so radically changed by a “myth,” and the vast

differences between pagan myths and the subdued resurrection narratives make this theory doubtful indeed.

The subjective vision theory of Ernst Renan and Willi Marxsen, who hold that the disciples (Peter first) had dreams of Jesus and interpreted these from a first-century perspective as being sent by God. But the appearances came to some who were not psychologically prepared (e.g., James and Paul), and it is difficult to explain all the changes merely on psychological grounds. A mass hallucination to “five hundred people at once” (1 Cor 15:6) is hardly a viable alternative, as if they were stoned on sacred mushrooms or something!

The objective vision theory of Eduard Schweizer, Günter Bornkamm, and C. R. D. Moule, who maintain that God sent the disciples visions rather than physical appearances and that these were interpreted along physical lines by the Jewish followers who had no concept of differences between a physical and spiritual body/resurrected form. But this is to force a Greek view of a spiritual body on historical evidence that attests otherwise. It is hard to conceive why God would restrict himself to mere visions of the glorified Jesus. The God who could do the one could also do the other, and there is little reason along these lines to deny the validity of the biblical claims.

The corporeal view of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and most conservative critics fits the evidence as we have it and makes the best sense. Jesus was raised from the dead literally and bodily. Gnilka notes the centrality of verbs for “seeing” in this final section (28:1, 6, 7, 17, plus the six uses of “look” in the chapter) and concludes that Matthew stresses what one can see with the eyes as interpreted through the Word. Matthew clearly believes that Jesus actually appeared and was “seen” by the disciples....

When the data is examined and the question honestly asked, “What really happened?” there are significant reasons for affirming the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection.

The disparate [Gospel] accounts are not really contradictory to one another, and it is indeed possible to harmonize them and show they supplement one another.

Little else can explain the incredible change of the disciples from self-centered cowards who would desert Jesus in his moment of greatest need to world-changing moral and spiritual giants.

Anyone making up the stories about the resurrection would never have women (who could not serve as witnesses in a Jewish framework) as the first official witnesses of the resurrection news.

The empty tomb is a historically verifiable fact, and in spite of Jewish claims that the disciples stole the body (Matt 28:13-15), there is no evidence they were able to produce the body of Jesus.

From the start the early church used the resurrection as a historically verifiable event (1 Cor 15:5-8; the sermons of Acts), and to them it actually happened.

Jesus did not appear just to his followers but also to unbelievers, such as his brother James (1 Cor 15:7; for him as an unbeliever see John 7:5).

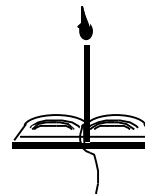
In conclusion, the resurrection as a historical event makes best sense of the data [Osbourne].

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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.]

A Study by Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

How to Begin Every Day with God, pt. 5

**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 “look up”; that is,

1. We must *look up* in our prayers, as those that speak to one above us, infinitely above us, the high and holy One who inhabits eternity; as those that expect every good and perfect gift to come from above, from the Father of lights; as those that desire in prayer to enter into the holiest, and to draw near with a true heart. With an eye of faith we must look above the world and everything in it, must look beyond the things of time. What is this world, and all things here below, to one that knows how to put a due estimate upon spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Jesus Christ? The spirit of a man at death goes upward (see Eccl. 3:21), for it returns to God who gave it, and therefore is mindful of its original. It must in every prayer look upwards towards its God, towards its home, as having set its affections on things above, wherein it has laid up its treasure. Let us therefore in prayer lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens (see Lam. 3:14). It was anciently usual in some churches for the minister to stir up the people to pray with this word, *Sursum Corda*, up with your hearts; unto

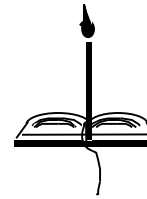
thee, O Lord, do we lift up our souls.

2. We must *look up* after our prayers.

a. With an eye of satisfaction and pleasure. *Looking up* is a sign of cheerfulness, as a down look is a melancholy one. We must *look up*, as those, that having by prayer referred ourselves to God, are easy and well pleased, and with an entire confidence in his wisdom and goodness, patiently expect the issue. Hannah, when she had prayed, looked up, looked pleasant; she went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad (see I Sam. 1:18). Prayer is heart's ease to a good Christian; and when we have prayed, we should look up, as those that through grace have found it so.

b. With an eye of observation, what returns God makes to our prayers. We must *look up*, as one that has shot an arrow looks after it, to see how near it comes to the mark; we must look within us, and observe what the frame of our spirit is after we have been at prayer, how well satisfied they are in the will of God, and how well disposed to accommodate themselves to it; we must look about us, and observe how providence works concerning us, that if our prayers be answered, we may return to give thanks; if not, we may remove what hinders, and may continue waiting. Thus we must set ourselves upon our watch-tower to see what God will say unto us (see Heb. 2:1), and must be ready to hear it (Psalm 85:8), expecting that God will give us an answer of peace, and resolving that we will return no more to folly. Thus must we keep up our communion with God; hoping that whenever we lift up our hearts unto him, he will lift up the light of his countenance upon us. Sometimes the answer is quick: while they are yet speaking I will hear; quicker than the return of any of your posts; but if it be not, when we have prayed, we must wait.

Let us learn thus to direct our prayers, and thus to *look up*; to be inward with God in every duty, to make heart-work of it, or we make nothing of it. Let us not worship in the outward court, when we are commanded and encouraged to enter within the vail.



A Study in Wisdom: Proverbs 3:1-12

A Study by Scott Sperling

Proverbs 3:1-12 – Imperatives and Benefits

- ¹ My son, do not forget my teaching,
but keep my commands in your heart,
- ² for they will prolong your life many years
and bring you peace and prosperity.
- ³ Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
- ⁴ Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.
- ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
- ⁶ in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.
- ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.
- ⁸ This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones.
- ⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops;
- ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing,
and your vats will brim over with new wine.
- ¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline,
and do not resent his rebuke,
- ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves,
as a father the son he delights in.

This section begins: **“My son, do not forget my teaching...”** (vs. 1). This signals that this is a continuation of the teachings in chapter 2, which began, **“My son, if you accept my words...”** In fact, chapters 1 through 9 of the book of Proverbs can be seen as one long discourse about Wisdom, as alternately delivered by a father to his son, and by Wisdom herself personified.

In the previous chapter, the emphasis was on how wisdom leads one to moral stability in life, and protects one from evil influences. In this section, there is an emphasis on quality-of-life benefits that having wisdom and living wisely brings.

This section also connects a trust and devotion to God with living wisely. To have wisdom and to live wisely is to live godly. In verses 5 through 12, we learn that true wisdom is anchored in knowing, trusting, and devoting oneself to God. “Devotion to God and devotion to Wisdom are inseparable. For the scholar, who may be tempted to seek knowledge without having first submitted to God, this means that the search will be futile and the wisdom gained will be distorted if one has not first oriented oneself to the Creator in faith, humility, and obedience” [Garrett, 63].

This section (vss. 1 through 12) consists of imperatives for living wisely, followed by benefits that will likely result from keeping the imperative. So the author gives “motivation for following the imperatives by naming the positive consequences that will flow from obedience” [Longman, 112].

The section begins with one such *imperative/benefit* pair: **“My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity”** (vss. 1-2). Before we speak of the specific details of the text, we need to touch on the concept of reward and punishment as laid out in the book of Proverbs. A simple, direct reading of these verses would imply, if extrapolated, that all godly people have long lives, filled with **“peace and prosperity.”** And yet, we know by experience, and knowledge of history, that this is not the case. Many godly people live a relatively short and difficult

life on earth. This, of course, was well-known by the author Solomon (he speaks of this in the book of Ecclesiastes). And so, we must view the *benefits* given for following a stated *imperative*, not as guaranteed rewards, but rather as likely results, all other things being equal. There are times when God chooses, for His purposes to test and try his godly people. At these times, God chooses to override the stated rewards given in these simple proverbs for a greater good or purpose. We need to keep this in mind, as we read the entire book of Proverbs. Life, most times, cannot be simplified to an “*if A, then B*” formula, but rather, in general, we are likely to reap the benefits stated, as God best sees fit. It is in the nature of the proverb not to give absolute guarantees or promises, “but rather to indicate the best route toward reward—all things being equal” [Longman, 74].

So again, Solomon begins this section: **“My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity”** (vss. 1-2). Again, as throughout most of chapters 1 through 9, Solomon addresses his teachings to **“my son”**, speaking as a loving father to his child. And as we read, we may consider Solomon to be our spiritual father, speaking God’s truth to us.

As stated, verses 1 through 12 consist of imperative/benefit pairs. The imperative here is **“do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart.”** “Three things may be considered as implied in this verse—*remembrance, attachment, and obedience*” [Wardlaw, 75]. “He had before instructed us to *seek and search* after wisdom, and set out before us its invaluable blessings. Now he calls us to bring it into practical exercise—*Forget not my law*” [Bridges, 21]. “We must never forget this law, but make it familiar to our memories, that we may have a guide ready to direct us in every situation in which we may be placed” [Lawson, 44].

The benefit to be derived from knowing wise teaching, and incorporating the commands into one’s being is that **“they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.”** It is a God-given instinct for us to desire a long

life. The benefit here goes beyond that, for it is **“many years”**, along with **“peace and prosperity.”** “Endless years without peace are a curse... The enjambment *and peace and prosperity* qualifies this life as having every sufficiency and good fortune, free from hostility and lack, and so filled with inner contentment, delight, joy, and pleasure as a gift from God” [Waltke].

Solomon continues: **“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man”** (vss. 3-4). These verses can be seen as parallel to verses 1 and 2. In 1 and 2, you are to **“not forget”** and **“keep my commands in your heart.”** Here you are to ensure that love and faithfulness **“never leave you, bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.”** A more intense remembrance is exhorted here. “It is not enough that we merely remember as we might the laws of the twelve tables, or any other code, in which we feel no farther interest than that which arises from historical curiosity. We must feel our interest in them, as commandments binding on ourselves. They must have more than even the approbation of the conscience; they must have the concurrent affections of the heart, as the commandments of One to whom the love and devotion of our whole souls is supremely due” [Wardlaw, 76]. “To inscribe something on a tablet ensures its clarity and permanence (e.g., Exod. 34:1, 28; Deut. 10:1-5; Isa. 30:8; Hab. 2:2). To write on the heart is to make an indelible mark on the center of one’s being, to etch the instruction onto the innermost parts of oneself... With parental teachings encircling the youth’s neck and incised on his heart, there is no dissonance between the external appearances and internal commitments—a consistency of character that is honored by God and humanity” [Yoder, 68].

Specifically here, it is **“love and faithfulness,”** also translated *mercy and truth*, which are to never leave us. These are two words which God himself uses to describe himself, as

he did to Moses: **“Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness’”** (Ex. 34:5-6). God is also described with these traits many other places in the Bible (see Ps. 86:15; Ps. 108:4; Ps. 115:1; Ps. 117:2; Ps. 138:2). So, to be truly in the image of God, we must also have these traits. They indicate “the highest normal standard of moral perfection” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 54, from Zöckler]. “*Mercy and truth* are the glorious perfections of God; always in combined exercise for his people’s good. While we rest upon them for salvation, let us copy them in our profession” [Bridges, 22]. “Where this mercy or love is exhibited in man it finds expression in (1) mutual outward help; (2) forgiveness of offences; (3) sympathy of feeling, which leads to interchange of thought, and so to the development of the spiritual life... Truth [or *faithfulness*] is that absolute integrity of character, both in word and deed, which secures the unhesitating confidence of all” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 54].

The benefit of exhibiting these traits is that you **“will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man”** (vs. 4). In the **“sight of God,”** because these are traits God himself prides himself in having. In the **“sight of man,”** because we all desire to be shown love and mercy, and to be dealt with in truth and faithfulness.

The next imperative concerns our day-to-day dependence on God: **“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight”** (vss. 5-6). There are three parts to the imperative: **“Trust in the LORD with all your heart,”** **“lean not on your own understanding,”** and **“in all your ways submit to him.”** Appropriately, given their emphasis on being entirely dependent on God, these are the first of a handful of exhortations, in verses 5 through 12, which relate to man’s relationship with God.

The first part of the imperative, **“trust in the LORD with all your heart,”** exhorts us to have a complete reliance and dependence on God. The words **“trust in the LORD”** really sum up the duty and attitude of God’s people. These words can be the answer to many conundrums we face, and the salve for any anxiety that troubles us: **“Trust in the LORD with all your heart.”** “Such confidence or trust, with its corresponding idea of the renunciation of reliance on self, is, as Zöckler truly remarks, a ‘fundamental principle of all religion’” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 55].

These words, by specifying **“with all your heart,”** again, exhort a full and complete reliance on God. “God complains as much of a divided allegiance as of none. In cleaving to Christ the effort to reserve a little spoils all” [Trapp, in Zöckler, 68]. “This dependence on God is to be exercised with all our hearts, our judgments being persuaded that God is the only and the all-sufficient object of confidence, and our souls resting with full satisfaction in his power and faithfulness” [Lawson, 47].

The remaining parts of the exhortation emphasize and clarify that our **“trust in the LORD”** is to be complete. Solomon tells us **“lean not on your own understanding.”** “An entire commitment entails an exclusive commitment” [Waltke]. God is not to be one of a list of things that we put our confidence in. He is to be the only entity in which we have full trust. Given this, we must realize that we cannot depend unequivocally on our **“own understanding.”** “To divide our confidence between God and the creature, is to lean with one hand upon a rock, and with the other hand upon a broken reed” [Lawson, 47]. Though certainly, our understanding of the world is a valuable tool in helping us to navigate life. “The admonition does not mean that we are not to use our own understanding, i.e. form plans with discretion, and employ legitimate means in the pursuit of our ends; but that, when we use it, we are to depend upon God and his directing and overruling providence” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 55]. “One is a fool to rely on his thimble of knowledge before [the

Lord’s] vast ocean or on his own understanding, which is often governed by irrational urges that he cannot control” [Waltke].

Then once again, to emphasize our complete reliance on the Lord, Solomon tells us, **“in all your ways submit to him.”** Most translations say, **“in all your ways acknowledge him.”** The statement seems to imply a submission to God’s will, with the full knowledge, and acknowledgement that it is God who is directing us. Implicit in this exhortation is that we should **“acknowledge”** God in **“all”** of our ways by turning to him in prayer for guidance and direction. “We must ask his advice and beg direction from him, not only when the case is difficult, but in every case, be it ever so plain” [Henry, 803]. “Take one step at a time, every step under Divine warrant and direction (see Ezek. 8:21-23; Neh. 1:11). Ever plan for yourself in simple dependence on God. It is nothing less than self-idolatry to conceive that we can carry on even the ordinary matters of the day without his counsel. He loves to be consulted... Consider no circumstances too clear to need his direction. In all thy ways, small as well as great; in all thy concerns, personal or relative, temporal or eternal, let him be supreme... Let the will be kept in a quiet, subdued, cheerful readiness, to move, stay, retreat, turn to the right hand or to the left, at the Lord’s bidding; always remembering that is best which is least our own doing, and that a pliable spirit ever secures the needful guidance (see Ps. 32:8-9; Isa. 48:17-18, Isa. 30:21)” [Bridges, 24, 25].

The benefit from having complete reliance on God, is that **“he will make your paths straight.”** “The straight paths are the best, with the least obstacles. These are to be contrasted with the crooked paths, which end in death (see Prov. 9:18; cf. Prov. 2:15)” [Longman, 115]. “We are everyday to pray that our steps may be so ordered, as that we may not be led into temptation” [Lawson, 48]. God directs our paths, not like a puppeteer pulling strings, but in more subtle ways. “Having showed to God our way, we must wait on God for direction, not by a voice from heaven, or by a new inspiration, but by his Spirit enabling us to understand his word, and apply it to particular

affairs, and by his providence making the way where we should walk clear before us" [Lawson, 49].

Solomon continues somewhat in the same vein: **"Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones"** (vss. 7-8). Here, Solomon points out the benefits to one's health that following these imperatives bring, mainly **"fearing the LORD."**

The first imperative here is **"Do not be wise in your own eyes."** This imperative carries on from the one in verse 5, **"lean not on your own understanding."** Our natural inclination is to trust primarily and solely in our own wisdom. Solomon here exhorts us to direct our attention away from ourselves, and to God; to **"fear the LORD and shun evil."** "The opposite of being wise in one's own eyes is to fear Yahweh. The fear of Yahweh puts one's own abilities and resources in proper perspective. It also naturally leads to an aversion to evil" [Longman, 115]. "There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, than conceitedness of our own wisdom" [Henry, 804].

The benefits to doing these things concern our bodily health: **"This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones"** (vs. 8). Good health is such an important factor in having a worry-free, contented existence on earth. Solomon points out that **"fearing the LORD"** and **"shunning evil"** are key methods to bring about bodily health. "By observing the commands of 3:7, as by drinking a divine elixir, one will experience a mysterious quickening and nourishing of the inner and firmest part of the body" [Waltke]. "Religion has a natural tendency to impart health and vigour to the body, because it preserves a man from those distempers which proceed from unsubdued lusts, and diffuses over the mind that calm serenity and heartfelt joy, which even upon the body exercise a medicinal influence" [Lawson, 51]. "The virtues of sobriety, of temperance, and chastity, and industry, and contentment, and control of the tempers and passions, and regularity, and integrity, and kindness, — and

others that are included in subjection to the law of God, have all, in various ways, a manifest tendency to such a result. They conduce, eminently, in the ordinary course of things, to the enjoyment of health and long life — to the prevention of the tear and wear of the constitution, and to general prosperity and well-being" [Wardlaw, 77]. "The prudence, temperance, and sobriety, the calmness and composure of mind, and the good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tend very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other enjoyments in this world are insipid" [Henry 804].

The next imperative entails proving one's devotion to the Lord by a bit of self-sacrifice: **"Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops"** (vs. 9). "The practice of offering a portion of one's means to God acknowledges God as the source and provider. If there is any area in which people in every age are tempted to be wise in their own eyes, it is in the fantasy that wealth is a product of their own competence and nothing more. The teaching answers such a fantasy by pointing to barns of grain and vats of grapes, agricultural products of human labor that in the end are beyond human control" [Koptak, 119]. "Earthly substance is necessary for the use of our bodies, but we are called to make a nobler use of it than the mere service of the outward man. We are to honour the Lord with it, making no use of any part of our increase, till we have set apart a reasonable proportion of it for the service of God" [Lawson, 52]. "By the practice of this duty, we show our faith in his providence and promises, our love to God, our gratitude for his goodness, and our preference of his service to that of mammon... By the neglect of this duty, we are guilty of robbing God himself of that rent which he requires from us as his tenants" [Lawson, 52]. "Is it any hardship to give a part to him from whom we have received all? Can we make a better use of our wealth, which is often a snare and a trap to men, than by serving God?" [Lawson, 52]. "We must honour him, not only with our bodies and spirits which are his, but with our estates too, for they also are his: we and all our appurtenances must be

devoted to his glory... It is the surest and safest method of thriving... We mistake if we think that giving will undo us and make us poor. No, giving for God's honor will make us rich" [Henry, 804]. And how do we **"honor the LORD with our wealth"**? By giving to ministries which advance the work of Jesus Christ on earth; by giving to ministries which help those less fortunate than us.

For a farmer to give away the **"firstfruits of all crops,"** is an act of faith that God would provide further harvest beyond the **"firstfruits."** Beyond that, Solomon states that a benefit of honoring God with the firstfruits is that **"your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine"** (vs. 10). So the benefit is not mere survival and sustenance, which would be a gift and blessing from God in itself, but abundance **"overflowing."** "It is a paradoxical truth, but if one is willing to give of one's wealth to honor Yahweh, then such persons will find an increase of their wealth, not a diminishing of it" [Longman, 116]. "God has the sun, and winds, and rain, and creatures of every description, in his hand; and these he manages in such a manner, as that none shall be a loser by him, nor a gainer by withholding from him" [Lawson, 53].

Though good health and wealth are mentioned in the previous verses as general benefits of honoring and devoting oneself to the Lord, there are times when the child of God experiences difficulties and trials. Solomon addresses those here: **"My son, do not despise the LORD'S discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in"** (vss. 11-12). "Abundant prosperity shall flow from honouring Jehovah, but he sometimes and not unfrequently sends affliction, and, indeed, without which this life would be incomplete" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 58]. "The strophe presupposes that the son has not kept his obligations and the Lord has meted out punishment instead of blessings. Prosperity and adversity are the wise and necessary mixture of the saint's condition" [Waltke]. "What will be our comfort when we are

in affliction? That it is a divine correction; it is the *chastening of the Lord*... for we may be sure that a God of unspotted purity does us no wrong and that a God of infinite goodness means us no hurt" [Henry, 805].

We are not to **"despise"**, nor **"resent"** God's discipline. These words are kind of two sides of the same coin. One denotes despising in the sense of not valuing their usefulness; the other denotes resenting as overly burdensome. Rather than **"despising"** and **"resenting"**, we are actually to value the discipline and rebuke of the Lord, because they are signs of his love for us, **"as a father [loves] the son he delights in."** All parents understand the concept of discipline rooted in love. "It is one of the finest triumphs of faith, when, in time of affliction, a Christian gets fresh confidence in a Savior's love" [Arnot, 97-98].

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews comments on these very verses: **"And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.' Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 'Make level paths for**

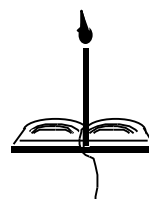
your feet,' so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed" (Heb. 12:5-13).

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A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist

Upon the Perching of a Piece of Cloth by William Spurstowe (1666)

Laws, signally good, oft times derive their birth according to the common saying, from evil manners, springing like fair and beautiful flowers from a black and deformed root. And so likewise the many and ingenuous explorations of finding out the difference between things of worth and their counterfeits; and of seeing into the particular defects of commodities, have been occasioned from the multiplicity of deceits, which have risen either from natural semblances, or corrupt practices.

The skillful *lapidary* has, by his observation, learned to know a false *stone* from a true, which the common eye cannot distinguish. The *herbalists* do difference *plants* sometimes by the root, sometimes by the taste, when the likeness of the leaf is perfectly the same. The *cautious* receiver, that he be not cozened by adulterated *coin* for *true*, makes an *artificial touchstone* of his senses. He *bends* it, he *rings* it, he *rub*s it, and *smells* to it, that thereby he may find out what it is. The circumspect *merchant* contents not himself with the seeing and feeling of his *cloth* as it lies made up; but he puts it upon the *perch*, and setting it between the light and himself draws it leisurely over; and so discovers not only the rents and holes that are in it, but the inequality of the threads, the unevenness of its spinning, the spots and stains that are in it, and what not, that may make it either to be rejected for its defects, or approved for its goodness.

O how impartial a judge is light, which neither flatters friends, nor wrongs enemies; which manifests the good as well as the evil to whatever it is applied. This kind of trial hints to me the best manner of doing that work, which every Christian

ought to perform with the greatest care, the searching and examining of his own ways. I may learn from what is done to the cloth, to do the same spiritually to myself, by setting my actions between the light of the Word, and the discerning power of conscience, that so the one may discover, and the other may judge what their rectitude or pravity is? And this is best done when every parcel of the conversation is looked into, and scanned, as the *cloth* that is drawn over the *perch*; then it is that I find the unevenness of my duties, the distractions of my thoughts, and the unbelief of my heart, which runs as a continued thread from one end of the duty unto the other. Then it is that I espy those secret stains of hypocrisy which discolor my services, and blemish them to God, when they seem fair to the eye of man. Then it is that convinced of my filthiness, I cry out. My *person* wants a *priest*, which is deformed with infinite *guilt*, that without him cannot be covered. My *nature* wants a *priest*, which is deformed with infinite *guilt*, that without him cannot be covered. My *nature* wants a *priest*, which is overrun with a universal *leprosy*, that without him cannot be cured. My *sins* want a *priest*, which are for their number as the sands, and for their greatness as the mountains, that without him can never be pardoned. My *holy things* want a *priest*, which are defiled with the daily eruptions of sin and folly, that without him can never be accepted.

And who is it, who thus views himself by this perfect law of liberty, yet is not thus affected? What said Paul of himself?: **“I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died”** (Rom. 7: 9). Who was once more full of conceited abilities to perform the righteousness of the law without blame? Who was more presumptuous in self-justifications and elated thoughts of his perfection, than the *apostle*, while he was without the law? That is, not without the *letter*, but without the *spiritual sense* and penetrative power of it; but when the commandment came in its vigor and life, how suddenly did all those

mis-persuasions of his righteousness vanish into nothing? He then lost his confidence of being saved by his obedience to the law; and by the light of it discovered those inward lustings, and desires to be sinful, and such as subjected him to death, which before were wholly neglected and unseen.

As I would therefore incite Christians to an exact discussion of their ways, so would I also direct them to look upon them through no other *medium* than the light of the Word: **“Wherewith”** (said David) **“shall a young man cleanse his ways,”** (or as the original imports, *make clear as crystal*) **“by taking heed thereto according to thy Word?”** (Ps. 119:9). The heathen were not altogether aliens to this duty of self-examination. It was Sextius’s custom, as Seneca reports it, when he betook himself to his night’s rest, to question his soul, “What malady hast thou this day cured? What vice hast thou withstood?” It was also Pythagoras his counsel to his scholars, that each man should demand of himself, *“Wherein have I offended? What good have I done?”* But alas! How confused and indistinct was that light by which they made this search? How little can the candlelight of nature discover of the evil of sin, whose rules and principles do so much fall in, and suit with the wills of the flesh? What carnal sins did the very best of them swallow down, without the least straining at them? What swarms are there of sins, which Christians complain of, that the natural man is totally ignorant of, and can no more discover, without the aid of the Word, than the eye can discern its own bloodshed without the help of a glass? We have Paul’s own confession in this particular: **“I had not known lust, except the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet’”** (Rom. 7:7). Before he only saw some sins that were as *beams* for their magnitude, but now he is sensible of the smallest *motes*.

To the law then, and to the testimony do you betake yourselves, O ye sincere and upright ones. When you go about this work, fear not its purity, but love it. Shrink not at its searching power, but yield up yourselves to a free and voluntary admission of its light. Yea, rejoice and be exceeding glad, that by the

light of the Word, you can trace sin home to its receptacle, and can both judge it and mortify it in the seed and root of it, which is the surest and best way of destroying it. He is amongst the first-born of Christians, who communes most with his own heart, and looks most often into the books of conscience, which writes journals, and not annals, and is most likely to obtain a double portion both of *peace* and *grace*. But when he has done all, let him make David's prayer the close: **"Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there by any wicked way in me, and lead me I the way everlasting"** (Ps. 139:23-24).

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True and False Faith

"There is much false coin in the world, washed pewter and gilded brass; there are sepulchres garnished outwardly, and full of rottenness and stench within; there are many that want not their artifices in religion as well as in common converse. Good things may be imitated when they are not rooted... The apostle speaks of '**a dead faith**' (see James 2:26), which is like the carcass of a man without life, a faith that deserves no more the name of faith than the carcass doth the title of a man when the enlivening and principal part is fled. There is a '**repentance unto life**,' (see Acts 11:18), which supposeth a dead repentance, such as Ahab's humiliation, like marble sweating tears in moist and rainy weather without any mollifying of the natural hardness, or Judas his sorrow, raised by the fire in his conscience, not like Peter's, by the spiritual influence of His Master. There is a '**lively hope**' (see I Peter 1:3), which supposeth a dead hope; there is a '**lively stone**,' (see I Pet. 3:5), which implies that there are lifeless stones, that are not inwardly fitted and prepared for the spiritual building. The building upon the rock and the sand might have the same beauty, form, and ornaments, but not the same foundation; one was stable and the other tottering. There is a '**repentance towards God**,' (see Acts 20:21), when the dishonor of God afflicts us, which implies there is a repentance towards ourselves, when the danger of our own persons starts a pretended sorrow for sin. There is a faith that is sound and lasting, a faith that is temporary and perishing, a faith that starts up like a mushroom in a night, and withers at the next scorching temptation. There is a faith common with devils, and a faith proper to Christians; there is a faith of Christ and a faith in Christ."

– Stephen Charnock (1628–1680)

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Applying God's Word

"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."

-- George Lauson (1749-1820)

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