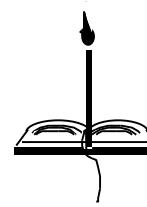


"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord..." Isaiah 1:18

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Old Testament Study: Exodus 28-29

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

Exodus 28-29 The Priesthood

Exodus 28

¹ And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. ² And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty. ³ And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. ⁴ And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. ⁵ And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.

⁶ And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work. ⁷ It shall have the two shoulderpieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof; and so it shall be joined together. ⁸ And the curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. ⁹ And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: ¹⁰ Six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to

their birth. ¹¹ With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. ¹² And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial.

¹³ And thou shalt make ouches of gold; ¹⁴ And two chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work shalt thou make them, and fasten the wreathen chains to the ouches.

¹⁵ And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. ¹⁶ Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. ¹⁷ And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. ¹⁸ And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. ¹⁹ And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. ²⁰ And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. ²¹ And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes.

²² And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains at the ends of wreathen work of pure gold. ²³ And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. ²⁴ And thou shalt put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastplate. ²⁵ And the other two ends of the two wreathen chains thou shalt fasten in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulderpieces of the ephod before it.

²⁶ And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breastplate in the border thereof, which is in the side of the ephod inward. ²⁷ And two other rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, to-

ward the forepart thereof, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod. ²⁸ And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod. ²⁹ And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.

³⁰ And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually.

³¹ And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue. ³² And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent.

³³ And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: ³⁴ A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. ³⁵ And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not.

³⁶ And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, Holiness to the Lord. ³⁷ And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. ³⁸ And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.

³⁹ And thou shalt embroider the coat of fine linen, and thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make the girdle of needlework.

⁴⁰ And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty. ⁴¹ And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. ⁴² And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach: ⁴³ And they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and his seed after him.

Exodus 29

¹ And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: Take one young bullock, and two rams without blemish, ² And unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened tempered with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: of wheaten flour shalt thou make them. ³ And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bullock and the two rams. ⁴ And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water. ⁵ And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod: ⁶ And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. ⁷ Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him. ⁸ And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them. ⁹ And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons. ¹⁰ And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock. ¹¹ And thou shalt kill the bullock before the Lord, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. ¹²

And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar. ¹³ And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar. ¹⁴ But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering.

¹⁵ Thou shalt also take one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram. ¹⁶ And thou shalt slay the ram, and thou shalt take his blood, and sprinkle it round about upon the altar. ¹⁷ And thou shalt cut the ram in pieces, and wash the inwards of him, and his legs, and put them unto his pieces, and unto his head. ¹⁸ And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt offering unto the Lord: it is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

¹⁹ And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram. ²⁰ Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about. ²¹ And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him. ²² Also thou shalt take of the ram the fat and the rump, and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and the right shoulder; for it is a ram of consecration: ²³ And one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of the unleavened bread that is before the Lord: ²⁴ And thou shalt put all in the hands of Aaron, and in the hands of his sons; and shalt wave them for a wave offering before the Lord. ²⁵ And thou shalt receive them of their hands, and burn them upon the altar for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour before the Lord: it is an offering made by fire un-

to the Lord. ²⁶ And thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and wave it for a wave offering before the Lord: and it shall be thy part. ²⁷ And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the shoulder of the heave offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of the consecration, even of that which is for Aaron, and of that which is for his sons: ²⁸ And it shall be Aaron's and his sons' by a statute for ever from the children of Israel: for it is an heave offering: and it shall be an heave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace offerings, even their heave offering unto the Lord.

²⁹ And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them. ³⁰ And that son that is priest in his stead shall put them on seven days, when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister in the holy place.

³¹ And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seethe his flesh in the holy place. ³² And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. ³³ And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy. ³⁴ And if ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because it is holy. ³⁵ And thus shalt thou do unto Aaron, and to his sons, according to all things which I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou consecrate them. ³⁶ And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it. ³⁷ Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.

³⁸ Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. ³⁹ The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: ⁴⁰ And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for

a drink offering. ⁴¹ And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. ⁴² This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. ⁴³ And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. ⁴⁴ And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.

⁴⁵ And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. ⁴⁶ And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God. (KJV)

These chapters unfold to us the Priesthood, in all its value and efficacy. They are full of deep interest. The very word "Priesthood" awakens in the heart, feelings of the most profound thankfulness for the grace which has not only provided a way for us to get into the divine presence, but also the means of keeping us there, according to the character and claims of that high and holy position.

The Aaronic priesthood was God's provision for a people who were, in themselves, at a distance, and needed one to appear for them in His presence continually. We are taught in Hebrews 7 that this order of priesthood belonged to the law—that it was made "**after the law of a carnal commandment**"—that it "**could not continue by reason of death**"—that the priests belonging to it had infirmity (see Heb. 7:16,23). It could not, therefore impart perfection, and hence we have to bless God that it was instituted "**without an oath.**" The oath of God could only stand connected with that which was to endure for ever, even the perfect, immortal, untransferrable priesthood of our great and glorious Melchisedek, who imparts, both to His sacrifice and His priesthood, all the value, the dignity, and the glory of His own peerless Per-

son. The thought of having such a sacrifice and such a Priest as He causes the bosom to heave with emotions of the liveliest gratitude.

But we must proceed to the examination of the chapters which lie before us.

In chapter 28, we have the robes, and in chapter 29 we have the sacrifices. The former have more especial reference to the need of the people; the latter, on the other hand, to the claims of God. The robes express the varied functions and qualities of the priestly office. **“The ephod”** was the great priestly robe. It was inseparably connected with the shoulder-pieces and the breastplate, teaching us, very distinctly, that the *strength* of the priest’s shoulder and the *affection* of the priest’s heart were wholly devoted to the interests of those whom he represented, and on whose behalf he wore the ephod—that special priestly robe. This, which was typified in Aaron, is actualized in Christ. His omnipotent strength and infinite love are ours—ours eternally—ours unquestionably. The shoulder which sustains the universe upholds the feeblest and most obscure member of the blood-bought congregation. The heart of Jesus beats with an undying affection, with an everlasting and an all-enduring love for the most neglected member of the redeemed assembly.

The names of the twelve tribes, engraven on precious stones, were borne both on the shoulders and on the breast of the high priest. (See 28:9-12, 28:15-29). The peculiar excellence of a precious stone is seen in this, that the more intense the light which is brought to bear upon it, the more brightly it shines. Light can never make a precious stone look dim; it only increases and develops its lustre. The twelve tribes, one as well as another, the smallest as well as the greatest, were borne continually upon the breast and shoulders of Aaron before the Lord. They were, each and every one, maintained, in the divine presence, in all that undimmed lustre and unalterable beauty which belonged to the position in which the perfect grace of the God of Israel had set them. The people were represented before God by the high priest. Whatever might be their infirmities, their errors, or their failures, yet their names glittered on the breastplate with unfading brilliancy. Jehovah had set them

there, and who could pluck them thence? Jehovah had put them thus, and who could put them otherwise? Who could penetrate into the holy place to snatch from Aaron’s breast the name of one of Israel’s tribes? Who could sully the lustre which gathered round those names, in the position which Jehovah had placed them? Not one. They lay beyond the reach of every enemy—beyond the influence of every evil.

How encouraging and consolatory is it for the tried, tempted, buffeted, and self-abased children of God to remember that God only sees them on the heart of Jesus! In His view, they ever shine in all the effulgence of Christ; they are arrayed in divine comeliness. The world cannot see them thus, but God does, and this makes all the difference. Men, in looking at the people of God, see only their blots and blemishes. They have no ability whatever to see further, and as a consequence, their judgment is always wrong—always one-sided. They cannot see the sparkling jewels bearing the names of God’s redeemed, engraven by the hand of changeless love. True it is that Christians should be most careful not to furnish the men of the world with any just occasion to speak reproachfully. They should seek **“by patient continuance in well doing, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men”** (I Pet. 2:15). If only they entered, by the power of the Holy Ghost, into the comeliness in which they ever shine, in God’s vision, it would assuredly lead to a walk of practical holiness, moral purity, and elevation, before the eyes of men. The more clearly we enter, by faith, into objective truth, or what is true of us in Christ, the deeper, more experimental, and practical will be the subjective work in us; and the more complete will be the exhibition of the moral effect in our life and character.

But, thank God, our judgment is not with men, but with Himself; and He graciously shows us our great high priest **“bearing our judgment on His heart, before the Lord continually”** (Ex. 28:30). This imparts deep and settled peace—a peace which nothing can shake. We may have to confess and mourn over our constant failures and shortcomings; the eye may, at times, be so dimmed with the tears of a genuine contrition as to be but little able to catch the lus-

tre of the precious stones on which our names are engraven, yet there they are all the while. God sees them, and that is enough. He is glorified by their brightness—a brightness not of our attaining, but of His imparting. We had nought save darkness, dullness, and deformity. He has imparted brightness, lustre, and beauty. To Him be all the praise, throughout the everlasting ages!

“The girdle” is the well-known symbol of service; and Christ is the perfect servant—the servant of the divine counsels and affections, and of the deep and manifold need of His people. With an earnest spirit of devotedness, which nothing could damp. He girded Himself for His work; and when faith sees the Son of God thus girded, it judges, assuredly, that no occasion can be too great for Him. We find, from the type before us, that all the virtues, the dignities, and the glories of Christ, in His divine and human nature, enter fully into His servant character. **“The curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen”** (28:8). The faith of this must meet every necessity of the soul, and satisfy the most ardent longings of the heart. We not only see Christ as the slain victim at the brazen altar, but also as the girded High Priest over the house of God. Well, therefore, may the inspired apostle say, **“let us draw near,”—“let us hold fast,”—“let us consider one another”** (Heb. 10: 19-24).

“And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim,” (*lights and perfections*) **“and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually”** (28:30). We learn from various passages of the Word, that **“the Urim”** stood connected with the communication of the mind of God, in reference to the various questions which arose in the details of Israel’s history. Thus, for example, in the appointment of Joshua, we read, **“And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim before the Lord”** (Num. 27:21).

“And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim” (thy perfections and thy lights) **“be with thy holy one... they shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law”** (Deut. 33:8-10). **“And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets”** (I Sam. 28:6). **“And Tirshatha said unto them that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim”** (Ezra 2:63). Thus we learn that the high priest not only bore the judgment of the congregation before the Lord, but also communicated the judgment of the Lord to the congregation—solemn, weighty, and most precious functions! All this we have, in divine perfectness, in our **“great High Priest who has passed into the heavens”** (Heb. 4:14). He bears the judgment of His people on His heart continually and He, by the Holy Ghost, communicates to us the counsel of God, in reference to the most minute circumstances of our daily course. We do not want dreams or visions; if only we walk in the Spirit, we shall enjoy all the certainty which the perfect **“Urim,”** on the breast of our High Priest, can afford.

“And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue... and beneath upon the hem of it, thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister; and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not” (Ver. 31-35). The blue robe of the ephod is expressive of the entirely heavenly character of our High Priest. He is gone into heaven; He is beyond the range of mortal vision; but, by the power of the Holy Ghost, there is divine testimony to the truth of His being alive, in the presence of God; and not only testimony, but fruit likewise. **“A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate”** (28:34). Such is the beautiful order. True testimony to the great truth that Jesus ever liveth to make interces-

sion for us will be inseparably connected with fruitfulness in His service. Oh! for a deeper understanding of these precious and holy mysteries!

“And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it like the engravings of a signet, *holiness to the LORD*. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre, upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord” (28:36-38). Here is a weighty truth for the soul. The golden plate on Aaron’s forehead was the type of the essential holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ. **“It shall be *always* upon *his* forehead, that *they* may be accepted before the Lord.”** What rest for the heart amid all the fluctuations of one’s experience! Our High Priest is **“always”** in the presence of God for us. We are represented by, and accepted in, Him. His holiness is ours. The more deeply we become acquainted with our own personal vileness and infirmity, the more we enter into the humiliating truth that in us dwelleth no good thing, the more fervently shall we bless the God of all grace for the soul-sustaining truth contained in these words, **“it shall be always upon *his* forehead, that *they* may be accepted before the Lord.”**

If my reader should happen to be one who is frequently tempted and harassed with doubts and fears, ups and downs in his spiritual condition, with a constant tendency to look inward upon his poor, cold, wandering, wayward heart; if he be tried with an excessive vagueness and want of holy reality—oh! let him stay his whole soul upon the precious truth that his great High Priest represents him before the throne of God. Let him fix his eye upon the golden plate and read, in the inscription thereon, the measure of his eternal acceptance with God. May the Holy Ghost enable Him to taste the peculiar sweetness and sustaining power of this divine and heavenly doctrine!

“And for Aaron’s sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty... and thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness... And they

shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity and die” (28:40-43). Here we have Aaron and his sons, typifying Christ and the Church, standing in the power of one divine and everlasting righteousness. Aaron’s priestly robes express those inherent, essential, personal, and eternal qualities in Christ; while the **“coats”** and **“bonnets”** of Aaron’s sons represent those graces with which the Church is endowed, in virtue of its association with the great head of the priestly family.

Thus, in all that has passed before us in this chapter, we may see with what gracious care Jehovah made provision for the need of His people, in that He allowed them to see the one who was about to act on their behalf, and to represent them in His presence, clothed with all those robes which directly met their actual condition, as known to Him. Nothing was left out which the heart could possibly need or desire. They might survey him from head to foot and see that all was complete. From the holy mitre that wreathed his brow, to the bells and pomegranates on the hem of his garment, all was as it should be, because all was according to the pattern shown in the mount—all was according to Jehovah’s estimate of the people’s need and of His own requirements.

But there is yet one point connected with Aaron’s robes which demands the reader’s special attention, and that is the mode in which the gold was introduced in the making of them. This is presented to us in chapter 39, but the interpretation comes in suitably enough in this place. **“And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen with cunning work”** (Ex. 39:3). We have already remarked that **“the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and fine twined linen”** exhibit the varied phases of Christ’s manhood, and the gold represents His divine nature. The wire of gold was curiously insinuated into all the other materials, so as to be inseparably connected with, and yet perfectly distinct from, them.

The application of this striking figure to the character of the Lord Jesus is full of interest. In various scenes, throughout the gospel narrative, we can easily discern this rare and beautiful union of Manhood and Godhead, and, at the same time, their mysterious distinctness.

Look, for example, at Christ on the sea of Galilee. In the midst of the storm **“He was asleep on a pillow”** (Mark 4:38)—precious exhibition of His perfect manhood. But, in a moment, He rises from the attitude of real humanity into all the dignity and majesty of Godhead, and, as the supreme Governor of the universe, He hushes the storm and calms the sea. There is no effort, no haste, no girding Himself up for an occasion. With perfect ease, He rises from the condition of positive humanity into the sphere of essential Deity. The repose of the former is not more natural than the activity of the latter. He is as perfectly at home in the one as in the other.

Again, see Him in the case of the collectors of tribute, at the close of Matthew 17. As **“the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth”** (Gen. 14:19), He lays His hand upon the treasures of the ocean, and says, **“they are mine;”** and, having declared that **“the sea is his and he made it”** (Ps. 95:5), He turns round and, in the exhibition of perfect humanity, He links Himself with His poor servant, by those touching words, **“that take, and give unto them for me and thee”** (Matt. 17:27). Gracious words! Peculiarly gracious, when taken in connection with the miracle so entirely expressive of the Godhead of the One who was thus linking Himself, in infinite condescension, with a poor, feeble worm.

Once more, see Him at the grave of Lazarus. (John 11). He groans and weeps, and those groans and tears issue from the profound depths of a perfect manhood—from that perfect human heart which felt, as no other heart could feel, what it was to stand in the midst of a scene in which sin had produced such terrible fruits. But then, as the Resurrection and the Life, as the One who held in His omnipotent grasp **“the keys of hell and of death”** (Rev. 1:18), He cries, **“Lazarus, come forth”** (John 11:43) and death and the grave, responsive to His authoritative voice, throw open their massy doors and

let go their captive.

My reader's mind will easily recur to other scenes in the gospels illustrative of the beautiful combination of the wire of gold with **“the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and the fine twined linen;”** that is to say, the union of the Godhead with the manhood, in the mysterious Person of the Son of God. There is nothing new in the thought. It has often been noticed by those who have studied, with any amount of care, the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

It is, however, always edifying to have the blessed Lord Jesus introduced to our thoughts as **“very God and very man.”** The Holy Ghost has, with **“cunning workmanship,”** wrought the two together and presented them to the renewed mind of the believer to be enjoyed and admired. May we have hearts to appreciate such teaching!

Let us now, ere we close this section, look for a moment at chapter 29.

It has been already remarked that Aaron and his sons represent Christ and the Church, but, in the opening verses of this chapter, Aaron gets the precedence. **“And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water”** (29:4). The washing of water rendered Aaron, typically, what Christ is, intrinsically, holy. The Church is holy in virtue of her being linked with Christ in resurrection life. He is the perfect definition of what she is before God. The ceremonial act of washing with water expresses the action of the word of God (See Eph. v. 26). **“For their sakes,”** says Christ, **“I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth”** (John 17:19). He separated Himself to God in the power of a perfect obedience, being governed in all things, as man, by the word, through the eternal Spirit, in order that all those who belong to Him might be thoroughly separated by the moral power of the truth.

“Then shalt thou take the anointing oil and pour it upon his head and anoint him” (29:7). Here we have the Spirit; but let it be noted that Aaron was anointed *before the blood was shed*, because he stands before us as the type of

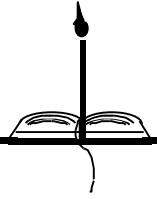
Christ, who, in virtue of what He was, in His own Person, was anointed with the Holy Ghost, long before the work of the cross was accomplished. The sons of Aaron, on the other hand, were not anointed until after the blood was shed. **“Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about. And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him”** (29:20-21). As regards the Church, the blood of the cross lies at the foundation of everything. She could not be anointed with the Holy Ghost until her risen Head had gone into heaven, and laid upon the throne of the divine Majesty the record of His accomplished sacrifice. **“This Jesus hath God raised us, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear”** (Acts 2:32-33. Comp. also John 7:39; Acts 19:1-6). From the days of Abel downward, souls had been regenerated, influenced, acted upon, and qualified for office by the Holy Ghost; but the Church could not be anointed with the Holy Ghost until her victorious Lord had entered heaven and received on her behalf the promise of the Father. The truth of this doctrine is taught, in the most direct and absolute manner, throughout the New Testament; and its strict integrity is maintained, in the type before us, by the obvious fact that, though Aaron was anointed before the blood was shed (29:7), yet his sons were not, and could not be, anointed till after (29:21).

But we learn more from the order of the anointing in our chapter, than the important truth with respect to the work of the Spirit, and the position of the Church. We have also set before us the personal preeminence of the Son. **“Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God,**

even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Ps. 45:7; Heb. 1:9). This must ever be held fast in the convictions and experiences of the people of God. True, the infinite grace of God is set forth in the marvelous fact that guilty, hell-deserving sinners should ever be spoken of in such terms—should ever be styled the **“fellows”** of the Son of God; but let us never, for a moment, forget the word **“above”**. No matter how close the union—and it is as close as God’s eternal counsels of redeeming love could make it—yet, **“in all things”** Christ must **“have the preeminence.”** It could not be otherwise. He is Head over all—Head of the Church—Head of creation—Head of angels—Lord of the universe. There is not a single orb that rolls along the heavens that does not belong to Him and move under His control. There is not a single worm that crawls along the earth which is not under His sleepless eye. He is **“high over all,”** **“the first-begotten from the dead,”** and **“of the whole creation,”** **“the beginning of the creation of God.”** **“Every family in heaven and earth”** must range itself, in the divine category, under Christ. All this will ever be thankfully owned by every spiritual mind; yea, the very enunciation of it sends a thrill through the Christian’s heart. All who are led of the Spirit will rejoice in every unfolding of the personal glories of the Son; nor can they tolerate, for a single instant, anything derogatory thereto. Let the Church be raised to the loftiest heights of glory, it will be her joy to bow at the feet of Him who stooped to raise her, by virtue of His completed sacrifice, into union with Himself; who having satisfied, in the fullest manner, all the claims of divine justice, can gratify all the divine affections by making her inseparably one with Himself, in all His infinite acceptableness with the Father, and in His eternal glory. **“He is not ashamed to call them brethren”** (Heb. 2:11).

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 1:11-12 (part 1)



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

A Study by Joseph Caryl (1644) Job 1:11-12 (part 1) “Put Forth Thine Hand Now”

**¹¹But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.
¹²And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord. (KJV)**

In the previous two verses, we have had the answer which Satan makes to the Lord's question, **“Hast thou considered my servant Job?”** You see the slander that is in it, and how he advances the blessings of God upon Job, so that he might debase the services of Job toward God. Now lest God should take him off presently with a denial, and tell him that all this is false—that Job is no such man as he represents him to be, that he has most presumptuously intruded into God's peculiar knowledge, namely the secrets of the heart (for Satan had nothing to accuse him of that was in sight, only what he guessed at in his heart)—lest God, I say, should presently come and check him thus, for his boldness and impudence, both in contradicting his testimony and in charging Job with insincerity, Satan makes a motion in the next verse, **“Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face”** (vs. 11). It is as if Satan said, “Lord, if you be not satisfied that thus it is

with your servant Job, if you will not take my word that he is a hypocrite, and that he serves you only for ends, *do but stretch forth your hand*, etc. Do but take away that which you have given him, and you shall see presently he will take away that which he has given you; if you will withdraw his riches, he will quickly withdraw his service.

The 11th verse contains Satan's motion which he subjoins to his answer in verse 10: **“But put forth thine hand now.”** By his previous answer, Satan had wounded all the holy services of Job, and now he seeks to wound his estate and possessions. His answer was full of malice, and his motion is as full of cruelty. Whom before he had falsely accused, he (in these words) desires may be causelessly afflicted. **“Put forth thine hand now.”** It is as if he should have said, “There is great question concerning Job's integrity, this one *experiment* will quickly decide and determine it, *Touch all that he hath*, etc.”

This motion is grounded (as was before noted) upon a feared denial of his answer in the former words. For there, Satan had argued after this manner, “It is an unsound and an hypocritical profession which is grounded only upon outward benefits, but all the profession of Job is grounded only upon the outward benefits, therefore it is unsound. *Doth Job serve God for naught?*” This is the strength of Satan's argument. Now, he perceiving the weakness or rather indeed the falseness, the extreme lie, that was in the *minor*, in the *assumption* (namely, that the profession and holiness of Job was grounded only upon outward things), he (I say perceiving that) seeks to confirm what he had affirmed by this motion. If you doubt (said he) whether it be so, or no, with Job, let that come to the trial, *touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face*.

The strength of the reason that lies in the motion may be thus conceived. That profession is grounded upon outward things which a man lays down, when outward things are removed and taken away; but if those outward things be removed and taken away from Job, he will quickly lay down his profession, yea he will take up blasphemy, he will curse thee to thy face; therefore the profession of Job is grounded upon outward things. This now is the logic or the reason, upon

which Satan bottoms and infers this motion, that so he may bring Job upon a further trial.

“Put forth thine hand now” – The Hebrew is, *send forth thy hand*. To put forth the hand signifies sometimes to help, sometimes to hurt. So in Psalm 144:7: **“Send forth thine hand and deliver me.”** There is a sending forth the hand in a way of mercy. And so in Acts 4:30, there Peter prays that Christ would *stretch forth his hand to heal*. So, that stretching forth, or sending forth, or putting forth the hand (for the words are all used in common to the same sense) signify to do a thing for our good and preservation, but usually this *putting forth*, or *stretching forth* of the hand, notes some affliction, some punishment. A man that stands with his hand stretched out, is in a posture to strike. And so God himself is often described by having his hand stretched forth, when he is about to punish, as in the prophecy of Isaiah diverse times, **“Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them”** (Isa. 5:25); and in chapter 9, three times: **“For all this his anger is not turned away, but his is stretched out still”** (Isa. 9:12); and so at the 17th verse, and at the 21st verse, **“His anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still,”** that is, the Lord is still smiting and afflicting them. In Esther 6:2, two men were found in the chronicle, who fought to lay (or put forth) their hands on the King Ahaseurus, *they would have slain him*. So then, the meaning of Satan here is, *stretch forth thine hand*, let him feel the weight of thine hand, in smitings and sore afflictions.

“Thy hand” – The hand of God in scripture signifies, 1. The purpose of God, as **“They have done whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done”** (Acts 4:28). 2. The hand of God signifies the Spirit of God, in the mighty actings and workings of it; so a Spirit of prophecy is called the hand of God; **“The hand of the Lord was there upon me”** (Ezek. 1:3); and **“The hand of the Lord was upon me”** (Ezek. 37:1), that is, the Spirit of the Lord, a mighty power of prophecy was upon me. So likewise, a spirit of strength that is upon a man, is called the hand of

God: **“The hand of the Lord was upon Elijah and he girt up his loins and ran before Ahab”** (I Kings 18:46). Here the hand of the Lord is put for the power of the Lord; *put forth thy hand*, that is, *put forth thy power*, and so the hand of the Lord is used often; **“The hand of the Lord is not shortened”** (Isa. 59:1), that is, the power of the Lord is not abated. The Lord has a long hand, and his hand is always of the same length; so, *stretch forth thine hand now*, that is, do thou put forth thy mighty power.

This hand of the Lord’s power (to clear that a little further) is taken three ways in Scripture.

First, for his *protecting power*. There is a protecting hand, as in John 10:28: **“No man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand,”** said Christ. God has his sheep in his hand, and he will protect and safeguard them so that none shall be able to pluck them away. This hand God put forth before, for Job.

Again, it is put for his *correcting power*: like in Ps. 32:4: **“His hand was heavy upon me, that is, the afflicting hand of God was heavy upon me. Let us fall into the hand of God”** (David chose that, see II Sam. 24:14), that is, into the afflicting hand of God, rather than into the hands of men.

It is put thirdly for a *revenging hand*, for a wrathful hand, by which he destroys and breaks in pieces those who are his enemies. **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Heb. 10:31). David desires to fall into the hands of God, that is, into his correcting hand, because he knew there was mercy, but it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God, when he comes in wrath to take vengeance of those who contemptuously despise his mercy, as there it is expressed.

Now here when Satan says, **“Put forth thy hand,”** that is, thine hand of power, Satan intends not that God should put forth the hand of his power to protect, nor barely to correct. He desires more than barely a correcting or chastising hand upon Job. He would have his revenging hand, his breaking, his destroying hand, as we shall see afterward.

Further, *Thy hand*, that is, God’s own hand, as if he did de-

sire that God himself would take Job into his own hand to chasten and punish him. The hand of God, his correcting or chastising hand sometimes is an immediate, and sometimes a mediate hand. Sometimes it is immediate, when God by himself chastens or punishes or afflicts, when no second cause appears or intervenes. So it may seem Satan here means, when he says, *put forth thine hand*, that is, do it yourself, let no other have the handling of Job, but yourself. God sends such immediate afflictions; a man is afflicted in his body, in his estate and many other ways, and he cannot find anything in the creature, whence it should come; it is an immediate stroke of God, he cannot see how or which way, or at what door this evil came in upon him. Therefore, it is called a *creating of evil* in Isa. 45:7: **“I make peace and create evil.”** Now creation is out of nothing; there is nothing out of which it is wrought. So many times God brings evil upon a people or person, when there is no appearance of second causes. Sometimes, likewise, it is called God’s hands, when it is the hand of a creature: it is God’s hand in a creature’s hand. Such a situation is found in Ps. 17:14: **“Deliver my soul from the wicked which is thy sword”** (you see a wicked man is God’s sword) **“and from men which are thy hand.”** So, *thy hand* may be understood of an instrument; Satan himself is God’s hand to punish in that sense, as wicked men here are said to be God’s hand; **“... from the men that are thy hand.”** Though there be other readings of that passage. Some read it, *deliver me from men by thy hand*; and others, *deliver me from men of thy hand*; but our translation may very well carry the sense of the original in it, *from men which are thy hand*. Such is the case of Nebuchadnezzar; that wicked king is called God’s servant: **“I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar my servant”** (Jer. 43:10). God speaks of him as his servant, or as his hand in the situation. So then, *put forth thine hand*, it may be understood (I say) either immediately or mediately: *do it by thyself*, or *do it by instruments*, or *strike him thyself*, or *give me commission*, or *give others commission to strike*.

There is one thing further in this expression, **“Put forth thine hand now.”** *Now*. Some read it, *put forth thine hand a*

little; and some read it, *I pray thee put forth thy hand*. The original word is translated to all these senses; we translate it, referring to the present importunity and instancy of Satan, *put forth thine hand now*; let not this business sleep; let it not be deferred a minute, a moment; let the commission go out speedily to afflict Job.

“And touch all that he hath”: To *touch* notes sometime a heavy and a sore affliction, and sometime a light and a small affliction. In the scripture, we find it both ways used. Sometime (I say) to *touch*, signifies the greatest and the forest affliction or punishment that can be; and so Job expresses all the afflictions that fell upon him at the last only by touching: **“Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me”** (Job 19:21). Whereas Job at that time lay under the forest and heaviest affliction that could be, all his estate was gone, and his body was full of diseases, and his soul was full of horror, and all this he expresses by this, *the hand of the Lord hath touched me*. So also in Ps. 73:14, to be *touched* signifies the greatest affliction, **“All the day long”** (said David), **“have I been plagued.”** That which we translate *plagued*, is the same original word which we translate *touch*, in the text; **“All the day long have I been touched,”** that is, *I have been touched with the sorest plagues*, heavy afflictions have been laid continually upon me. So that to *touch* signifies sometimes the greatest or the sorest strokes of trouble.

Sometimes again we shall find it signifies only a *light affliction*, as in Gen. 26 in two places of that chapter; in the 11th verse, **“Abimelech charged all his people, saying, he that toucheth this man or his wife, shall surely be put to death;”** that is, he that does them the least *hurt* or *wrong*. So at the 19th verse, in that agreement between Abimelech and Isaac, they conclude thus, **“Thus thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good”**: So that to *touch* notes the least ill or hurt that can be, *we have not touched thee*, that is, we have *done nothing to thee but good*; anything on this side of doing good to them had been *touching* of them. We find a similar expression

in Ps. 105:15, where the Psalmist speaking of God's extraordinary care of his people: **"He suffered no man to do them wrong, he rebuked kings for their sakes, saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."** *Touch not mine anointed* people, that is the meaning of that place, though in many other places we know princes are called the anointed of God; yet here it is meant of the people of God in general, they are God's anointed (as the context clearly carries it), for they have all received unction from God, an unction of grace, an unction of the spirit, and an unction of privilege. *Touch not mine anointed*, that is, do them not the least hurt. And the sense that these words may bear, *Put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath*, might be carried, as if Satan here intended, only a touch in the latter sense. Give him but the least stroke, lay but the lightest affliction upon him, do but touch him; you are so confident of your servant Job, that he is such a man, do but give him the least touch, and you shall see how he will discover himself. So some expound it.

He does not say, *wound him, smite him, break him to pieces*, but *touch him* only. Neither said he, touch him, but his: And if you give him but a touch with the top of thy little finger, you will presently find the rottenness of his heart. In that sense, the word imports an extenuation of Job's sincerity or heightening of Job's hypocrisy, as if he had been so rotten in his profession that the least touch would overthrow him, and make him discover himself to be stark naught. Like the apples growing about Sodom, which have fair outsides, but if you touch them, they moulder away into dust and ashes.

Though the words have this sense in them, and Satan carries it cunningly, expressing himself in such ambiguous terms, yet certainly Satan had a further intent whatsoever his language may bear: he had an intention that Job should be touched in the former sense, namely that he should have a touch to the quick, as we say, that he should have the forest and deepest wound that his estate was capable of: he would have him whipped, not with cords, but with scorpions; he would have the little finger of God heavier upon him than his loins upon others.

Destroy him, undo him by your *touching*. He speaks by a figure which is when we go less in our expressions than in our intentions, when our words are lower than our spirits. And that is proper for Satan, who is the great deceiver, the great juggler in word and deed; to desire that Job should only be touched, when he meant he should be utterly undone and ruined. *Touch all that he hath*, that is, all his estate, all his possessions, his children, his family, his cattle, whatsoever belongs to Job, let all feel an undoing stroke from thy hand.

Before I come to that which he undertakes upon the affliction, I shall observe two or three things from the words, thus far opened.

"Put forth now thine hand": We may note from that, *the extreme importunity of Satan to do mischief*. He would not give God a minute, not a moment's respite to consider this thing, but do it now, presently, let him presently be afflicted, he makes *haste to destroy*, he makes *haste to shed blood*, **"their feet are swift to shed blood,"** as the Psalmist speaks. So Satan, his feet are swift to shed blood, when Satan would have God to afflict us, do it presently, says he; now sin, now provoke God, do not stay till the next day; but when we are called to give up ourselves to God, then tomorrow will serve the turn, and next year will serve to repent, yea when you are old, 'tis time enough to repent; when he tempts to do any mischief, any sin, then now, now sin, but 'tis time enough to do good hereafter, tomorrow will serve for that.

"Put forth now thine hand, and touch all that he hath": It is a truth which Satan here speaks concerning the hand of God; *that if God but touch the highest and greatest estate in the world, it will fall to pieces quickly*. There is a truth in it, take it in the earnest sense that can be, if God do but lightly touch the estate of a man, it will soon fall in pieces. God is not put to any stress to afflict and punish, as in Ps. 81:14: **"I should soon have subdued their enemies and have turned my hand against their adversaries."** God expresses the utter overthrow of the enemies of his people, but by the *turning of a hand*, if God do but turn his hand, they are all gone presently, soon subdued. If he do but touch the might, the pomp, the

greatness, the riches and the power of all those in the world that are opposers of his church, presently they fall to the ground: A touch from the hand of God will end our wars. If he touch the mountains they smoke (as it is in the Psalm) and consume to ashes: they that are the mighty and great ones of the world, the mountains, by one touch of his hand fall as it were to nothing. So if God do but touch our estates, they moulder away, no creature can uphold them.

Then again observe here, the cunning impostor of Satan that puts such sore, such heavy afflictions into such light and easy expressions; he clothes his malice, his utmost malice here in very fair words, do but touch him, says this enemy; but you see what Satan touches are, *touch all that he hath*. Why Satan, would nothing have made a trial, but only a touching of all? For Job to have lost somewhat had been a trial, a touch for Job to have lost half his flocks of sheep, or his oxen, had been a trial and no very light one either; for Job to have lost a son, to have found one of his children suddenly struck dead, had been an affliction and a heavy one too; such a touch as that might well have touched the father's heart. Would it not serve Satan that a son should die or that some of his cattle should be destroyed, but he must have all touched, *all that he hath*? The malice of Satan is insatiable, there is nothing that will serve him, unless he may devour all.

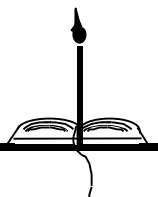
This touch of Satan, which he desires might be laid upon Job, is like the touch that many have given to those, who have come into their hands amongst us; they would but touch them, but they would touch them in all; when they put forth their hands (as they pretended) in ways of justice, in their courts, they would touch men in all, touch them in their liberties by imprisonment, and touch them in their estates by extreme vast fines, and touch them in their names by disgrace, touch them in their bodies by whipping and cutting, and touch them in their relations, by keeping all friends from the sight of them. No moderation, no bounds, but touch them in all that they had. And (O exactness of justice) when God came to touch that power, he gave them a touch, just after the rate and proportion of their own touches; for when those

courts and persons came to have their power and actions scanned, it was not moderating, or regulating, or restraining, or abating, or limiting their power, that satisfied; they must quite down and be taken away. God gave them a touch, just as they touched others before: So that a man may say certainly, there is a God that judges the earth. These are the touches of Satan and the touches of merciless men are as like his as themselves are; they think there is nothing done unless men be undone: they never give over touching till they come to ruining.

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



New Testament Study: *Roman 1:1*



A Study by Scott Sperling

Romans 1:1 **Introduction to Romans**

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God...

The importance of the book of Romans must not be understated, and cannot be overstated. Paul, in this book, among other things, teaches us that we are justified by faith – and that we cannot be justified through our own works. In teaching this, he makes us to understand the supreme importance and value of, to each and every one of us, the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made. Paul also skillfully explains to us how the doctrine of justification by faith was prefigured and supported by the events in the Old Testament. We learn from Paul in the book of Romans the purpose of rite of circumcision, the purpose of the Jews as the chosen people of God, the purpose of the Law, etc., all with respect to God’s entire plan of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul teaches us that salvation by faith was not an afterthought invented by New Testament writers; rather, salvation in the Old and New Testament has always been by faith. We can all thank God for the book of Romans, for without it, would we have confidence that our faith in the work of Christ is sufficient for salvation?

The writing in the book of Romans is masterful. Paul presents us with well-reasoned, systematic views of the basic tenets of Christianity. The book of Romans “is the only part of Scripture which contains a detailed and systematic exhibition of the doctrines of Christianity. The great truths, which are

embodied and inculcated in every other part of the Bible, are here brought together in a condensed and comprehensive form. More especially, the glorious doctrine of justification by faith is clearly unfolded and exhibited in the strongest light” [Haldane, p. 1]. It is “a writing, which, for sublimity and truth of sentiment, for brevity and strength of expression, for regularity in its structure, but above all, for the unspeakable importance of the discoveries which it contains, stands unrivalled by any mere human composition, and as far exceeds the most celebrated productions of the learned Greeks and Romans, as the shining of the sun exceedeth the twinkling of the stars.” [Macknight, cited in Plumer, p. 30].

As to the purpose of the book, “the object of the writer was to give to the Roman congregation, and ultimately to Christendom, a complete statement of religious truth” [Shedd, p. viii]. “It contains, indeed, an abridgment of all that is taught in the Christian religion. It treats of the revelation of God in the works of nature, and in the heart of man, and exhibits the necessity and the strictness of the last judgment. It teaches the doctrine of the fall, and corruption of the whole human race, of which it discovers the source and its greatness. It points out the true and right use of the law, and why God gave it to the Israelites; and also shows the variety of the temporal advantages over other men which that law conferred on them, and which they so criminally abused. It treats of the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, of justification, of sanctification, of free will and of grace, of salvation and of condemnation, of election and of reprobation, of the perseverance and assurance of the salvation of believers in the midst of their severest temptations, of the necessity of afflictions, and of the admirable consolations which God gives His people under them,—of the calling of the Gentiles, of the rejection of the Jews, and of their final restoration to the communion of God” [Haldane, p 7-8].

From what we can tell, the church in Rome consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. And so, Paul (to our benefit) wrote

the epistle with both in mind. So, in it, we see how the revelation of God's plan through Christ affects both groups. Best estimates put Paul writing this epistle around 55 or 60 AD, some twenty-five years after Christ's death and resurrection. One can only imagine how difficult it was for the various churches of that time as they grappled with the revelation of God through Christ, as told them by the apostles, without the benefit of written text that explained Christian doctrine (churches certainly argue Christian doctrine nowadays, and we have had the New Testament writings for thousands of years). So, Paul's epistle to the Romans must certainly have been invaluable to those who received it. We too should value this book, and study it carefully, so as to learn what the sacrifice of Christ means to us, and to learn the importance, and indeed, the value of faith in Christ. Certainly, the Epistle to the Romans has been greatly valued, and has been greatly influential throughout human history. "Coleridge calls the Epistle to the Romans 'the profoundest book in existence.' Chrysostom had it read to him twice a week. Luther, in his famous preface, says: 'This Epistle is the chief book of the New Testament, the purest gospel. It deserves not only to be known word for word by every Christian, but to be the subject of his meditation day by day, the daily bread of his soul. . . . The more time one spends on it, the more precious it becomes and the better it appears.'" [Godet, 1]. "No one has ever fully understood Romans. No one can remain undisturbed by it, either. It is the most thought-provoking of all the Christian documents. It has a habit of forcing men to reconsider their whole understanding of religion even when they have spent many years in theological inquiry. Thus Romans profoundly changed Augustine's thinking in the last years of his life. It was the detonator to Luther's explosion. It has been used again and again to demolish and reconstruct systems of theology, most recently by Schweitzer, Bultmann and Barth" [Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 59].

As to the structure of the book, Mr. Haldane gives a fine summary: "This Epistle, like the greater part of those written by Paul, is divided into two general parts,—the first of which contains the doctrine, and extends to the beginning of the twelfth chapter; and the second, which relates to practice, goes on to the conclusion. The first is to instruct the spirit, and the other to direct the heart; the one teaches what we are to believe, the other what we are to practice" [Haldane, p. 9].

To begin, Paul introduces himself: "**Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God**" (vs. 1). "Conformably to the practice of antiquity, Paul commences his Epistle by prefixing his name, title, and designation" [Haldane, 15]. He is first and foremost, "**a servant of Christ Jesus**", as we all should consider ourselves. As Paul teaches us elsewhere: "**You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies**" (I Cor. 6:19-20). "As the Christians used it, the term conveys the idea of complete and utter devotion, not the abjectness which was the normal condition of the slave. Paul is affirming that he belongs to Christ without reservation" [Morris]. "The phrase connotes total devotion, suggesting that the servant is completely at the disposal of his or her Lord" [Moo, 41]. It is amazing that Paul, who at one time was the most-feared persecutor of those who followed Christ, should come to consider himself, not only a follower of Christ, but a "**servant of Christ Jesus.**" "The word may be taken in its strict and primary sense, as signifying a servant who is the absolute property of the master and bound to him for life" [Taylor, in Plumer]. The transformation of Paul demonstrates the transforming power of God over the hearts of men. Never give up hope for even the most outspoken hater of Jesus: if God can change Paul's heart, He can change anyone's.

Being a "**servant**" indicates membership in the lowest rank of society, unless one is servant to a person of renown (like a duke, or an earl, or a prince, or a king). The more re-

nowned, the higher the honor of the servant. So, being a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ turns servanthood into the most honorable of professions. "Let the disciples of Christ remember, that they are all His servants;—and, what department soever of that service they are called to fill, whether more public or more private, let them cherish the same spirit with Paul, counting it their honour, and feeling it their pleasure, to serve such a Master" [Wardlaw, 39]. "The more we feel bound by the authority of Christ, the more we are free from the bondage of men" [Schaff, in *Lange's*, 58]. "It would be well for Christian leaders to begin each day acknowledging before God that they are his servants" [Mounce, 40].

Significantly, Paul gives **"servant of Christ Jesus"** as his title, and then gives **"apostle"** as his calling: **"...called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God"** (vs. 1). The word **"apostle"** literally means "messenger". In the Bible, Jesus designated twelve to be His apostles: **"When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated apostles"** (Luke 6:13). "The apostles, then, were the immediate messengers of Christ, appointed to bear testimony to what they had seen and heard" [Hodge, 15]. "The title **'servant'** was very general, embracing all the ministries established by Christ; the title **'apostle'** denotes the *special* ministry conferred on Paul. It is the most elevated of all. While Christ's other servants build up the church, either by extending it (*evangelists*) or perfecting it (*pastors* and *teachers*), the apostles... had the task of founding it" [Godet, 121]. "As a strict official designation, the word **'apostle'** is confined to those men selected and commissioned by Christ himself to deliver in his name the message of salvation" [Hodge, 15]. After Judas betrayed Christ, and committed suicide, the other eleven apostles gathered and chose Matthias to replace Judas as one of the Twelve (see Acts 1:15-26). It seems though that, later, Jesus Himself chose Paul as the twelfth apostle, on the road to Damascus; for certainly, we know very little about Matthi-

as's work as an apostle, but the work of Paul as an **"apostle"**, as a messenger of the revelation of God through Christ, and founder of the church of Christ, continues through his writings to the present day. "It was his office which gave him the right to address the believers at Rome, and elsewhere, with that tone of authority which pervades all his epistles. Speaking as the messenger of Christ, he spoke as he spoke, as one having authority, and not as an ordinary teacher" [Hodge, 14].

The other apostles were followers of Christ before His resurrection. Paul of course became a follower of Christ in an unusual way, as mentioned, through his remarkable conversion on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9; also Acts 26:14-18), and through that conversion, Paul was **"called"** in a very direct way **"to be an apostle"**. Jesus said to Paul: **"I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you"** (Acts 26:16). Paul's **"calling"** as an **"apostle"** gave him the authority to write boldly and authoritatively concerning the doctrines of the Christian faith, as he did in this Epistle to the Romans.

Paul's **"calling"** was sudden, dramatic, totally transformative, and complete. "Before his conversion, he was an ardent and bigoted supporter of the traditions of his fathers, violently opposed to the humbling doctrines of Christianity, and a cruel persecutor of the Church. From the period of his miraculous conversion—from the hour when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus—down to the moment when he sealed his testimony with his blood, his eventful life was devoted to the promulgation of the faith which once he destroyed. Throughout the whole of his long and arduous course, he experienced a continual alternation of trials and graces, of afflictions and benedictions; always borne down by the hand of man, always sustained by the hand of God" [Haldane, 15-16]. "We can never too much admire and adore the wisdom and mercy of God in taking the gifted, learned, bitter persecutor of Tarsus, changing his heart,

sending him to preach to the nations, and inspiring him to write for the edification of the church in all future ages the epistles he has left us, and in particular this great doctrinal discussion, which more lucidly and logically than any other one book of Scripture shows to men the way of salvation.” [Plumer, 39]. “Surely, this is one of the most amazing things in history. If one may dare to use such a term, this is the crowning act and the supreme masterpiece of our blessed Lord, that He chose thus as an apostle one who had been His chief enemy. He chose here a man who had not been with Him in the days of His flesh, who was not one of that circle of the twelve, who had not heard His teaching, who had not seen the miracles, who was not with them at the crucifixion, who was not with them when He came into the upper room after His resurrection. He was not there. He was an outsider then, and for years after that, and a blasphemer, and a persecutor, trying to exterminate Christianity, and yet he is an apostle as much as the other apostles” [Lloyd-Jones, 42-43]. “The sudden call of the persecuting Paul to the apostleship of the Gentiles corresponds to the sudden call of the Gentiles to Christianity, just as the gradual instruction of the Jewish apostles accords with the long training of the Jewish nation for the gospel” [Schaff, in *Lange’s*, 59].

The wisdom of God in calling Paul is manifest. Paul had unique qualifications to bridge and connect the teachings of the Old Testament to the teachings and work of Christ. He also had unique qualifications to reach out and connect to people who lived in a world dominated by Roman politics and Greek philosophy. To do these things, Paul “needed, above all, to come from the very heart of Judaism; only on this condition could he thoroughly know life under the law, and could he attest by his own experience the powerlessness of this means of salvation. But, on the other hand, he was required to be exempt from that national antipathy to the Gentile world with which Palestinian Judaism was imbued. How would he have been able to open the gates of the king-

dom of God to the Gentiles of the whole world, if he had not lived in one of the great centres of Hellenic life, and been familiarized from his infancy with all that was noble and great in Greek culture, that masterpiece of the genius of antiquity? It was also, as we have seen, a great advantage for him to possess the privilege of a Roman citizen. He thus combined in his person the three principal social spheres of the age, Jewish legalism, Greek culture, and Roman citizenship” [Godet, 6].

In addition to being **“called to be an apostle”**, Paul was **“set apart for the gospel of God”**. The common Christian term for being **“set apart”** is “sanctification”. Biblically, “saints” are those who are “sanctified”, who are **“set apart”** as Christians. Followers of Christ are, by the nature of Christianity, **“set apart”** from those of the world, from the ways of the world, from the values of the world, from the attitudes of the world. Those of the world should look at you, as a Christian, and see that there is something different about you: they should sense your “sanctification”, your **“set apart-edness.”**

There is a bit of a play on words here, by Paul, in saying that he was **“set apart.”** “He was a Pharisee, and the meaning of the term ‘Pharisee’ in the Hebrew is ‘a separated one’, one set apart. The Pharisees set themselves apart. They walked on the other side of the street, and they were careful that their skirts should not touch anybody else lest they should be rendered unclean, and they would have nothing to do with publicans and sinners... The Apostle was saying something like this: ‘I once separated myself as a Pharisee, but the real truth about me is that I have been separated by God Himself to this great work which I am privileged to do’” [Lloyd-Jones, 51]. “The term *separated*, here used, appears to allude to his having been a Pharisee before his conversion, which signifies one separated or set apart. Now, however, he was separated in a far different manner; for then it was by human pride, now it was by Divine grace. Formerly he was set apart to uphold the inventions and traditions of men, but now to preach the Gospel of God” [Haldane, 18].

It is **“the gospel of God”** for which Paul was **“set apart.”** The word **“gospel”** literally means “good news.” Paul writes in great detail about the **“gospel of God”** in the book of Romans. In a nutshell, the **“gospel”** is the fact that sinners can be saved through faith in Christ. Note well, the **“gospel”** is *good* news. At times, when hearing the attitude and tone of some Christians, one would wonder if they are preaching *good* news. “When ministers so present religious truth as to make it appear sad tidings to meek and penitent souls, they mightily distort and pervert it; for they are sent to preach the gospel, glad news, good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” [Plumer, 40]. After his calling, Paul preached, explained, expounded, and lived the **“gospel of God.”** Through Paul’s writings, primarily the writings in this epistle, we too can know and understand the plan of God, who through the ages worked out his divine purpose and brought us to this time and place in history, so that we too may be **“set apart for the gospel of God.”**

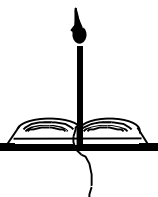
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A Topical Study: Prayer



[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. 7

**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).**

For Application,

First. Let this word put us in mind of our omissions; for omissions are sins, and must come into judgment: how often has our morning worship been either neglected or negligently performed? The work has been either not done at all, or done deceitfully; either no sacrifice at all brought, or it has been the torn, the lame, and the sick; either no prayer, or the prayer not directed aright, nor lifted up. We have had the morning's mercies; God has not been wanting in the compassion and care of a father for us, yet we have not done the morning's service, but have been shamefully wanting in the duty of children to him.

Let us be truly humbled before God this morning for our sin and folly herein, that we have so often robbed God of the honour, and ourselves of the benefit, of our morning worship. God hath come into our closets, seeking this fruit, but has found none, or next to none, hath hearkened and

heard, but either we speak not to him at all, or speak not aright. Some trifling thing or other has served for an excuse to put it by once, and when once the good usage has been broken in upon, conscience has been wounded, and its bonds weakened, and we have grown more and more cool to it, and perhaps by degrees it has been quite left off.

Secondly, I beseech you, suffer a word of exhortation concerning this. I know what an influence it would have upon the prosperity of your souls to be constant and sincere in your secret worship, and therefore give me leave to press it upon you with all earnestness; let God hear from you every morning, every morning let your prayer be directed to him, and look up.

1. Make conscience of your secret worship; keep it up, not only because it has been a custom you have received by tradition from your fathers, but because it is a duty, concerning which you have received commandment from the Lord. Keep up stated times for it, and be true to them. Let those that have hitherto lived in the total neglect, or in the frequent omission of secret prayer, be persuaded from henceforward to look upon it as the most needful part of their daily business, and the most delightful part of their daily comfort, and do it accordingly with a constant care, and yet with a constant pleasure.

No persons, that have the use of their reason, can pretend an exemption from this duty; what is said to some is said to all. Pray, pray, continue in prayer, and watch in the same. Rich people are not so much bound to labour with their hands as the poor; poor people are not so much bound to give alms as the rich; but both are equally bound to pray. The rich are not above the necessity of the duty, nor the poor below acceptance with God in it. It is not too soon for the youngest to begin to pray; and those whom the multitude of years has taught wisdom, yet at their end will be fools, if they think they have now no further occasion for prayer.

Let none plead they cannot pray: if you were ready to perish with hunger, you could beg and pray for food; and if you see yourselves undone by reason of sin, can you not beg and

pray for mercy and grace? Art thou a Christian? Never for shame say that thou canst not pray, for that is as absurd as for a soldier to say that he knows not how to handle a sword, or a carpenter an axe. What are we called for into the fellowship of Christ, but that by him we may have fellowship with God. You cannot pray so well as others, pray as well as you can, and God will accept of you.

Let none plead they have no time in a morning for prayer; I dare say you can find time for other things that are less needful; you had better take time from sleep than want time for prayer; and how can you spend time better, and more to your satisfaction and advantage? All the business of the day will prosper the better for your beginning it with God.

Let none plead, that they have not a convenient place to be private in for this work. Isaac retired into the field to pray; and the Psalmist could be alone with God in a corner of the house-top. If you cannot perform it with so much secrecy as you would, yet perform it; it is doing it with ostentation that is the fault, not doing it under observation when it cannot be avoided. I remember, when I was a young man, coming up to London in the stage coach in King James' time, there happened to be a gentleman in the company, who then was not afraid to own himself a Jesuit; many encounters he and I had upon the road, and this was one: he was praising the custom of churches keeping the doors always open, for people to go in at any time to say their prayers. I told him it looked too like the practice of the Pharisees, who prayed in the synagogues, and did not agree with Christ's command, when thou prayest by thyself, enter not into the church with the doors open, but into thy closet, and shut thy doors. When he was pressed with that argument, he replied, with some vehemence, "I believe there are many who say their prayers nowhere; for" (said he) "I have travelled a great deal in the coach in company with Christians, have often lain in inns in the same room with them, and have carefully watched them, and could never perceive that any of them said his prayers, night or morning." I hope

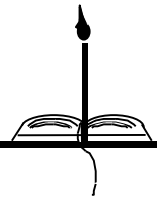
there was more malice than truth in what he said; but I mention it as an intimation, that though we cannot be so private as we would be in our devotions, yet we must not omit them, lest the omission should not prove a sin only, but a scandal.

2. Make a business of your secret worship, and be not slothful in this business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Take heed lest it degenerate into formality, and you grow customary in your accustomed services. Go about the duty solemnly. Be inward with God in it; it is not enough to say your prayers, but you must pray your prayers, must pray in praying, as Elijah did (see James 5:17). Let us learn to labour frequently in prayer, as Epaphras did (see Col. 4:12), and we shall find it is the hand of the diligent in this duty that maketh rich. God looks not at the length of your prayers, nor shall you be heard for your much speaking, or fine speaking; but God requires truth in the inward part, and it is the prayer of the upright that is his delight. When you have prayed, look upon yourselves as thereby engaged and encouraged, both to serve God and to trust in him; that the comfort and benefit of your morning devotions may not be as the morning cloud which passeth away, but as the morning light which shines more and more.

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



A Study in Wisdom: Proverbs 3:13-35



A Study by Scott Sperling

Proverbs 3:13-20 – The Value of Wisdom

- ¹³ Blessed are those who find wisdom,
those who gain understanding,
¹⁴ for she is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.
¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.
¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways,
and all her paths are peace.
¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her;
those who hold her fast will be blessed.
- ¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD laid
the earth's foundations,
by understanding he set the heavens in place;
²⁰ by his knowledge the watery depths
were divided,
and the clouds let drop the dew.

In this section, Solomon focuses on the value of wisdom. He begins by comparing wisdom's value to things that normally humans value: **“Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her”** (vss. 13-15). Note first that Solomon pronounces a blessing on those who **“find”** wisdom, and who **“gain”** understanding. “Saving wisdom is a

thing to be **‘found’** and **‘gained’**: it is not required of us that we create it. We could not plan, we could not execute a way of righteous redemption for sinners. We could not bring God's favour down to compass men about, and yet leave his holiness untainted as it is in heaven... Understanding is a thing to be *gained*. It comes not in sparks from our own intellect in collision with other human minds. It is a light from heaven, above the brightness of this world's sun. The gift is free, and an unspeakable gift it is” [Arnot, 99].

Solomon favorably compares finding **“wisdom”** and gaining **“understand”**, to finding and gaining **“silver”**, **“gold”**, **“rubies”** and anything else we may **“desire”**. Solomon demonstrated that he valued **“wisdom”** and **“understanding”** over everything else, for when God presented the offer to **“ask for whatever you want me to give you”**, Solomon answered, **“Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people”** (II Chron. 1:7,10). God then commended Solomon's choice, and told him that he would add to Solomon's gift of wisdom, **“wealth, possessions and honor”** (II Chron. 1:12). “It is not only a surer, but a more gainful merchandise to trade for wisdom, for Christ, and grace, and spiritual blessings, than for silver, and gold, and rubies... It is a true happiness, for it is inclusive of, and equivalent to, all those things which are supposed to make men happy” [Henry, 806]. “Earthly riches are for the body, wisdom is for the soul; the former may enrich a man for the space of threescore and ten years, the latter for numberless millions of ages.” [Lawson, 57].

Solomon continues to stress the value of wisdom: **“Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor”** (vs. 16). Health, riches and honor: what more could one ask for in life? “True wisdom is the path to life, because it shuns perils and averts them, and provides advantages; controls the passions; teaches prudence and temperance; and especially because eternal life is its final issue” [JFB, 421]. “The man of pleasure utterly mistakes both his object and his pursuit. The only happiness worth seeking is found here; that

which will live in all circumstances, and abide the ceaseless changes of this mortal life” [Bridges, 31]. “The world has no just conception of the real character of wisdom’s ways. Religion to them is associated with cold, heartless forms and irksome restraints — much to do, but nothing to enjoy. But they only see half the prospect. They see what religion takes away. But they see not what it gives. They cannot discern that, while it denies the sinful, it abounds in spiritual pleasures” [Bridges, 33].

For those who live in wisdom, the **“long life”** promised is a life of quality: **“Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed”** (vss. 17-18). “Invoking the memory of Eden, she is identified with the tree of life, that tree whose fruit grants life” [Longman, 119]. “The pleasures of the world are like the gleams of a wintry sun: faint, and feeble, and transient. The pleasures of religion are satisfying and eternal” [Lawson, 60].

God himself utilized the value of wisdom in creating the universe: **“By wisdom the LORD laid the earth’s foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew”** (vss. 19-20). The universe is governed and run on the principles of God’s wisdom. The laws of physics, chemistry, biology, etc., were devised and constructed according to God’s wisdom and knowledge. The workings of the universe reflect the riches of God’s wisdom. As the Psalmist so eloquently stated: **“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge”** (Ps. 19:1-2). “Knowledge and wisdom belong to God in their highest perfection, and shine forth in all his works. By his wisdom he established the world, and formed every creature beautiful in its kind. By his knowledge, the heavens and the earth, and all their inhabitants, were formed into one universe,

which incessantly proclaims the greatness of its Creator’s wisdom” [Lawson, 62].

Proverbs 3:21-26 – The Benefits of Wisdom

- 21 My son, do not let wisdom and understanding
out of your sight,
preserve sound judgment and discretion;
22 they will be life for you,
an ornament to grace your neck.
23 Then you will go on your way in safety,
and your foot will not stumble.
24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
25 Have no fear of sudden disaster
or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,
26 for the LORD will be at your side
and will keep your foot from being snared.**

Solomon goes on to enumerate some benefits of living wisely: **“My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck”** (vss. 21-22). Solomon begins with an exhortation on carefully cultivating Godly wisdom and understanding: we are not to let them **“out of sight”**; we are to **“preserve sound judgment and discretion.”** The wording of these exhortations suggests having a motherly care, holding dear **“wisdom and understanding.”**

The first benefit mentioned here is that wisdom and understanding **“will be life for you, and ornament to grace your neck.”** “True wisdom is real life, communicated from him who is the quickening Spirit, to them that were dead in trespasses and sins. It is an ornament of grace to the neck, which renders the meanest beggar who possesses it more noble than the mightiest monarch, who is acquainted with no brighter ornament than his regal crown” [Lawson, 63]. As an ornament,

wisdom and understanding adorn the person, bestowing honor and good repute.

Wisdom also brings safety: **“Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble”** (vs. 23). “Wisdom will direct us into, and keep us in, the safe way, as far as may be from temptation, and will enable us to walk in it with a holy security. The way of duty is the way of safety” [Henry, 807].

Wisdom also brings a sense of security: **“When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet”** (vs. 24). In repose, often anxieties and threats of dangers are magnified in our minds. Wisdom and understanding will mitigate these, bringing peaceful sleep. “The way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience; and the sleep, as of the laboring man, so of the wise and godly man, is sweet” [Henry, 807].

This sense of security is a result of the awareness of God’s protection and providence: **“Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the LORD will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared”** (vss. 25-26). God’s presence and protection should drive away fears of sudden disasters. If they come, they come according to his will for us, and he will lead us through them. Those living in Godly wisdom should not fear “the desolation which wicked men will be brought into in a moment. It will come, and timorous saints may be apprehensive that they shall be involved in it; but let this be their comfort, that though judgments lay waste generally, at least promiscuously, yet God knows who are his and how to separate between the precious and the vile” [Henry, 808].

Proverbs 3:27-35 – Living Uprightly Towards Your Neighbor

**²⁷ Do not withhold good
from those to whom it is due,
when it is in your power to act.**

- ²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor,
“Come back tomorrow and I’ll give it to you” –
when you already have it with you.**
- ²⁹ Do not plot harm against your neighbor,
who lives trustfully near you.**
- ³⁰ Do not accuse anyone for no reason –
when they have done you no harm.**
- ³¹ Do not envy the violent
or choose any of their ways.**
- ³² For the LORD detests the perverse
but takes the upright into his confidence.**
- ³³ The LORD’S curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the home of the righteous.**
- ³⁴ He mocks proud mockers
but shows favor to the humble and oppressed.**
- ³⁵ The wise inherit honor,
but fools get only shame.**

An important component of true wisdom is treating your neighbor decently, showing love for your neighbor whenever possible. “True wisdom consists in the due discharge of our duty towards man, as well as towards God, in honesty as well as piety, and therefore we have here divers excellent precepts of wisdom which relate to our neighbor” [Henry, 808]. Solomon gives us a set of five **“do nots”** concerning treating our neighbors decently.

He begins: **“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act”** (vs. 27). “Either by the law of equity, or of charity. For there is a debt of love (see Rom. 13:8) that we must ever be owing and ever pay” [Trapp, 11]. This exhortation applies both to withholding good actions, as well as withholding financial help to those in need. “Now if our receipts be found great, and our layings out small, God will cast such bills back in our faces, and turn us out of our stewardship. They are fools that fear to lose their wealth by giving, but fear not to lose themselves by keeping it” [Trapp, 11-12]. As cited above, we have a **“continuing debt to love one another”** (Rom. 13:8).

Solomon continues: **“Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Come back tomorrow and I’ll give it to you’—when you already have it with you”** (vs. 28). “Your beneficence must be prompt and present” [Trapp, 12]. “He that gives speedily, gives twice; but he that gives with slow reluctance, gives in part a denial. Much of the benefit is often lost to the receiver, and much of the gratitude to the giver, by telling our neighbor to go and come again” [Lawson, 68].

“Do not plot harm against your neighbor, who lives trustfully near you” (vs. 29). “After having praised beneficence, Solomon proceeds to forbid malevolence, especially towards neighbors living peaceably near. If you are to do positive good, much more are you to refrain from devising and doing evil to your neighbor” [JFB, 422]. “Devising evil against a friend is at any time reprehensible, but to do so whence confides in and is altogether unsuspecting of you, is an act of the greatest treachery, and an outrage on all law, human and Divine” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 66].

“Do not accuse anyone for no reason—when they have done you no harm” (vs. 30). Our litigious society would do well to heed this. Liberal litigiousness is ungodly, as well as unwise. Disputes should be solved face-to-face, with a charitable attitude, ready to compromise, in a calm and peaceful manner, where possible. “The lives of many are embittered by the quarrelsomeness of their neighbors. Offence, never intended, is taken, bitter words are spoken, a hostile attitude is assumed, all friendly relations are broken off, malicious insinuations are thrown out; in fact, there is war between the house of this man and that man, when there is positively nothing on which to found a complaint. A very small allowance of charity would cure this evil spirit, if only taken in time” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 82].

“Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways” (vs. 31). Enviousness towards those who do evil should never cross our minds. Whatever ill-gotten gains achieved from evil and violent practices will be offset far more by the consequences of the evil ways.

Verse 31 is a preface, of sorts, to verses 32 through 35, which delineate why the **“violent”** are not to be envied. First, **“For the LORD detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence”** (vs. 32). Envy of those who do evil is a **“perverse”**ness; it’s backward from the way things ought to be. As such, it is **“detested”** by God. Envy of evildoers adversely affects our relationship with God.

“The LORD’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous” (vs. 33). Evil actions, and even **“envy”** of the **“violent”**, can bring dire consequences, not only on one’s own person, but also on one’s entire house. The whole family is affected: through imitation, through corrupted values, through exposure to evil. “Our interests are more closely connected with each other than we are able to observe, or willing to allow. The welfare of one is largely dependent on the well-doing of another. Let every wicked man learn here, that over and above the ruin of his own soul, his sins bring a curse on his wife and children, his neighbors and friends. Such is God’s government, that you cannot live in sin, any more than in smallpox or the plague, without involving others in the danger” [Arnot, 115]. Contrariwise, recall, that God **“blesses the home of the righteous.”** “In the poor little cottage or tenement of the righteous, there is a blessing in it, there is contented godliness, which is greatest gain; the blessing of God which maketh rich” [Trapp, 12]. “By the blessing of the Lord, the meanest cottage is converted into a dwelling of joy and praise” [Lawson, 71].

“He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed” (vs. 34). So prevalent is the sin of pride and conceitedness, that this verse is cited twice in the New Testament (see James 4:6, and I Peter 5:5). “On no point is the mind of God more fully declared than against pride” [Bridges, 41].

“The wise inherit honor, but fools get only shame” (vs. 35). “Saints are wise men, and act wisely for themselves; for though their religion now wraps them up in

obscurity, and lays them open to reproach, yet they are sure to inherit glory at last, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They shall have it, and have it by inheritance” [Henry, 808].

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A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist

Upon Health of Body and Peace of Conscience by William Spurstowe (1666)

It was a high and eminent testimony given by St. John to the Elder Gaius, in the prayer that he made for him, with an earnest wish that *he might prosper, and be in health, even as his soul prospers* (III John 1:2). It is a crown that I could heartily desire might be deservedly set upon the head of everyone that is called by that honorable name of *Christian*; and then I doubt not, but those reproaches, which are daily cast upon them, would fall as far short of them, as stones that are thrown at the sun; and those scandals, at which those who are without do stumble, would be removed, and they also won by their conversation to the obedience of the faith.

But alas! I must invert the Apostle's wish, and if I will wish true prosperity to the saints themselves, pray *primarily* that their *souls* may prosper and be in health. Where may I find the man, or who can tell me what is his name, whose care and observance has so far prevailed, as to make his *soul* in an equal plight with his *body*, so as to keep the one as free from lusts, as the other from diseases? Who ever thought it necessary that pensions should be given to orators to dissuade men from running into infected houses, or to be out of love with mortal poisons? Is not the least jealousy and suspicion of such things argument enough to secure themselves against dangers that may fall out? But is there not need to admonish and warn the best and holiest of men that they abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul? Is it not requisite to bid the most watchful to take heed of a *lethargy*, when the wise virgins are fallen asleep? Did not Christ himself caution his disciples against having their hearts at any time over-charged with sur-

feiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life? And yet the meanest of their condition might seem to exempt them from such snares. From whence then is it that the welfare and health of the *body* should be more studiously endeavored by all, than the well being of the *soul* in its peace and serenity?

Is it not from the strength of fleshly principles which abide in the best, and darken oft time the eye of the understanding, that it cannot rightly apprehend its own concerns? If there were but a clear insight into that blessedness into which peace of conscience gives a believer, it could not be but that it being laid in the balance with the health of the body, it should as far over-weigh it as a full bucket a single drop, or as the vintage of wine a particular cluster. True it is that health of body is the *salt* of all outward blessings, which without it has no relish or savor; neither riches nor honors, nor delights for the belly or back, can yield the least pleasure where this is wanting, so that enjoyment of it alone may well be set against many other wants. And better it is to enjoy health without other additional comforts, than to possess them under a load of infirmities. And yet I may still say, what is the chaff to the wheat? Though it be the greatest outward good that God bestows in this life, it is nothing to that peace which passes all understanding. Sickness destroys it, age enfeebles it, and extremities embitter it, but it is the excellency of this divine peace that it works joy in tribulation, that it supports in bodily languishments, and creates confidence in death. Who is it that can throw forth the gauntlet, and bid defiance to armies of trials, to persecution, distress, famine, nakedness, peril and sword? It is only he whose heart is established with this peace, the ground of which is God's free love, the price of which is Christ's satisfaction, the worker of which is the Holy Spirit, and the subject of which is a good conscience. This was it that filled old Simeon's heart with joy, and made him to beg a dismissal on account of his Savior, whom his eyes had seen, his arms embraced, and his soul trusted in (see Luke 2:28-32).

What a strange thing is it then, that there should be so few merchant-men who seek this goodly pearl, which is far above all the treasures of the earth that are hid in it or extracted from it. Many say, "Who will show us any good?", but it is David only that prays, "**Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us**" (Ps. 4:6). Others, like the scattered Israelites in Egypt, go up and down gathering straw and stubble; when he, like an Israelite indeed, in the wilderness of this world, seeks *manna*, which his spirit gathers up and feeds upon with delight; then he cries out, "**Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased**" (Ps. 4:7). It is the love of God shed abroad in the heart that doubles the sweetness of prosperity, and sweetens also the bitterness of affliction. A wonder only therefore it is, not that few should seek, but much greater that any in this world should live without it. Can any live well without the king's favor, either in his court, or kingdom? And yet there are many places wherein such persons may lie hid in his dominions, when the utmost ends of the earth cannot secure them against God's frowns. But if any be so profligate and Cleopatra-like to dissolve this jewel of peace in his lusts, and to drink down in one prodigious draught that which exceeds the world in its price, and yet think they can live well enough without it; let them consider how they will do to die without it. Sweet it is in life, but it will be more sweet in death. It is not then the *sunshine* of creatures, but *Savior-shine* that will refresh them. It is not then *wine* that can cheer the heart, but the blood of *sprinkling* that will pacify it. The more perpendicular death comes to be over our head, the lesser will the shadow of all earthly comforts grow and prove useless, either to assuage the pains of it, or to mitigate the fears of it. What is a fragrant posy put into the hands of a malefactor who is in sight of the place of execution, and his friends bidding him to smell of it? Or what is the delivering to him a sealed conveyance that entitles him to great revenues, who hath a few minutes only to live?

But O, what excess of joy does fill and overflow such a poor man's heart, when a pardon from his prince comes hap-

pily in to prevent the stroke of death, and to assure him both of life and estate? This is indeed as health and marrow to the bones. And is it not thus with a dying sinner who expects in a few moments to be swallowed up in those flames of wrath, the heat of which already scorch his conscience and cause agonies and terrors which embitter all the comforts of life, and extract cries from him that are like the yellings of the damned: "I am undone, without hope of recovery. Eternity itself will as soon end as my misery. God will forever hold me as his enemy, and with his own breath will enliven those coals that must be heaped upon me." Of what value now would one smile of God's face be to such a person? How joyful would the softest whisper of the Spirit be, that speaks any hope of pardon, or peace? Would not one drop of this sovereign balm of God's favor let fall upon the conscience, heal and ease more than a river of all other delights whatsoever? Think therefore upon it, O Christians, so as not any longer through your own fault to be without the sense of this blessing in your hearts; that so in life, as well as in death, you may be filled with this **"peace of God, which passeth all understanding."** If prayer will obtain it, beg every day a good look from him, the light of whose countenance is the only health of yours. If an holy and humble walking will preserve it, be more careful of doing anything to lose your peace, than to endanger your health; remember that peace is so much better than health, as the soul is better than the body.

But grant, holy Father, however others may neglect or defer to seek peace with thee and from thee, yet I may now find thy peace in me by thy pardoning all my iniquities, and may be found of thee in peace without spot, and blameless in the great day.

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

Paul's Life and Service

Paul, in the prosecution of his high purpose and great commission,
 We thus see him travelling from country to country;
 Enduring every species of hardship and privation;
 Encountering every extremity of danger;
 Assaulted by the populace; punished by the magistrate;
 Scourged, beaten, stoned, and left for dead;
 Expecting everywhere the same treatment and the same dangers;
 Yet when driven from one city, preaching in the next;
 Spending his whole time in proclaiming Christ and Him crucified;
 Sacrificing pleasure, ease, safety, worldly position;
 Persisting in this course for more than thirty years;
 Unaltered by the experience of ingratitude,
 perverseness, prejudice;
 Unsubdued by anxiety, want, labor, persecution;
 Unwearied by long-continued conflict;
 Undismayed by the prospect of a violent death:
 The love of Christ and of souls his great constraining motive;
 A glorious monument of the power and riches of divine grace.

— Thomas Robinson (c. 1870)

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Seeking Wisdom as Silver

"We everyday see with what anxious diligence men seek for silver. They fatigue their bodies, and waste their spirits; they destroy their health, and expose their lives; they even wound their consciences, and expose themselves to shameful deaths and everlasting misery, that they may load themselves with shining clay. Shall the professed disciples of the great Teacher set less value upon knowledge, than other men set upon silver?... It is therefore highly reasonable, that we diligently and carefully use all those means which God hath appointed for this end; that we hear sermons with earnest attention; that we read and search the word of God, and make it the subject of our frequent meditation; that we make use of edifying conversation; that we go to the wise, who have the law of God in their hearts, whose mouths speaks wisdom, and tongues talk of judgment. To the use of such means of improvement as these, we must add prayer for the divine blessing, to render them effectual to our instruction and salvation."

— *George Lawson (1749-1820)*

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