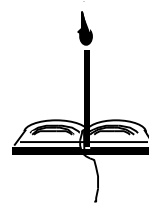


"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord..." Isaiah 1:18

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Old Testament Study: Exodus 30

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

Exodus 30 - The Atonement Money, the Brazen Laver, the Anointing Oil, the Holy Perfume

¹ And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it. ² A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; four-square shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same. ³ And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. ⁴ And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. ⁵ And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. ⁶ And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. ⁷ And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. ⁸ And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. ⁹ Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon. ¹⁰ And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.

¹¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹² When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. ¹³ This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. ¹⁴ Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. ¹⁵ The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. ¹⁶ And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.

¹⁷ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹⁸ Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. ¹⁹ For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: ²⁰ When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: ²¹ So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

²² Moreover the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²³ Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, ²⁴ And of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive an hin: ²⁵ And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil. ²⁶ And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony, ²⁷ And the table and all his

vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense, ²⁸ And the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot. ²⁹ And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy. ³⁰ And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. ³¹ And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations. ³² Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. ³³ Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people.

³⁴ And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: ³⁵ And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: ³⁶ And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. ³⁷ And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. ³⁸ Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people. (KJV)

The priesthood being instituted, as in the two preceding chapters, we are here introduced to the position of true priestly worship and communion. The order is marked and instructive; and, moreover, precisely corresponds with the order of the believer's experience. At the brazen altar, he sees the ashes of his sins; he then sees himself linked with One who, though personally pure and spotless, so that He could be anointed without blood, has, nevertheless, associated us with Himself in life, righteousness, and favour; and, finally, he beholds, in the golden altar, the preciousness of Christ, as the material on which the divine affections feed.

Thus it is ever; there must be a brazen altar and a priest

before there can be a golden altar and incense. Very many of the children of God have never passed the brazen altar. They have never yet, in spirit, entered into the power and reality of true priestly worship. They do not rejoice in a full, clear, divine sense of pardon and righteousness; they have never reached the golden altar. They hope to reach it when they die; but it is their privilege to be at it *now*. The work of the cross has removed out of the way everything which could act as a barrier to their free and intelligent worship. The present position of all true believers is at the golden altar of incense.

This altar typifies a position of wondrous blessedness. There we enjoy the reality and efficacy of Christ's intercession. Forever done with self and all pertaining thereto, so far as any expectation of good is concerned, we are to be occupied with what He is before God. We shall find nothing in self but defilement. Every exhibition of it is defiling; it has been condemned and set aside, in the judgment of God, and not a shred or particle thereof is to be found in the pure incense and pure fire, on the altar of pure gold: it could not be. We have been introduced, **"by the blood of Jesus,"** into the sanctuary—a sanctuary of priestly service and worship, in which there is not so much as a trace of sin. We see the pure table, the pure candlestick, and the pure altar; but there is nothing to remind us of self and its wretchedness. Were it possible for aught of that to meet our view, it could but prove the death knell of our worship, mar our priestly food, and dim our light. Nature can have no place in the sanctuary of God. It, together with all its belongings, has been consumed to ashes; and we are now to have before our souls the fragrant odour of Christ, ascending in grateful incense to God: this is what God delights in. Everything that presents Christ, in His own proper excellence, is sweet and acceptable to God. Even the feeblest expression or exhibition of Him, in the life or worship of a saint, is an odour of a sweet smell, in which God is well pleased.

Too often, alas!, we have to be occupied with our failures and infirmities. If ever the workings of indwelling sin be suffered to rise to the surface, we must deal with our God about them, for He cannot go on with sin. He can forgive it, and cleanse us from it; He can restore our souls by the gracious

ministry of our great High Priest; but He cannot go on in company with a single sinful thought. A light or foolish thought, as well as an unclean or covetous one, is amply sufficient to mar a Christian's communion, and interrupt his worship. Should any such thought spring up, it must be judged and confessed, ere the elevated joys of the sanctuary can be known afresh. A heart in which lust is working, is not enjoying the proper occupations of the sanctuary. When we are in our proper priestly condition, nature is as though it had no existence; then we can feed upon Christ. We can taste the divine luxury of being wholly at leisure from ourselves, and wholly engrossed with Christ.

All this can only be produced by the power of the Spirit. There is no need of seeking to work up nature's devotional feelings, by the various appliances of systematic religion. There must be pure fire as well as pure incense. (Compare Lev. 10:1, with 16:12). All efforts at worshipping God, by the unhallowed powers of nature, come under the head of **"strange fire"** (see Lev.10:1). God is the object of worship; Christ the ground and the material of worship; and the Holy Ghost the power of worship.

Properly speaking, then, as in the brazen altar, we have Christ in the value of His sacrifice, so in the golden altar, we have Christ in the value of His intercession. This will furnish my reader with a still clearer sense of the reason why the priestly office is introduced between the two altars. There is, as might be expected, an intimate connection between the two, for Christ's intercession is founded upon His sacrifice. **"And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it, once in a year, with the blood of the sin-offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD"** (vs. 10). All rests upon the immovable foundation of *shed blood*. **"Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places**

made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:22-24).

From verse 11 to 16, we have the atonement money for the congregation. All were to pay alike. **“The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls”** (vs. 15). In the matter of atonement, all must stand on one common platform. There may be a vast difference in knowledge, in experience, in capacity, in attainment, in zeal, in devotedness, but the ground of atonement is alike to all. The great apostle of the Gentiles, and the feeblest lamb in all the flock of Christ, stand on the same level, as regards atonement. This is a very simple and a very blessed truth. All may not be alike devoted and fruitful; but **“the precious blood of Christ,”** and not devotedness or fruitfulness, is the solid and everlasting ground of the believer’s rest. The more we enter into the truth and power of this, the more fruitful shall we be.

In the last chapter of Leviticus, we find another kind of valuation. When anyone made **“a singular vow,”** Moses valued him according to his age. In other words, when anyone ventured to assume the ground of capacity, Moses, as the representative of the *claims* of God, estimated him **“after the shekel of the sanctuary.”** If he were **“poorer”** than Moses’ estimation, then he was to **“present himself before the priest,”** the representative of the grace of God, who was to value him **“according to his ability that vowed.”** (See Lev. 27:1-13).

Blessed be God, we know that all His claims have been answered, and all our vows discharged by One who was at once the Representative of His claims and the Exponent of His grace, who finished the work of atonement upon the cross, and is now at the right hand of God. Here is sweet rest for the heart and conscience. Atonement is the first thing we get hold of, and we shall never lose sight of it. Let our range of intelligence be ever so wide, our fund of experience ever so rich, our tone of devotion ever so elevated, we shall always have to fall back upon the one simple, divine, unalterable, soul-sustaining doctrine of *the blood*. Thus it has ever been in the history of

God’s people. Thus it is and thus it ever will be. The most deeply taught and gifted servants of Christ have always rejoiced to come back to *that one well-spring of delight*, at which their thirsty spirits drank when first they knew the Lord; and the eternal song of the Church in glory will be **“unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood”** (Rev. 1:5). The courts of heaven will forever resound with the glorious doctrine of the blood.

From ver. 17 to 21, we are presented with **“the brazen laver and its foot”**—the vessel of washing and the basis thereof. These two are always presented together. (See chap. 30:28; 38:8; 40:11). In this laver, the priests washed their hands and feet, and thus maintained that purity which was essential to the proper discharge of their priestly functions. It was not, by any means, a question of a fresh presentation of blood; but simply that action by which they were preserved in fitness for priestly service and worship. **“When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: so they shall wash their hands and their feet that they die not”** (vs. 20-21).

There can be no true communion with God, save as personal holiness is diligently maintained. **“If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth”** (I John 1:6). This personal holiness can only flow from the action of the word of God on our works and ways. **“By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer”** (Ps. 17:4). Our constant failure in priestly ministry may be accounted for by our neglecting the due use of the laver. If our ways are not submitted to the purgative action of the word—if we continue in the pursuit or practice of that which, according to the testimony of our own consciences, the word distinctly condemns, the energy of our priestly character will, assuredly, be lacking. Deliberate continuance in evil and true priestly worship are wholly incompatible. **“Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth”** (John 17:17). If we have any uncleanness upon us, we cannot enjoy the presence of God. The effect of His

presence would then be to convict us by its holy light. But when we are enabled, through grace, to cleanse our way, by taking heed thereto according to God's word, we are then morally capacitated for the enjoyment of His presence.

My reader will at once perceive what a vast field of practical truth is here laid open to him, and also how largely the doctrine of the brazen laver is brought out in the New Testament. Oh! That all those who are privileged to tread the courts of the sanctuary in priestly robes, and to approach the altar of God in priestly worship, may keep their hands and feet clean by the use of the true laver!

It may be interesting to note that the laver, with its foot, was made **"of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation"** (see chap. 38:8). This fact is full of meaning. We are ever prone to be **"like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was"** (James 1:23). Nature's looking-glass can never furnish a clear and permanent view of our true condition. **"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed"** (James 1:24-25). The man who has constant recourse to the word of God and who allows that word to tell upon his heart and conscience, will be maintained in the holy activities of the divine life.

Intimately connected with the searching and cleansing action of the word is the efficacy of the priestly ministry of Christ. **"For the word of God is quick and powerful"** (i.e., *living and energetic*) **"and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."** Then the inspired apostle immediately adds, **"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our pro-**

fession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:12-16).

The more keenly we feel the edge of the word, the more we shall prize the merciful and gracious ministry of our High Priest. The two things go together. They are the inseparable companions of the Christian's path. The High Priest sympathizes with the infirmities which the word detects and exposes. He is **"a faithful"** as well as **"a merciful High Priest."** Hence, it is only as I am making use of the laver that I can approach the altar. Worship must ever be presented in the power of holiness. We must lose sight of nature, as reflected in a looking-glass, and be wholly occupied with Christ, as presented in the Word. In this way only shall the **"hands and feet,"** the works and ways be cleansed, according to the purification of the sanctuary.

From ver. 22-33, we have the **"holy anointing oil,"** with which the priests, together with all the furniture of the tabernacle, were anointed. In this we discern a type of the varied graces of the Holy Ghost, which were found, in all their divine fullness, in Christ. **"All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad"** (Ps. 45:8). **"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power"** (Acts 10:38). All the graces of the Spirit, in their perfect fragrance, centered in Christ; and it is from Him alone they can flow. He, as to His humanity, was conceived of the Holy Ghost; and, ere He entered upon His public ministry, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost; and, finally, when He had taken His seat on high, in token of an accomplished redemption, He shed forth upon His body, the Church, the precious gifts of the Holy Ghost. (See Matt. 1:20; 3:16,17; Luke 4:18,19; Acts 2:33; 10:45,46; Eph. 4:8-13).

It is as those who are associated with this ever blessed and highly exalted Christ, that believers are partakers of the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost; and, moreover, it is as they

walk in habitual nearness to Him, that they either enjoy or emit the fragrance thereof. The unrenewed man knows nothing of this. **“Upon man’s flesh shall it not be poured”** (vs. 32). The graces of the Spirit can never be connected with man’s flesh, for the Holy Ghost cannot own nature. Not one of the fruits of the Spirit was ever yet produced *in nature’s barren soil*. We **“must be born again”** (John 3:7). It is only as connected with the new man, as being part of **“the new creation,”** that we can know anything of the fruits of the Holy Ghost. It is of no possible value to seek to imitate those fruits and graces. The fairest fruits that ever grew in nature’s fields, in their highest state of cultivation; the most amiable traits which nature can exhibit, must be utterly disowned in the sanctuary of God. **“Upon man’s flesh shall it not be poured; neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people”** (vs. 32-33). There must be no counterfeit of the Spirit’s work; all must be of the Spirit—wholly, really of the Spirit. Moreover, that which is of the Spirit must not be attributed to man. **“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”** (I Cor. 2:14).

There is a very beautiful allusion to this **“holy anointing oil”** in one of the *songs of degrees*. **“Behold,”** says the Psalmist, **“how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments”** (Ps. 133:1-2). The head of the priestly house being anointed with the holy oil, the very **“skirts of his garments”** must exhibit the precious effects. May my reader experience the power of this anointing! May he know the value of having **“an unction from the Holy One”** (I John 2:20), and of being **“sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise”** (Eph. 1:13)! Nothing is of any value, in the divine estimation, save that which connects itself immediately with Christ, and whatever is so con-

nected can receive the holy anointing.

In the concluding paragraph of this most comprehensive chapter, we have the **“sweet spices... tempered together, pure and holy”** (vss. 34-35). This surpassingly precious perfume presents to us the unmeasured and unmeasurable perfections of Christ. There was no special quantity of each ingredient prescribed, because the graces that dwell in Christ, the beauties and excellencies that are concentrated in His adorable Person, are without limit. Naught save the infinite mind of Deity could scan the infinite perfections of Him in whom all the fullness of Deity dwelleth; and as eternity rolls along its course of everlasting ages, those glorious perfections will ever be unfolding themselves in the view of worshipping saints and angels. Ever and anon, as some fresh beams of light shall burst forth from that central Sun of divine glory, the courts of heaven above, and the wide fields of creation beneath, shall resound with thrilling Alleluias to Him who was, who is, and who ever shall be the object of praise to all the ranks of created intelligence.

But not only was there no prescribed quantity of the ingredients; we also read, **“of each there shall be a like weight”** (vs. 34). Every feature of moral excellence found its due place and proper proportion in Christ. No one quality ever displaced or interfered with another; all was **“tempered together, pure and holy,”** and emitted an odour so fragrant that none but God could appreciate it.

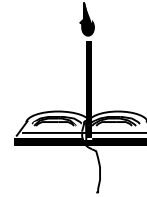
“And thou shalt heat some of it very small and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy” (vs. 36). There is uncommon depth and power in the expression, **“very small.”** It teaches us that every little movement in the life of Christ, every minute circumstance, every act, every word, every look, every feature, every trait, every lineament, emits an odour produced by an equal proportion—**“a like weight”** of all the divine graces that compose His character. The smaller the perfume was beaten, the more its rare and exquisite temper was manifested.

“And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composi-

tion thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people” (vs. 37-38). This fragrant perfume was designed, exclusively, for Jehovah. Its place was “before the testimony” (vs. 36). There is that in Jesus which only God could appreciate. True, every believing heart can draw nigh to His matchless Person, and more than satisfy its deepest and most intense longings; still, after all God’s redeemed have drunk, to the utmost of their capacity; after angels have gazed on the peerless glories of the man Christ Jesus, as earnestly as their vision is capable of; after all, there will be that in Him which God alone can fathom and enjoy. No human or angelic eye could duly trace the exquisitely minute parts of that holy perfume “beaten very small.” Nor could earth afford a proper sphere in which to emit its divine and heavenly odour.

Thus, then, we have, in our rapid sketch, reached the close of a clearly marked division of our book. We began at “the ark of the covenant,” and travelled out to “the altar of brass;” we returned from the altar of brass, and have come to the “holy perfume;” and, oh! what a journey is this, if only it be travelled, not in company with the false and flickering light of human imagination, but by the infallible lamp of the Holy Ghost! What a journey if only it be travelled, not amid the shadows of a by-gone dispensation, but amid the personal glories and powerful attractions of the Son, which are there portrayed! If my reader has so travelled it, he will find his affections more drawn to Christ than ever; he will have a loftier conception of His glory, His beauty, His preciousness, His excellency, His ability to heal a wounded conscience, and satisfy a longing heart; he will have his eyes more thoroughly closed to all earth’s attractions, and his ears closed to all earth’s pretensions and promises. In one word, he will be prepared to utter a deeper and more fervent amen to the words of the inspired apostle, when he says, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema Maranatha*” (I Cor. 16:22).

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 download-



A Classic Study: Job 1:11-12 (part 2)

[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 2) - “He Will Curse Thee”

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)

“Touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face” (vs. 11) – Some render it thus: *Touch all that he hath, if he curse thee not to thy face*. So it is word for word out of the original, or, *Touch all that he hath and see if he does not curse thee to thy face*. We give the sense of it in a direct affirmation, “Touch all that he hath, and he will...” etc. Others put the force of an imprecation to it: *Touch all that he hath and see if he does not curse thee to thy face*; that is, as if he had said, let me never be believed, and never be trusted. Indeed, Satan is so far disgraced and damned already, that he has nothing to lose; he cannot damn himself further; he cannot wish anything to himself worse than he already is, but yet there is a kind of execration or imprecation upon himself in it: *Do this, and if he does not curse thee to thy face, let me never be accounted of*, or (as many use to say) *let me never be trusted*; or as some wretched hellish ones, *Let me be damned*, if such or such a thing be not. There is such an *emphasis* in that manner of speaking used in the text. But we translate it by a direct affirmation, and that is a good sense

too, *touch all that he hath and he will curse thee to thy face*; that's certain, so said Satan, he will do it: it is as sure as done already.

“Curse thee” – It is the same word which is used before, in verse 5, **“It may be my children have cursed God.”** The word signifies properly to bless. It was showed that probably in that place, it might be translated **“Curse”**; but in this text there is a necessity of translating it so, seeing a clear fence cannot be made out, taking the word properly. In cursing another, these three things concur: first, an ill opinion or conceit of that person; second, hatred or malice against him; third, a desire that some evil may befall him. This Satan means when he undertakes that Job being afflicted, will curse God. So then to curse God is to blaspheme God in our thoughts and words, to think or speak unworthy of God, and the ways of God; *see, if he curse thee not to thy face; that is, see if his heart be not embittered against thee; see if his tongue be not sharpened to wound thy honor, to reproach thy goodness, to accuse thy providence.* As it is said of those in Isa. 8:21: **“They shall be hungry and hard bestead.”** And what then? **“They shall fret themselves and curse their King and their God, and look upward;”** that is, they shall speak basely of their King and of their God, in whom they have trusted, and whom they have followed. He speaks of those wretches that did seek to worship false gods, or worship the true God falsely; they shall curse their King and their God. It is the very same, that here Satan promises himself and undertakes with God that Job will do likewise; *do but make him hungry (said he) and hard bestead, and he will fret himself, and curse thee.* It was very ordinary among the heathen to do so: when their gods did not please them, then they would curse their gods. Satan interprets Job to be a man of the same temper.

Aquinas translates the word literally, *Touch all that he hath and he will bless thee to thy face.* He endeavors to make out the sense thus, *touch all that he hath and thou shalt see he hath blessed thee to thy face.* He reads it in the *preterperfect tense*; that is, if you afflict him you will find that all his former religion was nothing but mere outside formality; that he served you only from the teeth outward, served you to your face; he blessed you,

prayed to you and honored you only to your face. He had no regard to worship from his heart; he did not worship you because he loved you or delighted in you, but gave you an outward complemental blessing, because you blessed him outwardly. As the apostle directs servants in Eph. 6:6: **“Not with eye service as men pleasers.”** Satan makes Job an eyeservant to God, or as if like those of whom Christ complains in Matt. 15, in the words of the prophet: **“He had drawn nigh to God with his lips, while his heart was far from him.”** The heart of Job has been far enough from you; he only blessed you with his lips and to your face. Indeed, this interpretation has a fair face, but touch it by a serious examination, and it will be found without a heart. The construction of grammar is quite against it, and for us to change the text, and make it to speak in the *preterperfect* tense of a thing past, whereas the words are in the future tense, of an act to be done for the time to come, is to take too much boldness with scripture. Therefore, though that opinion has a plausible sense in it, yet I shall lay it by and take the ordinary translation, that he indeed intended this, that Job would break forth into blasphemous revilings of God, if God did but try him with an affliction.

And when he says that Job would do it *to his face*, the meaning of it is, that he would do it openly: he will curse you openly; he will curse you boldly; he will not go behind the door to tell tales of you, but he will speak of it before all the world, that you are a cruel God, an unjust God, and a hard matter; he will tell such tales of you, even to your very face. We have a like speech in Gal. 2:11: **“When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face,”** said Paul; that is, openly, I did not go behind his back to tell Peter his own, but I told him it to his face, plainly, openly before them all, as it is explained in verse 14, **“I said to Peter before them all.”** Jerome (because he would not have Peter receive such an open reproof, judging it would be a disparagement to Peter, to be rebuked by Paul) gives a quite contrary sense of those words of Paul: *I withstood him to his face*; that is, said he, I did speak somewhat roughly to him before them, but there was

no such things in my heart. I did it but to his face, very slightly, lest I should offend the Jews whose apostle Peter was; and *I did it to his face*, a little, that I might satisfy the Gentiles, who were scandalized by Peter's walking; otherwise in my heart, I had no quarrel with Peter; he and I agreed enough. It was as if Paul had made but a shadow fight to delude the people. But we must not interpret it that way. *I withstood him to his face*, is not opposed to withstanding him cordially, but to a withstanding of him secretly, or behind his back. So here, *he will curse thee to thy face*; that is, he will curse thee (as the Greek scholar had it) openly, and impudently; Job himself indeed was afraid lest his sons had cursed God in their hearts, but for all his niceness and seeming fear of his children's sinning in secret, he will curse you with impudence; he will not only curse you in his heart, but the curse will break out at his lips: *Out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth will speak blasphemy against God. He will curse thee to thy face.*

We may give some examples of what it is to curse God, to blaspheme God to his face. You may read what it is in Mal. 3:14: **“Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord;”** you have spoken to my very face. Why? What had they spoken to the Lord? **“What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?”** This is to curse God to his face: when the ways of God are blasphemed and the worship of God reported as unprofitable; when we say it is in vain to serve God; when they cast aspersions and bring up an evil name upon any holy duty; this is to blaspheme God. They did only speak against the service of God, and they thought they had not blasphemed God in it, **“Wherein have we spoken against thee?”** Yes, said God, you have spoken against me, in that you have spoken against and discredited my ways. So, if Job had said the ways of God are unprofitable, and I see now it is in vain to serve God and to fear him; this had been blasphemy and cursing of God to his face. David was near upon the very brink of this blaspheme, in Ps. 73:13, when he said, **“I have cleansed my**

heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency, because” (said he) **“I am plagued every morning.”** The judgments and afflictions that were upon him, began to make him break out thus. But he presently befools himself for such speeches, and by that repairs God in his honor.

Secondly, to quarrel and be angry with the providence of God, as if he were not wise or just or good in his dispensations either to particular persons or to the church. This, I say likewise, is a cursing, a reproaching of God.

Thirdly, to curse the servants and people of God is to curse God. If he that touches them touches God, then he that curses them curses God too. And God is cursed in any of these senses two ways. First, by detracting from himself, his worship, his works or his servants the good they have, or by fastening on them and aspersing them with the evil which they have not.

“He will curse thee to thy face.” – Observe two or three points from this:

First, note this, *Satan can only guess at the hearts of men.* He would undertake and enter warranty with God that Job would blaspheme, if God did but touch him, but he was deceived: Satan did but conjecture at most, and speak at a venture. If he did not lie knowingly, I am sure he did but guess ignorantly. Satan knows not what is in the heart; that's God's peculiar; that's God's cabinet. God know there lay sincerity in the heart of Job all the while, although Satan would stand to it that nothing was there but hypocrisy.

Secondly, we may note, seeing Satan accusing him of hypocrisy, would have him afflicted, *That affliction is the trial and touchstone of sincerity.* When God afflicts you, then he brings you to the touchstone to see whether you are good mettle or not; he brings you then to the furnace, to try whether you be dross or gold, or what you are. *Affliction is the great discoverer*; it unmasks us. Satan was not out in the thing; he hit upon the rightest way that could be; if anything would discover Job, affliction would.

Indeed, some are discovered by prosperity and outward abundance. The warm sun makes some cast off that cloak,

which the wind and the cold caused them to wrap closer about them. Some, when they have gotten enough from God, care not for God; when the fish is caught, they lay by the net, for they do but go a-fishing with holiness, and the profession of religion, and when they have their ends, there's an end of their profession.

Affliction and the cross try others: Some will hold on with God as long as the sun shines, as long as it is fair weather; but if the storms arise, if troubles come, whether personal or public, then they pull in their heads, then they deny and forsake God, then they draw back from and betray his truth. Trouble makes the great trial; bring professors to the fire, and then they show their mettle. This course Satan took with Job. He knew Job had been abundantly tried by fullness and abundance, and these did not draw his heart from God, he must therefore now try another way.

It is an excellent passage in the Church history, concerning Constantius, the father of Constantine, that so the end he might try the hearts of his courtiers, he proclaimed that all they who would not forsake the worship of the true God, should be banished the court, and should have heavy penalties and fines laid upon them. Presently upon this (says the story) all that were base and came to serve him only for ends, when away, forsook the true God, and worshipped idols. By this means, he found out who were the true servants of God, and whom he meant to make his own; such as he found faithful to God he thought would prove faithful to him. What this exploratory decree of Constantius effected in this court, the same did that which the apostate Julian set forth in good earnest against the Christians. He no sooner caused it to be proclaimed, that whosoever would not renounce the faith should be discarded his service, and forfeit both life and estate to his high displeasure. But presently upon the publication of that decree, they who were indeed Christians, and they who had only the title of Christians, presented themselves, as it were, on a common stage to the view of all men. Such as these are willows not oaks.

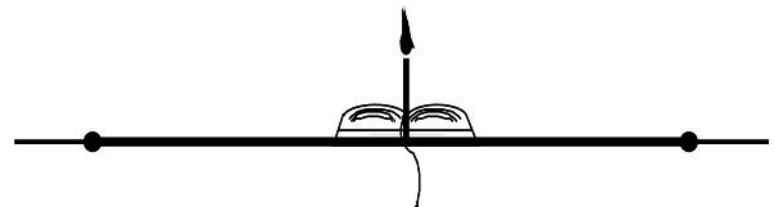
And so it was with Naomi and her two daughters-in-law,

Orpah and Ruth. All the while that she was Naomi, beautiful, and had enough, they both stayed with her: but when once Naomi became Marah, bitter, and empty, then Orpah took her leave of her, but Ruth abided with her. Here was the trial whether Orpah or Ruth had the sincerer affection to Naomi. Ruth loved her mother's person, Orpah her estate and outward preferments.

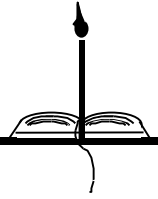
While religion and prosperity go together, it is hard to say which a man follows; but when once they are forced to a separation, where the heart was will soon be manifest. The upright in heart are like Ruth: whatsoever becomes of the Gospel, they will be sharers with it in the same condition; be it affliction, or be it prosperity; be it comfort or be it sorrow; be it fair weather or be it foul; be it light or be it darkness, they will take their lot with it. This is a clear truth, that, whatsoever was the cause of our doing a thing, that being removed we cease to do it: if outward comforts and accommodations in the world be the cause of why we follow Christ in the profession of the Gospel, then as soon as ever they fail, our profession will fail too. When zeal is kindled only with the beams of worldly hopes, when worldly hopes fail, our zeal is extinct, and our endeavor is cut off with our expectation.

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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 1:1-7



A Study by Scott Sperling

Romans 1:1-7 - Greeting to the Romans

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— ² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³ regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, ⁴ and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵ Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. ⁶ And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷ To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul begins his letter to the Roman church with an introduction, typical of the format of letters of that time. He introduces himself as the writer of the letter: “**Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus**”; he then states his qualifications to write what he is about to write: “**...called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God**”. At this point, at the mention of the “**gospel of God**”, Paul abandons for the moment the typical letter format and, overflowing with the spirit of apostleship, cannot help but to expand on the term “**the gos-**

pel of God”: “...the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord” (vss. 2-4). Mention of the “**gospel of God**” spurred Paul to include a parenthetical aside concerning it. Paul, as we shall see in this Epistle, always went with the inspirational flow. If a word or phrase spurred tangential thoughts, he spilled them as they came to him, without great regard for grammatical niceties. It is one thing that makes Paul's letters natural-sounding. They lend credibility that they are actually letters, dictated live by Paul, without too much editing. “It is an obvious peculiarity of this apostle's style, that he abounds in what are commonly called parenthesis. His mind was so glowing and so full of ideas, that the expression of a single word often calls forth, as it were, a burst of thought respecting the import of that word, which hinders him from advancing in the sentence that he had begun, until he has given vent to the feelings thus incidentally occasioned” [Stuart, 34].

Yet, despite the parenthetical asides, Paul's Epistles, and especially the book of Romans, are masterpieces of organized and systematic presentation of Christian doctrine. Even the parenthetical asides serve to strengthen the thoughts and ideas presented in the rest of the book. For instance here, as Paul mentions that the “**gospel of God**” was “**promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son**” – he is presenting and foreshadowing one of the themes of the book of Romans, that the idea of salvation by faith and through God's grace (the heart of the “**gospel of God**”), is not a new idea, but was existent in the Old Testament, and indeed, “**promised beforehand through [God's] prophets**”. Later in the Epistle, Paul will point out that Abraham was declared right-

eous, not by his own works, but by faith (see Rom. 4:1-4). Paul will also teach us that David spoke the good news, the **“gospel of God”**, when he described the **“blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works”** (Rom. 4:6). “This pre-announcement of the gospel is made in the Messianic promises, prophecies, and types of the Old Testament. Paul finds all of the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament, germinally, in the Old, and continually cites the Old Testament in proof of the truths and facts of Christianity” [Shedd, 7-8]. “As the suspicion of being new subtracts much from the authority of a doctrine, he confirms the faith of the gospel by antiquity; as though he said, ‘Christ came not on the earth unexpectedly, nor did he introduce a doctrine of a new kind and not heard of before, inasmuch as he, and his gospel too, had been promised and expected from the beginning of the world.’” [Calvin, 2]. “The second verse teaches that the gospel is no abrupt innovation or afterthought, but the forethought of God, the fulfilment of His promise, and **‘the desire of all nations.’** This harmony of the New and Old Dispensations should be a convincing proof of the Divine origin of Christianity, not only to the Jews, who already believe in the Old Testament, and need only be convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was really the promised Messiah, but also to the Gentiles, who well know that it is the exclusive prerogative of God to foresee and prearrange the future. In this view, Christianity is the oldest as well as the latest religion, going back to the first promise in Paradise, and even beyond the beginning of time, to the eternal counsel of God.” [Schaff, in *Lange’s*, 59-60].

Specifically, the gospel is **“promised beforehand through his prophets”**, in these ways:

“By Moses, as the woman’s seed, Gen. 3:15; Abraham’s seed, Gen. 22:18; Shiloh, 49:10; the prophet like unto Moses, Deut. 18:15;

By David, as his Son, Ps. 132:11; his Lord, Ps. 110:1; the Anointed, Ps. 2:2; Ps. 84:9; the Priest-King, 110:1; the Pierced One, 22:16;

By Isaiah, as the Virgin’s Son, Isa. 7:14; Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, 9:6; Rod out of the stem of Jesse, 11:1; Man of sorrows, 53:3; wounded and bruised Surety, 53:5, 10-12; God’s righteous servant, 42:1; 52:13 ; 53:11;

By Jeremiah, as the Righteous Branch, 23:5; the Lord our Righteousness, 23:6;

By Ezekiel, as the true David, the Shepherd-King, Ezek. 37:24;

By Daniel, as Messiah the Prince, Dan. 9:25-26;

By Micah, as the Judge of Israel, Mic. 5:2;

By Haggai, as the Desire of all nations, Hag. 2:7;

By Zechariah, as the Pierced One, Zech. 12:10; the Man who was Jehovah’s Shepherd and Fellow, 13:7;

By Malachi, as the Messenger of the Covenant, Mal. 3:1; the Sun of Righteousness, 4:3;

The prophets had foretold concerning the Messiah,—His divine and human nature, Isa. 9:6; His descent, Gen. 3:15; 12:3; 49:10; Isa. 11:1; I Sam. 16:11; the time of His appearing, Gen. 49:10; Dan. 9:24-25; Hag. 2:6, 9; the place of His birth, Mic. 5:2; the virginity of His mother, Isa. 7:14; the forerunner who should prepare His way, Mal. 3:1; the special scene of His ministry, Isa. 9:1-2; the miracles that should accredit His mission, Isa. 35:5-6; His sufferings and death, Ps. 22:16ff; Zech. 13:7; Isa. 53:2ff; His resurrection, Ps. 16:10; His ascension into heaven, Ps. 68:18; His sitting down at the right hand of the Father, Ps. 110:1; His effusion of the Holy Ghost, Joel 2:28; His second coming in judgment, Dan. 7:13...

The Jews who received the Old Testament were properly the first to receive the gospel” [Robinson, 13, 14].

“Let us accustom ourselves to search the whole Scriptures,—of the Old Testament and of the New,—as bearing a united and harmonious testimony to Christ. The Old should be read in the light of the New; and the New as the interpreter of the Old” [Wardlaw, 70].

Next, as part of his aside concerning the **“gospel of God”**, Paul writes of the nature of Christ, and of Christ as the center of the gospel: **“...regarding his Son, who as to His human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead:**

Jesus Christ our Lord" (vss. 3-4). Again, Paul is foreshadowing themes that he will later expand on in the book of Romans. He speaks here of the humanity ("**...as to His human nature was a descendant of David...**"), and divinity ("**...was declared with power to be the Son of God...**") of Jesus. In the book of Romans, we learn of the importance of both the humanity and divinity of Christ. In chapter five, we learn that Jesus was every bit as human as Adam, yet was without sin, so that because of Christ's humanity and sinlessness, he is able to reverse the effects of the sin that Adam brought into the world. In chapter eight, we learn that because Jesus is God's son, we also may be co-heirs with Christ, and may, through Christ's intercession, be glorified with him. And so we see, the "**gospel of God**" is centered around the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ: we are saved because of his humanity; we will be glorified because of his divinity.

Jesus's humanity was derived through his being "**a descendant of David.**" He was conceived miraculously, but born in a normal, human way to Mary, who is shown to be a "**descendant of David**" in Luke's genealogy (see Luke 3:23-38). As to Jesus's divinity, Paul tells us he was "**declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead.**" During his ministry, Jesus made both the claim of being divine, and the claim of being the "**Son of God**". He said, "**I and the Father are one**" (John 10:30). His hearers took this statement as a claim to divinity, for some of them picked up stones to stone him with (see John 10:31). At another time, Jesus asked his disciples, "**Who do you say I am?**" Peter answered, "**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.**" Jesus commended Peter, saying that Peter's answer came directly from God: "**Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven**" (see Matthew 16:15-17). Now, it is one thing to make claims of divinity; it is quite another to prove divinity. For Jesus, this proof came by his resurrection from the dead.

Numerous times, Jesus predicted his own death, yet every time he predicted his death, he also predicted his resurrection. In doing so, Jesus set up his resurrection as proof that his claims made during his ministry concerning his divine nature were true. In this way, Jesus was "**declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.**" "Had Jesus not risen from the dead, he would be remembered today only as a Jewish moralist who had some inflated ideas about his own relationship to God" [Mounce, 41]. "Had Jesus continued under the power of death, all his claims and all his doctrines would have been falsified. His grave would have been that of a mere man, branded with the memorial of a false prophet, a false witness of God, the falsest and the guiltiest that ever had arisen" [Wardlaw, 65]. "Jesus Christ had declared Himself to be the Son of God; and on this account the Jews charged Him with blasphemy, and asserted that He was a deceiver. By His resurrection, the clear manifestation of the character He had assumed, gloriously and forever terminated the controversy which had been maintained during the whole of His ministry on earth. In raising Him from the dead, God decided the contest. He declared Him to be His Son, and showed that He had accepted His death in satisfaction for the sins of His people, and consequently that He had suffered not for Himself, but for them, which none could have done but the Son of God. On this great fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Paul rests the truth of the Christian religion, without which the testimony of the Apostles would be false, and the faith of God's people vain" [Haldane, 28].

Though the revelation of Christ was "**promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures,**"—that is, the Hebrew scriptures—Paul wants the Gentile believers to know that they also are within the reach of the gospel: "**Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith**" (vs. 5). Note first, that the calling that the Apostles received to

preach to the Gentiles was **“through [Christ] and for his name’s sake.”** It is for the glory of Christ that the gospel is preached to the whole world, that his name and work are proclaimed to everyone who lives on this earth. “The whole scheme of the gospel supposes that Christ is glorified by the salvation of men, so that all the progress of the saving truth is for his name, i.e. to his honor, and therefore we are bound to receive that gospel ourselves, and make it known to others” [Plumer, 43]. “The Gospel is preached among all nations for the obedience of faith, but paramount to this is the glory of the name of Jesus Christ” [Haldane, 32].

And then, the desired end result of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and to anyone for that matter, is that they take hold of the **“obedience that comes from faith.”** “The design of the apostleship was to bring all nations so to believe in Christ the Son of God that they should be entirely devoted to his service” [Hodge, 21]. “The gospel is good news for all who will respond in faith. But faith inevitably issues in obedience. Faith is not intellectual assent to a series of propositions but surrender to the one who asks us to trust him... Paul’s desire was to take the gospel to the entire world and see the nations turn to God in a faith that changes conduct. Any other response would be inadequate. Apart from a changed life there is no real faith” [Mounce, 42]. Note well that **“obedience comes from faith.”** Our lapses into sin are due to a lack of faith: in the word of God; in the power of God; in the strength of the Holy Spirit’s work in ourselves; in God’s providence; in God’s promises.

Paul steers his message to his readers, directly to the believers in Rome: **“And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ”** (vs. 6). Paul began the letter by saying that he himself is a **“servant of Christ Jesus.”** Now here, he tells his readers, those that have grabbed hold of the **“obedience that comes from faith”**, that they themselves are to be Christ’s servants, that they are **“called to belong to Jesus Christ.”** “To accept Christ as Savior is to give up all rights to oneself. Christians belong to

Christ. Paul the apostle was the servant of the Lord. We who believe have placed ourselves at Christ’s disposal to be used as he sees fit. There is little room here for the mistaken idea that people can accept Christ as Savior without also allowing him to be Lord of their lives” [Mounce, 43].

This ends Paul’s digression, and so now he returns to complete the greeting of his letter: **“To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ”** (vs. 7). Paul addresses this epistle to all of the Christians in Rome (whether Jew or Gentile). He describes his Christian brothers and sisters as those who are **“loved by God and called to be saints.”** God loves all his created beings, but there is a special love for those who are children of God through faith in Christ. “All men are in a sense *loved* of God (see John 3:16); but apart from faith, this love of God can only be that of compassion. It becomes an intimate love, like that of father and child, only through the reconciliation granted to faith” [Godet, 139].

Christians are **“called to be saints.”** The Biblical use of the word **“saints”** is different than the popular use of the word today. The Roman Catholic Church has designated certain believers as **“saints”**, but the use of the word in the Bible always designates *all* believers as **“saints.”** Those who are **“saints”**, are **“sanctified”**, set apart from those of the world, and belonging to God through faith in Jesus. “All Christians are **‘saints.’** To be a Christian, without being a saint, is impossible; an unsanctified Christian being a contradiction in terms” [Wardlaw, 79].

The blessing Paul gives his readers is, **“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”** Paul uses this greeting in all of his epistles. It subtly joins together Gentiles and Jews by using the traditional Greek greeting (**“grace”**), and the traditional Jewish greeting (**“peace”**). It also confers upon his readers two characteristics of those who are Christians: **“grace”** flowing from God’s blessings; **“peace”** as a result of receiving this **“grace.”**

“Grace and peace are related to one another as cause and effect; grace is the Divine love manifesting itself towards sinful humanity, peace is that state of inward harmony of life which arises in man from the reception of grace” [Olshausen, 475-476]. They “constitute the chief blessings of Christianity, embracing all that we need” [Schaff, in *Lange’s*, 64]. “Grace is uniformly placed first in order, because it is the source whence peace and all the blessings of salvation flow. Grace is the free unmerited favor of God to sinners in the plan of salvation. Grace and peace are joined together, because they are inseparable” [Haldane, 34].

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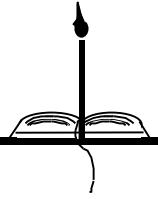
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A Topical Study: Communion with God



[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 Spend the Day with God, pt. 1

“...On Thee do I wait all the day.”

(Psalm 25:5).

Which of us is there that can truly say thus? —That lives this life of communion with God, which is so much our business, and so much our blessedness? How far short do we come of the spirit of holy David, though we have much better assistance for our acquaintance with God than the saints then had, by the clearer discoveries of the mediation of Christ. Yet that weak Christians, who are sincere, may not therefore despair, be it remembered, that David himself was not always in such a frame as that he could say so; he had his infirmities, and yet was a man after God’s own heart. We have ours, which, if they be sincerely lamented and striven against, and the habitual bent of our souls be towards God and heaven, we shall be accepted through Christ; for we are not under the law, but under grace.

However, David’s profession in the text shows us what should be our practice: on God we must wait all the day. That notes two things, a patient expectation, and a constant attendance.

First. It speaks a patient expectation of his coming to us

in a way of mercy; and then, all the day must be taken figuratively, for all the time that the wanted and desired mercy is delayed. David, in the former part of the verse, prayed for divine conduct and instruction. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me.

He was at a loss, and very desirous to know what God would have him to do, and was ready to do it; but God kept him in suspense; he was not yet clear what was the mind and will of God, what course he should steer, and how he should dispose of himself. Will he therefore proceed without divine direction? No, *on thee will I wait all the day*, as Abraham attended on his sacrifice from morning till the sun went down, before God gave him an answer to his inquiries concerning his seed (see Gen. 15:5,12); and as Habakkuk stood upon his watch-tower, to see what answer God would give him when he consulted his oracle; and though it do not come presently, yet at the end it shall speak, and not lie.

David, in the words preceding the text, had called God the God of his salvation, the God on whom he depended for salvation, temporal and eternal salvation; from whom he expected deliverance out of his present distresses, those troubles of his heart that were enlarged (Ps. 25:17), and out of the hands of those enemies that were ready to triumph over him (Ps. 25:2), and that hated him with cruel hatred (Ps. 25:19). Hoping that God will be his Savior, he resolves to wait on him all the day, like a genuine son of Jacob, whose dying profession was, **“I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord”** (Gen. 49:18). Sometimes God prevents his people with the blessings of his goodness; before they call he answers them, is in the midst of his church to help her, and that right early (see Ps. 46:5). But at other times he seems to stand afar off, he delays the deliverance, and keeps them long in expectation of it, nay, and in suspense about it. The light is neither clear nor dark; it is day, and that is all. It is a cloudy and dark day, and it is not till evening time that it is light, that the comfort comes, which they have been all the day waiting for; nay, perhaps it comes not till far in the night. It is at midnight that the cry is made,

“Behold the bridegroom comes.” The deliverance of the church out of her troubles, the success of her struggles, and rest from them, a rescue from under the rod of the wicked, and the accomplishment of all that which God hath promised concerning it, is what we must continue humbly waiting upon God for, without distrust or impatience; we must wait all the day.

1. Though it be a long day; though we be kept waiting a great while, quite beyond our own reckoning. Though, when we have waited long, we are still put to wait longer, and are bid, with the prophet’s servant, to go yet seven times (I Kings 18:43), before we perceive the least sign of mercy coming. We looked that this and the other had been he that should have delivered Israel, but are disappointed. **“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved,”** (Jer. 8:20). The time is prolonged, nay, the opportunities are let slip; the summer time and harvest time, when we thought to have reaped the fruit of all our prayers, and pains, and patience, is past and ended, and we are as far as ever from salvation. The time that the ark abode in Kirjathjearim was long, much longer than it was thought it would have been when it was first lodged there: it was twenty years; so that the whole house of Israel lamented after the Lord, and began to fear it would abide forever in that obscurity (see I Sam. 7:2).

But though it be a long day, it is but a day; but one day, and it is known to the Lord (see Zech. 14:7). It seems long while we are kept waiting, but the happy issue will enable us to reflect upon it as short, and but for a moment. It is no longer than God hath appointed, and we are sure his time is the best time, and his favors are worth waiting for. The time is long, but it is nothing to the days of eternity, when those that had long patience shall be recompensed for it with an everlasting salvation.

2. Though it be a dark day, yet let us wait upon God all the day. Though, while we are kept waiting for what God

will do, we are kept in the dark concerning what is doing, and what is best for us to do; yet let us be content to wait in the dark. Though we see not our signs, though there is none to tell us how long; yet let us resolve to wait, how long so ever it be; for though what God doth, we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

Never was man more perplexed concerning God’s dealings with him than poor Job was: **“I go forward, but he is not there; backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, on the right hand, but I cannot see him”** (Job 23:8-9); yet he sits down, ver. 10, resolving to wait on God all the day with a satisfaction in this, that though I know not the way that he takes, he knows the way that I take; and when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold, approved and improved. He sits by as a refiner, and will take care that the gold be in the furnace no longer than is needful for refining it. When God’s way is in the sea, so that he cannot be traced, yet we are sure his way is in the sanctuary, so that he may be trusted (see Psalm 77:13,19). And when clouds and darkness are round about him, yet even then justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

3. Though it be a stormy day, yet we must wait upon God all the day. Though we are not only becalmed, and do not get forward; but though the wind be contrary, and drives us back; nay, though it be boisterous, and the church be tossed with tempests, and ready to sink, yet we must hope the best: yet we must wait and weather the storm by patience. It is some comfort that Christ is in the ship. The church’s cause is Christ’s own cause; he has espoused it, and he will own it; he is embarked in the same bottom with his people, and therefore why are ye fearful? Doubt not but the ship will come safe to land. Though Christ seem for the present to be asleep, the prayers of his disciples will awake him, and he will rebuke the winds and the waves; though the bush burn, if God be in it, it shall not be consumed. Yet this is not all, Christ is not only in the ship, but at the helm; whatever threatens the church is ordered by the Lord Jesus, and shall be made to work for its good. It is

excellently expressed by Mr. George Herbert:

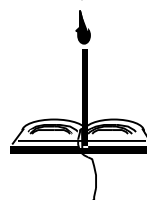
Away! despair, my gracious God doth hear,
 When winds and waves assault my keel,
 He doth preserve it, he doth steer,
 Even when the boat seems most to reel.
 Storms are the triumph of his art.
 Well may he close his eyes, but not his heart.

It is a seasonable word at this day; what God will do with us we cannot tell; but of this we are sure: he is a God of judgment, infinitely wise and just, and therefore blessed are all they that wait for him (see Isa. 30:18). He will do his own work in his own way and time; and though we be hurried back into the wilderness, when we thought we had been upon the borders of Canaan, we suffer justly for our unbelief and murmurings; but God acts wisely, and will be found faithful to his promise; his time to judge for his people, and to repent himself concerning his servants, is when he sees that their strength is gone. This was seen of old in the mount of the Lord, and shall be again. And therefore let us continue in a waiting frame. Hold out faith and patience, for it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

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

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

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A Study in Wisdom: Psalm 77

A Study by Scott Sperling

Psalm 77 - A Prayer in Distress

- ¹ I cried out to God for help;
 I cried out to God to hear me.
- ² When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;
 at night I stretched out untiring hands,
 and I would not be comforted.
- ³ I remembered you, God, and I groaned;
 I meditated, and my spirit grew faint. *Selah.*
- ⁴ You kept my eyes from closing;
 I was too troubled to speak.
- ⁵ I thought about the former days,
 the years of long ago;
- ⁶ I remembered my songs in the night.
 My heart meditated and my spirit asked:
- ⁷ "Will the Lord reject forever?
 Will he never show his favor again?"
- ⁸ Has his unfailing love vanished forever?
 Has his promise failed for all time?
- ⁹ Has God forgotten to be merciful?
 Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"
Selah.
- ¹⁰ Then I thought, "To this I will appeal:
 the years when the Most High
 stretched out his right hand.
- ¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
 yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
- ¹² I will consider all your works
 and meditate on all your mighty deeds."

- ¹³ **Your ways, God, are holy.
What god is as great as our God?**
- ¹⁴ **You are the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among the peoples.**
- ¹⁵ **With your mighty arm
you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
*Selah.***
- ¹⁶ **The waters saw you, God,
the waters saw you and writhed;
the very depths were convulsed.**
- ¹⁷ **The clouds poured down water,
the heavens resounded with thunder;
your arrows flashed back and forth.**
- ¹⁸ **Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind,
your lightning lit up the world;
the earth trembled and quaked.**
- ¹⁹ **Your path led through the sea,
your way through the mighty waters,
though your footprints were not seen.**
- ²⁰ **You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.**

In this psalm, a child of God is in deep distress. In the first half of the psalm, he focusses on this distress. In the second half of the psalm, to seek consolation, he turns his eye to God: His works, His nature, His miraculous support for His people in the past. “This psalm, according to the method of many other psalms, begins with sorrowful complaints, but ends with comfortable encouragements.” [Henry, 818].

In his great distress, the Psalmist utilizes the God-given weapon of prayer: **“I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me”** (vss. 1-2). The intensity of the Psalmists appeal to God is reflected in the repetition: **“I cried... I cried...”** It is also reflected in the manner of prayer. His prayer was not an internal, mental prayer, nor

even a fervently whispered prayer. It was a vocal, and quite audible prayer, spoken—possibly even shouted—aloud. “He used his voice also, for though vocal utterance is not necessary to the life of prayer, it often seems forced upon us by the energy of our desires. Sometimes the soul feels compelled to use the voice, for thus it finds a freer vent for its agony” [Spurgeon, 312]. “Prayer is man’s real strength; not careless prayer, which turns to God merely among other helpers, but ardent, ceaseless, unwearying prayer” [*Plain*, 33]. “Languid devotion, that moves not our hearts, can hardly be expected to move God” [Plumer, 741]. “No faithful prayer is ineffectual” [Trapp, 591].

The Psalmist next speaks of the depths of his distress: **“When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands, and I would not be comforted. I remembered you, God, and I groaned; I meditated, and my spirit grew faint. You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak”** (vss. 2-3). Though he was fervent in prayer, the Psalmist could find no **“comfort”**. This passage suggests that his distress was related to sin in his life, for he felt alienated from God, and **“groaned”** at the thought of God. He also, apparently, felt the tug of conscience as God would give him no rest: **“You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.”** “If our hearts or consciences condemn us, it is impossible to remember him without being troubled” [Payson, in Spurgeon, 318]. “He who is the well-spring of delight to faith, became an object of dread to the Psalmist’s distracted heart. The justice, holiness, power, and truth of God have all a dark side, and indeed all the attributes may be made to look black upon us if our eye be evil; even the brightness of divine love blinds us, and fills us with a horrible suspicion that we have neither part nor lot in it. He is wretched indeed whose memories of The Ever Blessed prove distressing to him; yet the best of men know the depth of this abyss” [Spurgeon, 313]. “Nothing can satisfy a soul which is sensible of Gods displeasure, save the sense of God’s favor” [Dickson, 188].

Note that, though the Psalmist began his prayer by **“crying out”**, through spiritual exhaustion his prayer has become a **“groan”**, a **“meditation”**. He was **“too troubled to speak.”** “Silence and thought succeed to the uttered prayer. But the heart still prays on in secret, though the mouth is silent.” [Perowne, 361]. “Sometimes our grief is so violent that it finds no vent, it strangles us, and we are overcome” [Timothy Rogers, in Spurgeon, 319]. “Words are but the body, the garment, the outside of prayer; sighs are nearer the heart work... Tears have a tongue, and grammar, and language that our Father knoweth” [Samuel Rutherford, in Spurgeon, 320]. “It is better for the heart to pray without the mouth, than the mouth without the heart” [Starke, in *Lange’s*, 435]. Indeed, it is a good thing to alternate fervently spoken prayer with deep, quiet meditation. In quiet meditation, we can hear God speak to us.

For the Psalmist, day turned to night, but he could find no rest; sleep deserted him. God often uses restless nights to bring us to Him in prayer, and to force us to meditate on our spiritual condition. “A wounded spirit is able to bereave a man of the night’s rest, and affect the body with a share of its miserable condition” [Dickson, 188]. “Sleep is a great comforter, but it forsakes the sorrowful, and then their sorrow deepens and eats into the soul” [Spurgeon, 313]. “Let the anxious, careworn, but humble believer remember that it is no new thing to spend sleepless nights” [Plumer, 742].

To his credit, the Psalmist persevered in prayer, despite feeling that his prayer was going unanswered. “They are real men of prayer with whom, when answers fail to be forthcoming, the thirst for prayer gets not weakened, but inflamed with greater ardor” [Tholuck, 323]. “Days of trouble must be days of prayer, days of inward trouble especially, when God seems to have withdrawn from us; we must seek him, and seek till we find him” [Henry, 819].

In hope of receiving some sort of comfort, the Psalmist recalls past times, times of God’s favor when his heart was at peace: **“I thought about the former days, the years of**

long ago; I remember my songs in the night” (vss. 5-6). “He selects the theme which believers in trouble ought always to choose; the days when the goodness of God was seen and tasted” [Tholuck, 323]. “Recollection of former mercies is the proper antidote against a temptation to despair, in the day of calamity” [Horne, 271].

His reflection on the past times of God’s favor led the Psalmist to wonder whether God’s favor had permanently left him: **“My heart meditated and my spirit asked: ‘Will the Lord reject forever? Will He never show His favor again? Has His unfailing love vanished forever? Has His promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has He in anger withheld his compassion?’”** (vss. 6-9). The Psalmist who, through study of God’s work in the past, and study of His revelation of Himself through His Word, knows of God’s true character, and appeals to God’s character through these questions. The Psalmist knows of God’s desire to forgive, so he asks, **“Will the Lord reject forever? Will He never show His favor again?”** The Psalmist knows of God’s infinite store of lovingkindness, and his unbounded mercy and compassion, so he asks, **“Has His unfailing love vanished forever? Has His promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has He in anger withheld his compassion?”** In effect, the Psalmist is asking: “Shall God, to whose nature it belongs to be gracious, and faithfully to keep His promises, make an exception in my case?” [Tholuck]. “The troubled conscience hungering after a sense of mercy, hath not only God’s merciful nature, and God’s constancy in his good will, but also his promises to lean unto, for supporting of itself” [Dickson, 190]. “Can God, who forgets nothing and no one (see Isa. 49:15), have forgotten his own nature, which is to be **‘merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness’** (Exod. 34:6)? Assuredly not” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 111].

The struggling with these questions led the Psalmist to change directions in his prayer: **“Then I thought, ‘To this I**

will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out His right hand. I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember Your miracles of long ago. I will consider all Your works and meditate on all Your mighty deeds” (vss. 10-12). The Psalmist now focusses directly on God’s wonderful and merciful deeds of the past, when love and protection for His people was demonstrated. “Those who are under suffering like to think about themselves, and brood over their situation. It is better for them to meditate upon God’s doings” [*Lange’s*, 434]. “Whatever else may glide into oblivion, the marvelous works of the Lord in the ancient days must not be suffered to be forgotten. Memory is a fit handmaid for faith” [Spurgeon, 315]. “History and prophecy are the two great sources of comfort to the saints. The former tells us what God has done; the latter, what He will do. To faith they both reveal wondrous things” [Plumer, 740]. “This verse is the transition point from the sad experience to the joyous—from dark, depressing views to bright, uplifting thoughts of God and his ways” [Cowles, 317]. The Psalmist, who **“stretched out untiring hands”** to God in verse 2, is appealing to the times when God Himself **“stretched out His right hand”** to His people. “Our distress and trouble make our faith weak, but they do not alter the eternal purposes of God’s love and grace. From the very beginning God’s right hand has been working out eternal plans of mercy and love to man” [*Plain*, 35].

And so, the Psalmist’s prayer turns to focusing solely on God, His character and His work: **“Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; You display Your power among the peoples. With Your mighty arm You redeemed Your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph”** (vss. 13-15). The Psalmist begins meditating on God’s **“holiness”** and **“greatness”**. “The evident *inference* from this in the mind of the psalmist, as bearing on the subject of his inquiry, is, that *it is to be expected* that there will be

things in his administration which man cannot hope to understand; that a rash and sudden judgment should not be formed in regard to Him from His doings; that men should wait for the developments of His plans; that he should not be condemned because there are things which we cannot comprehend, or which *seem* to be inconsistent with goodness. This is a consideration which ought always to influence us in our views of God and His government” [Barnes, 288-289].

The Psalmist concludes with an extended meditation on one of God’s greatest works on behalf of His people, the leading of the Israelites to safety through the Red Sea: **“The waters saw You, God, the waters saw You and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; Your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, Your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. Your path led through the sea, Your way through the mighty waters, though Your footprints were not seen”** (vss. 16-19). Through this episode, we learn that there are no obstacles on earth that are too great for God to overcome in order to help His people. His hand, His look, His mere thought are to be obeyed by His creation: **“The waters saw You, God, the waters saw You and writhed; the very depths were convulsed.”**

Note here, this path **“through the waters”** was not an easy one for the Israelites to take: **“Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, Your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked”** (vs. 18). Like the Psalmist, the Israelites were, no doubt, full of fear. They quite probably thought that God had deserted them. They were brought to the end of their hope, to the depths of despair, with the Egyptian army behind them, and a raging sea before them. “The Lord draweth deep in working out the delivery and salvation of His own people, bringing them at first into extremity of danger, and then making a plain and clear escape from all their straits” [Dickson]. “Looking back to this period of their history, the psalmist saw that there *was* abundant reason for confid-

ing in God, and that the mind *should* repose on him calmly amid all that was dark and mysterious in his dealings... In view of the past, the mind ought to be calm; encouraged by the past, however incomprehensible may be God's doings, men may come to him, and entrust all their interests to him with the confident assurance that their salvation will be secure, and that all which seems dark and mysterious in the dealings of God will yet be made clear" [Barnes, 291]. "The same Great God who never lacked resources to humble the proudest nations of the ages long ago may be trusted to do all he wills in the ages present or future. That wisdom and power which stand out sublimely prominent in the great deeds of the ancient times will always be equal to any demand through all the ages" [Cowles, 319].

The Psalmist concludes: **"You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron"** (vs. 20). Some see this as an abrupt ending, so much so, that they believe that we are missing the end of the psalm. But I would say that here, in God's perfect word, we have enough to know that the Psalmist was comforted by God's shepherdly leading of his people through the trouble, as He **"led His people like a flock."** "As soon as the good man began to meditate on these things, he found he had gained his point; his very entrance upon this matter gave him light and joy; his fears suddenly and strangely vanished, so that he needed to go no further" [Henry, 820]. "It is a glorious attribute of faith that it does not cease in prayer and supplication till God at last causes His gracious countenance to shine, and appears with His comfort and help" [Starke, in *Lange's*, 435].

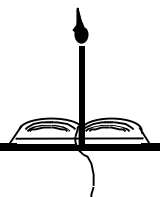
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A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist



A Meditation Upon a Looking Glass by William Spurstowe (1666)

What is that which commends a *Looking-Glass*? Is it the pearl, and other precious stones with which the frame that it is set in is richly decked and enameled? Or is it the impartial and just representation which it makes, according to the face, which everyone that beholds himself brings unto it? Surely the ornaments are wholly foreign, and contribute no more to its real worth than the cask does to the goodness of the wine into which it is put; or the richness of the place to the cordial in which it is administered. That for which the Glass is to be esteemed, is the true and genuine resemblance which it makes of the object which is seen in it, when it neither flatters the face, by giving any false beauty to it, nor yet injures it, by detracting ought from it. To slight then or neglect the Glass for the meanness of its case, and to value it only for its gaiety, is no better than the folly of children, or the brutish ignorance of those, who prize the book by the *cover*, and not by the *learning* that is in it. To quarrel at the Glass for its returning a most exact and absolute likeness of the face that is seen in it, is to despise it for its excellency, and can come from no other ground, than a consciousness of some guilt.

Is it not for this very respect, that beautiful persons both prize it, and use it happily too much? It being the only means whereby they come to be acquainted with their own comeliness, and to understand what it is that allures the hearts and eyes of all towards them. Who then but those

whose features nature has drawn with a *coal*, rather than a *pencil*, or whom age and sickness have robbed of what they formerly prided themselves in, shun the familiar use of it? Or who but they be angry when they look into it, as if it upbraided them, rather than resembled them? Many such throw passionately away their Glass saying, "As I am I will not, as I was I cannot behold myself." And yet, is not this anger against the Glass causeless? Does it make the gray hairs on the head, or the pock-holes and wrinkles in the face? Or does it discover only what age and diseases have done, and let them see what they cannot conceal from the eyes of others?

Now, what does all this argue, but an averseness in men to understand the truth of their own condition, and a willingness through self-flattery to deceive themselves in thinking of whatever they have above what is meet? Great must needs be the impatency against truth, when the silent reflections of a Glass, that vanish as soon as it is turned from, kindle such dislikes in the breast as to make them to cast it from them, for doing only the same thing to them which it does to others.

Here methinks we may learn the ground as to why carnal men are offended at the Word, both in putting scorn and contempt upon it by the low and mean thoughts they have of it, or else by the anger which they express against it in throwing this blessed mirror from them, as Moses did the tables which he broke beneath the mount. Some pick a quarrel with the plainness of the Word, as if it wholly wanted those embroideries of wit and art that other writings and discourses abound with, and had none of those quaint and taking expressions that might win upon the affections of them that converse with it. But is not this to make such use of the Word as young children do of the Glass, more to behold the babies in their own eyes, than to make any observance of themselves? Is the Word writ or preached to have its reflections upon the *fancy*, or upon the *conscience*? Is it to inform only the *head*, or to reform the *heart*? If the inward man be the proper subject of it, the *simplicity* of it conduces more to that great end than the *contemperation* of it with humane mixtures. It is not the *painted*, but the *crystal* glass

by which the object is best discerned.

Others again are not a little displeased with the Law or Word of God, because when they look into it, both their *persons* and *sins* are represented in a far differing manner from those conceptions they ever had of the one or of the other. In their own eyes they are without any blemish; but in this Glass they appear as deformed *lepers*, and spread with a universal uncleanness, and who can bear it to see himself thus suddenly transformed into a monster? Now, their sins, which they judged to be as little as the motes in the sun-beams, appear in amazing dimensions, and it is to them, not a *looking glass*, but a *magnifying glass*. Thoughts of the heart, glances of the eye, words of the lips, the eruptions of the passions are all censured by it, as deserving death, and there is nothing can escape it, which as a rule it will not guide, or as a judge condemn. O how irksome must this needs be to carnal and unregenerate men, who abound with self-flatteries, and presumptions of their own innocence and righteousness, who can with as little patience endure the convincing power of the Word as sore eyes can the severe searchings of the light?

We need not then wonder that the Word has so many adversaries who take part with *nature* against *grace*; setting their wits on work by distinctions, and blended interpretations, to make it as a Glass breathed and blown upon, which yields nothing but dim and imperfect reflections. Is there anything that the Word more clearly asserts than the loathsome condition of man's nature with which he comes into the world? Is it not expressed by the filthiness of the birth which every child is encompassed with when it breaks forth from the womb? Is it not resembled to the rottenness and stench of the grave into which man is resolved when he is said to be dead in sins and trespasses? And yet how many when they view themselves in this Glass give out to the world that they can see no such thing?

Celestius, of old, thought that original sin was a matter rather of dispute, than of faith. And some, of late, have

been more bold, calling it *Augustine's figment*. But the more injurious others are to this *Divine Mirror* of truth, the more it behooves every good Christian to be studious in vindicating it from the scorns of such that despise it for its *simplicity*, and from the impieties of others that seek to corrupt its *purity*: and to show that for what cause others hate it, he most affectionately loves and prizes it. **“Thy word is very pure,”** said David, **“therefore thy servant loveth it.”**

Can you do God better service, other than honoring his Word, which he has magnified above all his name? Or can you do yourselves more right, than to judge yourselves by that which is so pure that it neither can deceive, nor be deceived? Though it present you with the sad spectacle of your sins, which may justly fill you with shame and self-aborrancy, does it not show you also your Savior, who is made unto us, Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption? And cannot this joyful sight raise you more than the other can cast you down? O fear not to see your sin, when you may at the same time behold your Savior.

A mourning heart is the best preparation for spiritual joy, and serves to intend the height of it, as dark colors do to set off the gold that is laid upon them. Give me therefore, O Lord, a broken and relenting heart, that sin may be my sorrow, and Christ may be my joy; let all my tears drop from the eye of faith, that I may not mourn without hope, nor yet rejoice without trembling. Let me see my sins in the Glass of the Law to humble me, and my Savior in the Glass of the Gospel to comfort me; yea, let me with open face so behold his glory, as to be changed into the same image from glory to glory.

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Heeding the Bible's Wisdom

"The children of Wisdom accept her words. They do not shut their ears against them. They do not slight them. They do not hastily and thoughtlessly disregard them. They give them what they are entitled to, a serious and deliberate attention. They listen, they remember, they meditate, they examine, they accept, they lay up for use. —The words of divine wisdom are now *in the Bible*. There the voice of Wisdom, and of God, addresses you. In reading the Bible, you should consider yourselves as listening to God. And it is a blessed privilege to have this Word in your possession, — to have God addressing you in it."

— *Ralph Wardlaw (1779-1853)*

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