

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

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## Old Testament Study: Exodus 31

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

### Exodus 31 – The Divine Call; The Sabbath

<sup>1</sup> And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: <sup>3</sup> And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, <sup>4</sup> To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, <sup>5</sup> And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. <sup>6</sup> And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee; <sup>7</sup> The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, <sup>8</sup> And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, <sup>9</sup> And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, <sup>10</sup> And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office, <sup>11</sup> And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

<sup>12</sup> And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>13</sup> Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. <sup>14</sup> Ye shall keep the

sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. <sup>15</sup> Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. <sup>16</sup> Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. <sup>17</sup> It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

<sup>18</sup> And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. (KJV)

The opening of this brief chapter records the divine call and the divine qualification of Bezaleel and Aholiab to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. **“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, *I have called* by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and *I have filled* him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship... And I, behold, *I have given* with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wisehearted *I have put* wisdom, that they may make all that *I have commanded* thee”** (vs. 2-3, 6). Whether for **“the work of the tabernacle”** of old, or **“the work of the ministry”** now, there should be the divine selection, the divine call, the divine qualification, the divine appointment; and all must be done according to the divine commandment. Man could not select, call, qualify, or appoint to do the work of the tabernacle; neither can he, to do the work of the ministry. Furthermore, no man could presume to appoint himself to do the work of the tabernacle; neither can he to do the work of the ministry. It was, it is, it must be, wholly and absolutely divine. Men may run as sent of their fellow, or men may run of themselves; but let it be remembered that all who

run, without being sent of God, shall, one day or other, be covered with shame and confusion of face. Such is the plain and wholesome doctrine suggested by the words, **“I have called,” “I have filled,” “I have given,” “I have put,” “I have commanded.”** The words of the Baptist must ever hold good, **“A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven”** (John 3:27). He can, therefore, have but little room to boast of himself; and just as little to be jealous of his fellow.

There is a profitable lesson to be learned from a comparison of this chapter with Genesis 4. **“Tubal-cain was an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron”** (Gen. 4:22). The descendants of Cain were endowed with unhallowed skill to make a cursed and groaning earth a delectable spot, without the presence of God. Bezaleel and Aholiab, on the contrary, were endowed with divine skill to beautify a sanctuary which was to be hallowed and blessed by the presence and glory of the God of Israel.

Reader, let me ask you just to pause and put this solemn question to your conscience, “Am I devoting whatever of skill or energy I possess to the interests of the Church which is God’s dwelling place, or to beautify an ungodly, Christless world?” Say not, in thine heart, “I am not divinely called or divinely qualified for the work of the ministry.” Remember that though all Israel were not Bezaleels or Aholiabs, yet all could serve the interests of the sanctuary. There was an open door for all to communicate. Thus it is now. Each one has a place to occupy, a ministry to fulfil, a responsibility to discharge; and you and I are, at this moment, either promoting the interests of the house of God—the body of Christ—the Church, or helping on the godless schemes of a world, yet stained with the blood of Christ and the blood of all His martyred saints. Oh! let us deeply ponder this, as in the presence of the great Searcher of hearts, whom none can deceive—to whom all are known.

Our chapter closes with a special reference to the institution of the Sabbath. It was referred to in chapter 16 in connection with the manna; it was distinctly enjoined in chapter

20, when the people were formally put under law; and here we have it again in connection with the setting up of the tabernacle. Whenever the nation of Israel is presented in some special position, or recognized as a people in special responsibility, then the Sabbath is introduced. And let my reader carefully note both the day and the mode in which it was to be observed, and also the object for which it was instituted in Israel. **“Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely he put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.”** (vss. 14-15). This is as explicit and absolute as anything can be. It fixes **“the seventh day”** and none other; and it positively forbids, on pain of death, all manner of work. There can be no avoiding the plain sense of this. And, be it remembered, that there is not so much as a single line of Scripture to prove that the Sabbath has been changed, or the strict principles of its observance, in the smallest degree, relaxed. If there be any Scripture proof, let my reader look it out for his own satisfaction. [*Editor’s note: Here I must disagree with Mr. Mackintosh. Hebrews 4 and Galatians 4:9-10 (as Mr. Mackintosh cites later) do seem to indicate, at least to me, that there has been a change in the Sabbath. Our Sabbath rest is Christ: always and forever, not just on Saturday. I leave it as an exercise for the reader to study this issue in detail.*]

Now, let us inquire if indeed professing Christians do keep God’s Sabbath on the day and after the manner which He commanded. It were idle to lose time in proving that they do not. Well, what are the consequences of a single breach of the Sabbath? *“Cut off”*—*“put to death.”*

But, it will be said, we **“are not under law, but under grace”** (Rom. 6:14). Blessed be God for the sweet assurance! Were we under law, there is not one throughout the wide range of Christendom who should not, long since, have fallen beneath the stone of judgment, even upon the one solitary point of the Sabbath. But, if we are under grace, what is the day

which belongs to us? Assuredly, “the first day of the week,” “the Lord’s day.” This is the Church’s day, the resurrection day of Jesus, who, having spent the Sabbath in the tomb, rose triumphant over all the powers of darkness, thus leading His people out of the old creation, and all that pertains thereto, into the new creation, of which He is the Head, and of which the first day of the week is the apt expression.

This distinction is worthy of the serious attention of the reader. Let him examine it prayerfully in the light of Scripture. There may be nothing and there may be a great deal in a mere name. In the present instance, there is a great deal more involved in the distinction between “the Sabbath” and “the Lord’s day” than many Christians seem to be aware of. It is very evident that the first day of the week gets a place, in the word of God, which no other day gets. No other day is ever called by that majestic and elevated title, “the Lord’s day.” Some, I am aware, deny that Rev. 1:10 refers to the first day of the week; but I feel most fully assured that sound criticism and sound exegesis do both warrant, yea, demand the application of that passage, not to the day of Christ’s advent in glory, but to the day of His resurrection from the dead.

But, most assuredly, the Lord’s day is never once called the Sabbath. So far from this, the two days are, again and again, spoken of in their proper distinctness. Hence, therefore, my reader will have to keep clear of two extremes. In the first place, he will have to avoid the legalism which one finds so much linked with the term “Sabbath;” and, in the second place, he will need to bear a very decided testimony against every attempt to dishonour the Lord’s day or lower it to the level of an ordinary day. The believer is delivered, most completely, from the observance of **“days and months, and times and years”** (see Gal. 4:9-10). Association with a risen Christ has taken him clean out of all such superstitious observances. But, while this is most blessedly true, we see that “the first day of the week” has a place assigned to it in the New Testament which no other has. Let the Christian give it that place. It is a sweet and happy privilege, not a grievous yoke.

Space forbids my further entrance upon this interesting

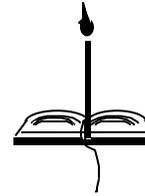
subject. It has been gone into, elsewhere, as already intimated, in the earlier pages of this volume. I shall close these remarks by pointing out, in one or two particulars, the contrast between “the Sabbath” and “the Lord’s day.”

1. The Sabbath was the *seventh* day; the Lord’s day is the *first*.
2. The Sabbath was a *test* of Israel’s condition; the Lord’s day is the *proof* of the Church’s acceptance, on wholly unconditional grounds.
3. The Sabbath belonged to the old creation; the Lord’s day belongs to the new.
4. The Sabbath was a day of *bodily* rest for the Jew; the Lord’s day is a day of *spiritual* rest for the Christian.
5. If the Jew worked on the Sabbath, he was to be put to *death*; if the Christian does not work on the Lord’s day, he gives little proof of *life*. That is to say, if he does not work for the benefit of the souls of men, the extension of Christ’s glory, and the spread of His truth. In point of fact, the devoted Christian, who possesses any gift, is generally more fatigued on the evening of the Lord’s day than on any other in the week, for how can he *rest* while souls are perishing around him?
6. The Jew was *commanded* by the *law* to abide in his tent; the Christian is *led* by the spirit of the *gospel* to go forth, whether it be to attend the public assembly, or to minister to the souls of perishing sinners.

The Lord enable us, beloved reader, to rest more artlessly *in*, and labour more vigorously *for*, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! We should *rest* in the spirit of a *child*, and *labour* with the energy of a *man*.

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## *A Classic Study: Job 1:11-12 (part 3)*

*[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 3) - God’s Grant to Satan’s Request

**<sup>11</sup>But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. <sup>12</sup>And 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)**

We are next to consider the Lord’s grant of Satan’s motion: **“And 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”** (vs. 12).

We have in this verse: First, God’s commission or his permission to Satan, **“Behold all that he hath is in thine hand...”** And secondly, his limitation of the commission, **“Only upon himself put not forth thine hand.”** Thirdly, Satan’s speedy execution of his commission, **“So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.”**

*The Lord said unto Satan, all that he hath is in thy hand, in thy power, so we translate it: the word in the original is, all is in thy hand. Satan moved that God would put forth his hand against Job; and God puts Job into Satan’s hand. Lest Satan should*

cavil that God had touched him but lightly, he puts him into Satan's power and lets him do it himself, *who would do it thoroughly*. The hand (as we before noted) is put for power or disposition or another, as in Exod. 4:21: **"Thou shalt do all the wonders before Pharaoh which I have put into thy hand."** And in John 3:35: **"The Father loves the Son and hath given all things into his hand."** This phrase of giving or putting into the hand, is taken either for good or for evil. Sometimes, the putting of a thing into one's hands is only for the managing and disposing of it for good, as in Gen. 39:7-8, when Joseph said that *his master had committed all that he hand into his hand*, that is, to take care of it, and to order it for his master's benefit, profit, and honor. But often, to put or to give into the hand is for evil, to do what you will with persons or things, to punish or to afflict them, as in Judg. 6:1, when God delivered the Israelites into the hand of Midian, that is, he left them to the power of the Midianites to tyrannize over and vex them. And in Judg. 6:7, God delivered Midian into the hand of Israel, that is, he gave Israel power over them to destroy or afflict them. So here, he gave all into the hand of Satan, that is, he gave Satan leave to dispose of Job's estate as he pleased. It is as if God had said to Satan, "Thou hast leave to do what thou wilt with Job's outward estate: spoil it, plunder it, destroy it, consume it, set it to fire; thou hast free leave, *all that he hath is in thy hand.*"

We shall note a point or two from that. You see, as soon as ever Satan had made his motion, God presently answered, *all that he hath is in thy hand*. It is not always an argument of God's good will and love to have our motions granted. Many are heard and answered out of anger, not out of love. The children of Israel required *meat for their lusts*, and God gave it them; he did not withhold from them their desire; they were not shortened of their lusts; they had it presently. Many times his own servants call and call again, move and move again, and obtain no grant. **"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice,"** said Paul (see II Cor. 12:8), yet Paul could not have what he sought. Satan did but move once, and presently all that Job had was in his hand.

But further, that which is chiefly here to be observed is, *that until God gives commission, Satan hath no power over the estates or persons of God's people, or over anything that belongs unto them*. Neither our persons, nor our estates are subject to the will either of men or devils. Christ must say, *All that he hath is in thy hand*, before Satan can touch a shoe-latchet. As Christ replied in John 19:11 to Pilate, when Pilate spoke so stoutly, **"Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee and power to release thee?"** Pilate thought that he had all power in this hand, but Christ tells him, **"Thou couldst have no power at all against me unless it were given thee from above."** If the devils could not go into the swine, much less can they meddle with a man, made after God's image, until God gives them leave. Every soul that has interest in Christ may suck comfort and consolation in the saddest, in the most sorrowful day, from the breast of this truth. If Satan and wicked men cannot move until Christ says go, nor wound until Christ says strike, nor spoil, nor kill, until Christ says their estates, their lives are in your power, surely Christ will not speak a word to their hurt, whom he loves, nor will he ever suffer his enemies to do real damage to his friends. Besides, it may fill the soul with unspeakable joy to remember, that while a man is suffering, the will of Christ is at work.

Thirdly, Satan does very wickedly (according to his nature), in moving that Job may be afflicted. He moves in malice and in spite. God knew what his heart and intent was, and yet grants it. We may note from hence:

*That which Satan and evil men define sinfully, the Lord grants holily.*

The will of God and the will of Satan joined both in the same thing, yet they were as different as light and darkness; their ends were as different as their natures. Though it were the same thing they both willed, yet there was an infinite distance between them in willing it. The will of Satan was sinful, but the power given Satan was just. Why? Because his will was from himself, but his power was from the will of God. Satan had no power to do mischief but what God gave him, but his will to do mischief was from himself. Therefore we find that

the same spirit is said to be an evil spirit and to be a spirit from the Lord, and yet the Lord does not partake at all in the evil of the spirit, as in I Sam. 16:14: **“The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.”** An evil spirit from the Lord; how was it an evil spirit if it were from the Lord? Can the Lord send forth any evil from himself who is only good? In that he was evil, that was from his own will; but that he had power to trouble Saul, that was from the Lord. So here, Satan’s will and intent were most wicked; these were from himself. His power to afflict Job was from God, and that was good. Satan wills Job should be afflicted for his destruction; God wills it only for his trial and probation. Satan desires that God may be blasphemed; but God wills that he himself may be glorified. Satan wills it so that others in his example might be scandalized and disheartened from entering into the service of God; but God wills it that others might be strengthened and encouraged to enter into his service, beholding a man under such heavy pressures, and yet not speaking ill of God or of his ways. Satan wills it, hoping thereby Job would discover his hypocrisy, but God wills it, knowing that he would therein discover his integrity. So then, though the same thing was willed, yet there was a vast disproportion in their ends and intentions; and though the power by which Satan did afflict Job was from God, yet the evil intent with which he afflicted him was from himself. Thus we see how God without any stain or touch of evil grants this, which Satan did most wickedly desire.

It follows: **“Only upon himself thou shalt not put forth thy hand.”**

God gives a commission, but it is with a limitation; there is a restriction in it: *Only upon himself thou shalt not...*, that is, not upon his person; not his body – thou shalt not afflict him with diseases; not his soul – thou shalt not afflict him with temptations.

Hence note: *That God himself sets bounds to the afflictions of his people.* He limits out how far every affliction shall go, and how far every instrument shall prevail, as he does with the sea: **“Hither to”** (said he) **“thou shalt come and no further,**

**here thou shalt stop thy proud waves”** (Job 38:11). So he says to all the afflictions of single persons, or whole nations: hither you shall come and no further, *only upon himself thou shalt not put forth thine hand.* This limitation respects: First, the degree or measure; *thus far you shall afflict*, that is, in such a degree, to such a height, and no higher. Secondly, it respects the time; *thus far*, that is, thus long, so many years, or so many days you shall have power and no longer. God leaves not either the measure or the time, the degree or the continuance of any affliction in the hand of Satan or his adherents. We read that **“the souls under the altar cry, ‘How long Lord, how long?’”** (Rev. 6:10). They cry to God, *how long?* They knew that he only had the time in his hand; he only could tell how long, and it should be as long as he pleased. *How long Lord?* They cried not to cruel tyrants, *how long will you persecute?*—but Lord, *how long will it be before you come to revenge?* And so David: **“My time it is in thy hand”** (Ps. 31:15), speaking of his afflictions. There is no affliction but it is in the hand of God, for the continuance of it as well as for the manner of it; and as no enemy, man or devil, can make your cross greater or longer, or heavier, so no friend, man or angel, can make your cross lighter or lesser or shorter than God himself has appointed. *Only upon himself shalt thou not put forth thine hand;* thou shalt not move an inch further, not a hair’s breadth further. Our afflictions, for the matter of them, are by the will of God, as the Apostle tells us, **“While you suffer”** (said Peter) **“according to the will of God.”** Those words—**“according to the will of God”**—note not only the righteousness of suffering (that it must be in a good cause), but also the spring from whence those sufferings come (they are within the will of God, and flowing from his dispensation of things in the matter of them). God himself gives your cross length, and breadth, and thickness; he fills your cup of sorrow; he directs how many drops, to a drop, shall be put into it; you shall not have a drop more than God prescribes, and (which is more comfortable) knows will be for your good.

Secondly, observe that *Satan is boundless in his malice toward the people of God.* If God did not set him bounds, Satan would

set himself no bounds. Therefore God said to him, *Only upon himself*, etc. He had a mind to have gone further, he would have been upon Job himself, as well as upon his estate, if God had not stopped and curbed him. Therefore, the Apostle gives that assurance for the comfort of the people of God: **“God is faithful”** (said he) **“who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able”** (I Cor. 10:13). It’s as if he had said, Satan would with all his heart lay more upon you than you are able to bear; Satan would break your backs if he were let alone, but God will not suffer it. Some observe this from his name Leviathan: **“In that day the Lord with his great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan the piercing serpent”** (Isa. 27:1). Leviathan is put there for Satan and for all the instruments of Satan. Now, Leviathan signifies in the Hebrew an *augmentation*, an *addition*, or an *increase*, and Satan is so-called, because (say they) he ever desires to lay more burdens upon, to increase the afflictions, troubles and temptations of God’s people; he never thinks he has done enough against them. His thirst to work mischief is never quenched, but still he desires to do more. He would with pleasure have his commission enlarged to do more mischief in the world. Therefore God is said not to strike after their stroke: **“Hath he smitten him as he smit those that smote him?”** (Isa. 27:7). In the Hebrew, it is, *He hath not smitten him according to the stroke of those that smote him, according to their stroke*, noting that the stroke of Leviathan and the stroke of his instruments is an unmeasurable stroke, a boundless stroke; they would never give over striking. They think the wound is never deep enough, nor blood shed enough; but the Prophet said, in verse 8, **“God doth it in measure,”** so that he opposes their striking to God’s afflicting by the measure of it; God keeps his afflictions in such a bound and compass; he afflicts in measure, but Satan’s stroke and the strokes of wicked men are without all measure, that is, without all moderation. Unless God stops them, they would never make an end.

Lastly, observe how Satan is by this proved a deceiver. He intended more than he spoke of; you may see it plainly in

this, because God put a restraint on him. *Touch all that he hath*, said Satan; that referred to his possessions and outward estate, as if that had been the mind of Satan in the motion; *do but afflict him in his outward estate, I desire no more to make this trial*. Now when the Lord said, *All that he hath is in thy hand*, there he grants him the motion in the letter of it, but the Lord God saw that Satan had a further reach, when he said, *Touch all that he hath*, which words seem to extend no further than his estate. But had not God limited and restrained him, he by an indefinite grant to his motion had likewise fallen upon his person; that was the great morsel he gaped after, all this while; he would have been meddling with Job himself, else there was no need of this limitation, *Only upon himself put not forth thy hand*. Satan fingers itch to be meddling with Job, though his words called for what he had, not for himself.

**“And Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.”**

– As soon as he had leave and his commission, he is gone presently, **“He went out from the presence of the Lord.”** The word is, he went out from the face of the Lord. Now, the face of the Lord in Scripture is taken sometimes for the essential glory of God, that inaccessible majesty of God, as in Exod. 33: **“Thou canst not behold my face.”** Sometimes the face of God is put for the favor and love of God: **“Cause thy face to shine upon thy Sanctuary which is desolate, and cause thy face to shine upon thy servant”** (Dan. 9:17). So in many other places, the face of God is put for the favor of God, because as the favor and love of man is seen and discovered in his face, so there is somewhat in those dealings of God, which discover God. He is said to make his face to shine upon his people when he discovers, by any act of his, that he loves and favors them; that is the shining of his face upon them. The face interprets the heart and shows the meaning of the spirit. So, in those things which interpret somewhat of the love of God to us, God is said to make his face shine upon us. On the other side, the face of God is put sometimes for the anger and wrath of God, because anger is seen in the face too. So, in those things by which God discovers his anger, he is said to set his face against men. There is

an express place for it in this sense: **“The anger of the Lord”** (the Hebrew is, *the face of the Lord*) **“hath divided them”** (Lam. 4:16); that is, the Lord has done such things as have the character of anger upon them, that represents and holds forth nothing but the anger of the Lord unto a people. Thirdly, by the face of the Lord in Scripture, we may understand the ordinances and the worship of God, because in them and by them God is revealed, manifested and known to his people, as a man is known by his face. So in the Old Testament, coming to God in those institutions was called *appearing before God*, because in them, God had promised to manifest himself unto his people. Lastly, the face of God is put for the common and general presence of God in the world, by which he fills Heaven and Earth: **“Whether shall I go from thy presence?”** (Ps. 139:7).

Now when it is said that *Satan went forth from the face of God*, or *from the presence of God*, it cannot be understood in the first or in the second sense, for he cannot so come into the presence of God or before the face of God: before his face of glory, or before his face of favor, Satan never came nor ever shall. And as the presence of God is taken for his worship, so Satan cares not to come into his presence. Lastly, as the face of God signifies his common and general presence in the world, so Satan cannot possibly go out from his face, *Whither shall I go from thy presence?* nor men, nor devils are able to go out of the presence of the Lord in that sense, for he fills Heaven and Earth.

Then these words, *He went out from the presence of the Lord*, are spoken after the manner of men. When a servant comes to his master to receive commission to do some business and has his errand given him, then he goes out from the presence of his master and about his business. So Satan comes here upon a business to God, he makes a motion, and desires to have such power put into his hand, to do such-and-such things. The Lord grants it, and so soon as ever he had his dispatch, Satan goes out of the presence of the Lord. So that the meaning is only this, that Satan left off speaking with God, left off moving God any further at that time, and

went out to execute that which he got commission to do, as servants go out from the presence of their masters when they have received warrant or direction what to do. A servant is in expectation of his message or errand, so long as his eyes are upon his master: **“Our eyes wait upon thee O God, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters”** (Ps. 123:3). The eyes of servants wait upon the face of the master till they have received their message, and then they go out from their presence.

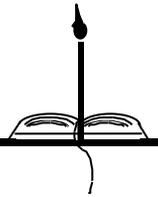
It notes the speed that Satan makes when he receives power from God to afflict or to chasten and try any of his children. He makes no stay; presently, he goes out from the presence of the Lord. Satan is speedy and active in executing any power that is committed to him against the people of God, against any particular member, or against the Church in general. As soon as ever, he has got his commission to afflict, he is gone to carry it out instantly. It is just as the good angels in Heaven are described to have wings, because as soon as ever they have received a command from God, they are upon the wing. They fly, as it were, to fulfill the will of God, and in that sense, go out of his presence. So, Satan and wicked angels are upon the wing too, in that sense. As soon as ever they have received power, they presently put it in execution.

And we may, in this, make Satan himself our pattern. As we pray that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven, in heaven by the good angels, so in this sense (I say) we may desire that we may do the will of God with as much speed as the evil angels. It is not unwarrantable to learn from Satan speedily to be doing about the will of God.

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## *New Testament Study:* *Romans 1:8-17*



A Study by Scott Sperling

### Romans 1:8-17 - Paul's Introductory Remarks

<sup>8</sup> First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. <sup>9</sup> God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you <sup>10</sup> in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

<sup>11</sup> I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— <sup>12</sup> that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. <sup>13</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

<sup>14</sup> I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. <sup>15</sup> That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Having finished his expansive greeting to the Romans, Paul now gives some introductory remarks: **"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world"** (vs. 8). Paul begins with thanks. "It is good to begin everything with blessing God, to make that the alpha and omega of every song, in everything to give thanks" [Henry, 215].

True to Paul's writing style, he is ever and always packing depth into even the simplest of statements. For instance, here in his expression of thanks, Paul refers to the intimacy he has with the Creator (by saying **"my God"**). He says **"my God"**, as if to say, "the God to whom I belong, whom I serve, and who stands to me in the relation of God, as father, friend, and source of all good" [Hodge, 24]. "The Apostle calls God 'my God' on account of God's individualizing love towards each reconciled soul. Each such soul feels God to be his, as if He belonged to no other" [Liddon, 8]. "In all our thanksgiving, it is good for us to eye God as our God; that makes every mercy sweet, when we can say of God, He is mine in covenant" [Henry, 215]. "Paul calls God his God, indicating a lively and ardent feeling of love to Him, of confidence in Him, and of liberty of access, which includes a persuasion that his thanksgivings will be agreeable to God... It is, besides, an intimation of his own character, as walking in communion with God... Such language is the privilege of every believer to use, and he will do so in proportion as the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto him" [Haldane, 36]. "Religion, for Paul, was an intensely personal relationship. God is not a ruling deity far removed from his people. The true believer views God as a close companion" [Mounce, 44].

In his brief expression of thanks, Paul also relays the importance of Jesus as a Mediator (by saying **"through Jesus Christ"**). "It is only through the mediating agency of Jesus Christ that thanksgiving or prayer can reach the Fa-

ther” [Liddon, 8]. “It is through Christ, that grace to render thanks is given, and that the blessing has been bestowed for which we give thanks. Paul thanks God as conscious of Christ’s presence and mediation” [Robinson, 43]. “All our duties and performances are pleasing to God, only through Jesus Christ; praises as well as prayers” [Henry, 215].

Paul thanks God, **“because your faith is being reported all over the world.”** Rome was the primary city of the western world, and the center of power and commerce. Naturally, Paul would thank God that the Christian faith was gaining a foothold in such an important city. Paul expresses the importance of the existence of a church in Rome, by speaking of how news of the church’s existence is being transmitted by Christians in their travels (the faith of the Romans **“is being reported all over the world”**). “Thus the faith of the believers whom God had assembled at Rome was held up as an example; and the Apostle here declares, not only for their encouragement, but also to excite them more and more to the performance of their duty, that the eyes of all the servants of God throughout the world were upon them” [Haldane, 39].

Beyond the **“thanks”** given here for their faith, the Roman church was a frequent topic in Paul’s prayers: **“God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you”** (vss. 9-10). Paul was clearly a man of prayer, praying not only for those near-and-dear to him, but also for those he had never met, such as the Romans. For Paul, prayer was not an empty exercise, but a direct appeal to God who, as the Master of the Universe, is willing and able to respond to his prayers. As James tells us: **“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective”** (James 5:16). “Believing prayer the best way to remember those we love” [Robinson, 47]. “One of the greatest kindnesses we can do our friends, and sometimes the only kindness that is in the power of our

hands, is by prayer to recommend them to the loving-kindness of God” [Henry, 215]. Through prayer, Paul demonstrated his true concern and interest in the success of the Roman church. “The apostle knows that there is no more genuine proof of sincere affection than intercession; hence he puts his prayer for them first” [Godet, 141]. “We thus learn the duty of Christians to pray for one another, and that those who believe the Gospel are as much bound to pray for its success, and the prosperity of the churches, as to labour in the work. Both prayer and labour ought to go together” [Haldane, 40].

A common subject of his prayers, with regard to the Romans, was that **“the way may be opened for me to come to you.”** Paul expands on that: **“I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles”** (vss. 11-13). As the self-proclaimed *apostle to the Gentiles*, it is not surprising that Paul desired to visit the church in the primary city of the Gentiles of that time. “Rome, the capital of such a mighty empire; Rome, to which all roads led, would naturally be a magnet for Paul. In his strategy for the universal outreach of the gospel, he must often have considered the importance of a strong Christian grouping there and the desirability of his linking up personally with it” [Dunn, 86]. “Feeling himself to be peculiarly the apostle to the Gentile world, and having already been the first agent in carrying the gospel into Europe (see Acts 16:9-10), and having established it there in important centers of population, he ever kept in view an eventual visit to the imperial city itself, in the hope of its thence permeating the whole western world” [*Pulpit*, 7].

Despite his personal desire to visit Rome, Paul feels himself to have been **“prevented”** from going there (see vs. 13),

up to that point. In fact, he **“planned many times”** to go there, but as of yet, the way was not **“opened”** for him to go there. There are times when we have a plan and desire to do some specific work for God, and yet, the way is not **“opened”** for us to complete it. We can get frustrated by this, but we must realize that God is in control, especially in matters related to serving Him. Though we may be the master of our purposes, we are not the master of our circumstances [Stifler]. God is ultimately in charge of what we do, and where we go, and when we go, especially for His purposes. “God often in mercy frustrates the wicked counsels of malicious men. But not only so; he sometimes hinders his servants from carrying out designs good in their motives. It happened now and again to Paul that, wishing to visit some country or city on an errand of mercy his way was in that particular direction hedged up, and his steps were turned elsewhere... We are taught that all our plans, even those of special evangelistic services, should be formed with submission to the wisdom and the will of God.” [Pulpit, 19].

Paul states one of the reasons he desires to visit the church in Rome: **“I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith”** (vs. 11). Paul uses a somewhat vague term here; he wants to impart **“some spiritual gift.”** The reason for Paul’s vagueness may be that, having not visited them, he did not know exactly how best to minister to them. “What gift Paul may want to share with the Romans cannot be specified until he sees what their needs may be. Whatever it is, its purpose will be to **‘strengthen’** their faith” [Moo, 60]. “Paul’s desire to preach Christ and benefit souls was a ruling passion” [Robinson, 49]. “Paul knew that there was in him by the grace of God, peculiar apostolic power, by both his presence and the ministry of the Word, to ‘impart a gift’ or spiritual blessing” [Newell, 9]. He says later: **“I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ”** (Rom. 15:29). “Enriched with the

gifts of God as he was, could the apostle help feeling the need of imparting some of them to a church so important as that of Rome?” [Godet, 144].

Paul then adds, **“...that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith”** (vs. 11). Paul, as great as an Apostle though he was, knew that he himself benefited spiritually from others, even as he himself ministered to them. He benefited from their prayers, from their edifying statements, from their kind hospitality, and even just from seeing their positive response to his own message. There is a natural *quid pro quo* that results from ministering to others, and imparting to them spiritual truths. Such work cannot help but be rewarded, by way of the imparter also receiving spiritual encouragement in seeing the effects of his work. Thus, Paul and the Romans would be **“mutually encouraged.”** Seeing positive results from one’s evangelism and Godly works is an encouragement to one’s faith, and an impetus for future evangelistic works.

Paul further states that he wants to visit the Romans **“in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles”** (vs. 13). “By *harvest* we must understand a spiritual result of apostolical toil; the Apostle thinks of himself as a husbandman (see I Cor. 3:7), who sows the seed of the Faith in the soil of human hearts, or in the great field of Heathendom. Individual souls reconciled to God in Christ are the Apostle’s *harvest*,—a harvest gathered in for Christ, yet also for himself, since he has no other object than Christ’s glory” [Liddon, 12]. **“Harvest”** refers to the product of his apostolic labors (cf. Phil. 1:22), including here probably both an increase in the number of Christians through evangelization among the Romans and a strengthening of the faith of the Roman Christians themselves” [Moo, 61]. Paul hoped that the **“harvest”** would be **“just as I have had among the other Gentiles.”** “He had travelled through a great part of Syria, of Asia, and of Greece, and everywhere he had either been the means of converting sinners or edifying believers. This was a source of

much joy to him; but after so many labors, he did not wish for repose. He desired to go to Rome to obtain fruit there also" [Haldane, 42].

Paul viewed his labor for Christ as a *debt*, or an *obligation*: **"I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome"** (vs. 14-15). The phrase **"I am obligated"** is literally *I am a debtor*, in the original Greek [UBS]. This is an appropriate way to look at service to God. We naturally look at service to God as some sort of favor that we are doing for God (as if He needs us). In truth, we who are saved by the grace of God, and the sacrifice of Christ, are greatly in God's debt to carry out the work of God, which He has prepared for us to do (see Eph. 2:10). "Paul was their debtor, not by any right that either Greeks or [non-Greeks] had acquired over him, but by the destination which God had given to his ministry towards them... All this is similar to what every Christian owes in the service of God, as far as his abilities, of whatever kind they are, and his opportunities, extend" [Haldane, 43]. "The obligation thus felt and owned by the Apostle, rested on three grounds:—on the great fundamental law of Christian benevolence and justice—**'whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them'** (Matt. 7:12). On the claim possessed by his God and Saviour on his personal gratitude, by which he was so imperatively bound to seek the advancement of His glory;—and on the official responsibility of special commission, according to which **'woe was unto him if he preached not the gospel'** (I Cor. 9:16)" [Wardlaw, 89]. "So was Paul bound by the love Christ had showed him, by the commission he held, by the revelations he had received and by the law of love to perishing men to do all he could for all classes of men, however esteemed or denominated" [Plumer, 49]. And how does Paul discharge this debt? "By carrying to them that gospel which he had received. That gospel, or the gift which that gospel reveals, has enriched himself infinitely. He takes

these riches to others; and so he endeavours to pay his debt to God by enriching the world" [Bonar, 187].

Paul enumerates those to whom he is a *debtor*: **"...both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome"** (vs. 14). I disagree with this translation. It is a bit clumsy, and also a bit misleading. Its clumsiness comes from the wording, which in English (to me, that is), sounds like Paul is calling the Romans *foolish*: **"...both to the wise and the foolish. That is why..."** In verse 15, Paul is referring to all four categories (**"Greeks/non-Greeks; wise/unwise"**) as applying to those in Rome. The translation is misleading in the use of the word **"foolish"**. I think this word would have been better translated "uneducated", or "unwise", or even "ignorant." Paul uses the term **"wise"** to refer to those who were educated in Greek philosophy and culture. Thus, the antithesis of **"wise"** for Paul, is *uneducated*, or *ignorant*. "The two terms [translated "wise" and "foolish"], do not refer to innate intellectual capacities, but rather to degrees of learning" [UBS].

Paul, in using the four terms—**"Greeks"**, **"non-Greeks"** (literally "barbarians"), **"wise"**, and unwise—is describing all inhabitants of Rome in a way that the Romans themselves classified people. "Before the Apostle's day, Greek culture had become prevalent at Rome; and the Romans associated themselves with the Hellenes, in opposition to the *barbarians*" [Liddon, 12]. "To the Jew the whole world was divided into Jews and Greeks, religious prerogative being taken as the line of demarcation. To the Greek and the Roman, the world was similarly divided into Greeks and Barbarians, civilization and culture being now the criterion of distinction" [Lightfoot in Newell, 11]. "Greeks were those that spoke the Greek language and had the Greek culture, which had covered Alexander's world-wide empire; and in which culture the Romans themselves gloried. 'Barbarians' were those not knowing Greek, and thus 'uncultured'" [Newell, 11]. And so, by saying **"Greeks"/**

**“non-Greeks” / “wise”** / unwise, Paul is not speaking of nationality (by saying **“Greek”**), but rather of degree of culture and sophistication. He is, in effect, making these classifications of people: cultured / uncultured / educated / uneducated.

All this is to say that Paul felt himself driven and obligated to preach the gospel to everyone, no matter what their level of education or sophistication may be. He would not be intimidated by the erudite nor intellectual. The gospel can stand its ground against anybody. So too now, we should not be intimidated by any level of education, sophistication or intellectualism, as we preach the gospel, or speak God’s truths. “The gospel has a claim upon the ignorant and poor because of its simplicity and its comforts. But it has just as strong a claim upon men of giant intellect and vigorous understanding, [because of everyone’s need for salvation]... Paul knew no difference of nation or of language, of creed or class, so far as the need of the gospel and the power of it were concerned. His message was that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and he knew that he would find sinners everywhere” [*Pulpit*, 26]. “Ministers and Christians are bound to do good to all *classes of men*. They have no right to except any. Differences in nation, in origin, in politics, in social ideas, can never release us from the obligation to convey to men a knowledge of God’s greatest blessing to man—a pure gospel... All men need the gospel. It suits the wants of all. We are commanded to preach it to every creature. Some slight the poor. Some avoid the rich. Some neglect the ignorant. Some are afraid of the learned. Some are offended with splendor. Some are driven away by squalid wretchedness. But in all these cases we err” [Plumer, 59]. “Yes, a Christian is debtor to the world, not to his family only, or his nation, but to the whole world. Let this thought dwell in us, and work in us; expanding and enlarging us; elevating our vision; throwing back our horizon, delivering us from all narrowheartedness on the one hand, and all false liberality on the other” [Bonar, 186]. “It is to Greek

and Jew, wise and unwise; men of all nations; the whole fallen world, that he feels himself a debtor. He seems to stand on some high eminence, and looking round on all kingdoms, and nations, and tongues, with all their uncounted millions, he says, “To all these I am debtor, and I must pay the debt” [Bonar, 185].

And the city of Rome had plenty of all of these categories of peoples, and thus, Paul looked at Rome as a fertile land, ready to be harvested to the glory of God: **“That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome”** (vs. 15). “Talk of your brave men, your great men, O world! Where in all history can you find one like Paul. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, marched with the protection of their armies to enforce their will upon men. Paul was eager to march with Christ alone to the center of this world’s greatness entrenched under Satan, with ‘the Word of the cross’” [Newell, 12].

In preaching the gospel, Paul is not intimidated by anybody, especially not the wise of the world, the intellectuals and the cultured: **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile”** (vs. 16). This statement, that Paul is not **“ashamed of the gospel”**, of course, greatly convicts us, who are so slow to speak of the magnificent gift of the sacrifice of Christ and the salvation that it brings. “It is incontestable proof of the deep depravity of man that he should be *ashamed* of the most glorious things—the gospel and the Saviour” [Plumer, 59]. “Paul is not afraid of the threats of the world; he does not avoid the offence of the Jews; nor is he ashamed in view of the contempt of the Greeks and of the wise men. And this is not only expressive of his real joy in general, but of his Christian enthusiasm, by which he could glory in the cross of Christ (see Rom. 5:2; Gal. 6:14)” [*Lange’s*, 73]. “There is many a man who would march up to the cannon’s mouth for the honour of his country—yet would not face the laugh of his companions

for the honour of his Saviour” [Chalmers, 22]. “There were some places in which the apostle might have been specially tempted to be ashamed of the gospel, or afraid of preaching it. At Jerusalem, for there the whole strength of Jewish ritualism rose against it; at Athens, for there it was confronted by the power of Grecian wisdom; at Ephesus, for there the dazzling subtleties of heathen magic rose against it; at Corinth, for there the torrent of human lust and pleasure rushed against it; at Rome, for there was the concentrated energy of earthly idolatry. Yet none of these things moved him. He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, though all that was intellectual, and eloquent, and sensual, and refined, and powerful in humanity protested against it, or mocked it as folly... But why was the apostle not ashamed of it? Had it been the feeble, childish thing which men said it was, he would have been ashamed of it. But it was not so. It was mighty; mightier than philosophy, or argument, or eloquence. It was *power*” [Bonar, 190-191]. “How sad the contrast between the false shame of Christians and the boldness and shamelessness of the world” [Lange’s, 78]. “Who would be ashamed of medicine when he is sick? Or of light when he is blind, and would like to see? Woe to those who are ashamed of the words and office of Christ!” [Hedinger, in Lange’s, 77].

The word used here—“**ashamed**”—is the same that Jesus used: “**Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels**” (Luke 9:26-27). So we see here, the danger in being “**ashamed of the gospel.**” It is a sin worth pleading forgiveness for.

As for Paul, he gives the reason that he is not ashamed of the gospel: “**...because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes...**” (vs. 16). The “**gospel**” is the revelation of God through Christ, the good news of our redemption through faith in the finished work of the sacrifice of Christ for our sin, and the good news of our future glory through Christ. As such, the gospel

is “**power**”—more than that—it is the “**power of God.**” We think of God’s power in connection with His work of Creation, and with His work of sustaining the Creation. The gospel is, every bit as that, a display of God’s power. Through the gospel, the dark forces of sin, which are at work in the world, are nullified. Through the gospel, billions of sinners, who have ruined their lives through sin, and cast themselves onto the path of destruction, are lifted up, redeemed, and elevated “from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from hell to heaven, from the kingdom of the devil to the kingdom of God,” and given eternal salvation [Martin Luther, cited in Lange’s, 77]. “This Gospel is not only powerful, but *all* powerful. There is no man, however degraded, guilty, depraved, and miserable, that it cannot save” [Brown, 7]. “It is the highest manifestation of the power of God—the highest manifestation of the compassionate love and grace of God” [Lange’s, 73]. Given the magnificence of this power of God, it is no wonder that Paul was ready and willing to confront the so-called power of Rome.

The gospel, in its power, “**brings salvation**” (vs. 16). This salvation comes from faith that Jesus died for our sins, and in doing so, paid the price of our sins so that we may be clothed with Him on the day of judgment, and enter into the glories of heaven. This is the “**salvation**” that the gospel brings. “The object of the Gospel is salvation—the salvation of men; their deliverance from the state of degradation, danger, and misery, into which sin has brought them; their deliverance from guilt or condemnation, from ignorance and error, from depravity and suffering in all their forms—complete everlasting deliverance from all these” [Brown, 7]. “The *salvation* here meant is not social or political, but that eternal *salvation* which was always associated with the promise of a Messiah... Thus *salvation* includes the whole of Christ’s redemptive work in the soul of man, which begins in justification and sanctification here, and is completed in endless happiness hereafter” [Liddon, 14]. “When man is truly delivered, he is always delivered from the depths of hell, and raised to the heights of

heaven; because he is saved from the condemnation of his conscience, and from the judgment of wrath, and is made a participant of salvation through the righteousness of faith which leads to righteousness of life.” [Lange’s, 73].

This salvation is for **“everyone who believes”** (vs. 16). “The excellence of the true doctrine of faith is its simplicity and equal adaptation to all nations and classes of men” [Plumer, 60]. This salvation is for everyone “without any distinction of age, sex, or condition—of birth or of country,—without excepting anyone, provided he be a believer in Christ” [Haldane, 47]. “This gospel is wide as the world. It embraces all kindreds, and nations, and tongues. It goes first to the Jew; it begins at Jerusalem; but it does not end there. It goes round the earth; it takes in all men, the Greek as well as the Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free. To every man this mighty gospel comes and says, ‘Believe and be saved’” [Bonar, 192].

This salvation is for everyone who **“believes.”** It comes through faith that Jesus, through His sacrifice, paid for our sins. Through this faith, and only through this faith, we stand before God clothed in the righteousness of Christ. “This power of God unto salvation is applied through faith, without which God will neither justify nor save any man, because it is the appointed means of His people’s union with Jesus Christ” [Haldane, 47].

Paul mentions that this salvation was offered **“first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”** One of the themes of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is that, even before Christ’s sacrifice, righteousness was available **“by faith”**, anticipating Christ’s sacrifice. In chapter 4 of Romans, Paul speaks in detail about how Abraham’s **“righteousness”** came by faith, citing the book of Genesis: **“Abraham believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness”** (Gen. 15:6). The righteousness in the Old Testament that came **“by faith”**, was faith that God would provide a way of righteousness for those who believe. So, the Old Testament faith anticipates Christ’s sacrifice. The righteousness that

came by faith to Old Testament believers, came through belief that forgiveness could be attained through the Temple worship and sacrifices. As we learn in the Book of Hebrews, these sacrifices were shadows that prefigured Jesus’ sacrifice; they were an imperfect means of salvation that pointed ahead to the perfect means of salvation that comes through Jesus’ sacrifice. In this way, the **“salvation”** for everyone who **“believes”** was available **“first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”** “From the days of Abraham, their great progenitor, the Jews had been highly distinguished from all the rest of the world by their many and great privileges. It was their high distinction that of them Christ came, **‘who is over all, God blessed forever.’**... While, therefore, the evangelical covenant, and consequently justification and salvation, equally regarded all believers, the Jews held the first rank, as the ancient people of God, while the other nations were strangers from the covenants of promise. The preaching of the Gospel was to be addressed to them first, and, at the beginning, to them alone (see Matt. 10:6); for, during the abode of Jesus Christ upon earth, He was the minister only of the circumcision (Rom. 15:8). **‘I am not sent,’** He says, **‘but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’** (Matt. 15:24)” [Haldane, 48]. “Salvation, as our Saviour said to the woman of Samaria, is of the Jews. Of them the Messiah came, to them the gospel was first preached, and by them preached to the Gentiles” [Hodge, 30]. “This does not mean that every Jew must be evangelized before the gospel can be presented to Gentiles. But it does mean that God, after having dealt in a special way with the Jew in Old Testament days and having followed this by sending his Son to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, could not pass by this people. To them was given the first opportunity to receive the Lord Jesus, both during his ministry (see John 1:11) and in the Christian era (see Acts 1:8; 3:26). Paul himself followed this pattern (see Acts 13:45-46; 28:25-28)” [Harrison]. “It would be false to say that salvation is intended for the Jews *in preference* to the Greeks. Paul has in view the right of *priority in time* which belonged to Israel as the result of its whole history... This right of priority rested on

the destination of Israel to become itself the apostle of the Gentiles in the midst of whom they lived. It was for Jewish believers to convert the world” [Godet, 153]. And indeed, historically we see the Christian church built up **“first to the Jew, then to the Gentile”**: the apostles were all Jewish men, and they brought the gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul next expands on the concept of **“salvation”** of **“everyone who believes”** by making clear that **“righteousness”** in God’s eyes comes through **“faith”**: **“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”** (vs. 17). *Righteousness*, simply stated, is the character attribute required by men to be acceptable to God. **Through the “gospel”—the good news that Jesus died for our sins—a means to “righteousness” is “revealed”.** **This “righteousness” is available to everyone who believes that Christ died for our sins. As Paul says, this is “the righteousness of God”—it is the one and only means provided to sinful man to become “righteous” before God, and to enter into His salvation.**

Because God Himself is perfectly righteous, He could “have come forth in righteousness and smitten with doom the whole Adamic race” [Newell, 17]. But in His love, He chose to provide a means where sinful man could meet His standard of **“righteousness”** through **“faith”** in Christ. This is the **“power”** of the Gospel: It overcomes God’s wrath. There are “two ways of becoming righteous before God: — 1. Our own perfect obedience; 2. Faith, which receives the obedience of another. The first gives a legal, the second an evangelical righteousness. The first is now found nowhere among men; the second is found only in Christ.” [Robinson, 72]. “The grand object of the Apostle is to show that man, having lost his own righteousness, and thereby fallen under condemnation, God has provided for him a righteousness—the complete fulfilment of the law in all its threatenings and all its precepts—by which, being

placed to his account through faith, he is acquitted from guilt, freed from condemnation, and entitled to the reward of eternal life” [Haldane, 49]. “This implies a righteousness impartable as well as imputable, or sanctifying as well as justifying—a righteousness inherent in God, and manifested in Christ, which, by a living union with Christ, is to become the personal property and higher nature of the believer, so that, at the final judgment, no trace of unrighteousness will remain” [Schaff, in *Lange’s*, 75].

The **“righteousness”** we receive comes through forgiveness of sins, just as Jesus said on the cross: **“Father, forgive them”** (Luke 23:34). “What this means is that when a man makes a great change such as that which the first Christians made when they embraced Christianity, he is allowed to start on his career with a clean record; his sin-stained past is not reckoned against him. The change is the great thing; it is that at which God looks. As with the Prodigal Son in the parable the breakdown of his pride and rebellion in the one cry, ‘Father, I have sinned’ is enough. The father does not wait to be gracious. He does not put him upon a long term of probation, but reinstates him at once in the full privilege of sonship... When the process of Justification is thus reduced to its simplest elements we see that there is after all nothing so very strange about it. It is simply Forgiveness, Free Forgiveness. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is a picture of it which is complete on two of its sides, as an expression of the attitude of mind required in the sinner, and of the reception accorded to him by God” [Sanday-Headlam, 36]. As we see from the parable of the Prodigal Son, this view of complete, unmerited forgiveness was taught by Jesus, the general statement of which is found in John 3:16: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”** (John 3:16). So, Paul is spelling out in doctrinal form what Jesus taught by way of discourses and parables.

Paul states that, in the gospel, the righteousness of God is **“revealed”**. The prophet Isaiah prophesied this revelation of

God's righteousness: **"Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed"** (Isa. 56:1). Though it was prophesied in the Old Testament, the **"righteousness of God"** which is available to us is **"revealed"** in the gospel, as we come to understand the work of Christ.

The NIV translation states that the righteousness **"is by faith from first to last"**. I dislike this translation, because it adds an interpretation of the simpler statement that Paul writes and, in doing so (in my opinion), unnecessarily limits what Paul is saying. A more accurate translation is found in nearly every other major version of the Bible. Paul simply states that the righteousness of God is **"from faith to faith"** (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NET Bible, ESV). This is a literal translation of what Paul wrote. The NIV limits the interpretation of this passage to mean **"faith from first to last"**, but there is in no way consensus among scholars that that is what Paul is saying. In fact, in most commentaries on this Epistle, there are many words written about what exactly **"from faith to faith"** means. The phrase, **"from faith to faith,"** "has been the subject of endless discussion. Many of the Fathers explained the double reference as meaning that God's righteousness was 'from the faith in the law to the faith in the gospel.' Augustine gave several explanations, among them that Paul wished to include both the faith of the preacher and the faith of the hearer. Calvin and others see a reference to the growth of faith in the individual, enabling the Christian to appreciate and enjoy more and more the righteousness of God. Barth argues that the first 'faith' refers to God's faithfulness, and the second the faith of the individual person. Some commentators compare Rom. 3:22, concluding that Paul wants to stress both that righteousness is received by faith and is for all who believe, or (on another reading of Rom. 3:22) that Paul attributes our righteousness both to Christ's faithfulness (**"on the basis of faith"**) and to our own believing. Others find a thrust against Judaism: righteousness is both received by faith and has faith, not

works, as its goal. Probably, however, in light of the only clear NT parallel to the construction, the combination is rhetorical and is intended to emphasize that faith and 'nothing but faith' can put us into right relationship with God." [Moo, 76]. "The idea of faith appears here in accordance with the comprehensive idea of righteousness, and therefore as a hearty, trustful self-surrender (to rest and lean upon), which includes both knowledge and belief, assent and surrender, appropriation and application" [*Lange's*, 76]. "The phrase, *from faith to faith*, expresses pure faith... Faith, says Paul, continues to be faith; faith is all in all" [Bengel, 16]. The phrase **"from faith to faith"** "indicates—1. The exclusiveness of faith as the means of obtaining it. Faith all in all in a believer's justification. Works not in the account. Not from faith to works, but from faith to faith (see Rom. 3:22,28). The doctrine of justification by faith is thus emphatically noted. 2. The growth of faith. From one degree of faith to another. Advance made in the clearness, simplicity, and strength of faith. 3. The many-sidedness of faith. From one kind of faith to another. From faith which saves, to faith for still further blessings. From faith which justifies, to faith which sanctifies. From a faith of the intellect, to a faith of the heart" [Robinson, 71]. "From the faith of dependence upon God, and dealing with him immediately, as Adam before the fall, to the faith of dependence upon a Mediator, and so dealing with God; so others. From the first faith, by which we are put into a justified state, to after faith, by which we live, and are continued in that state... There is faith justifying us; life by faith; there is faith maintaining us; and so there is a righteousness from faith to faith: Faith is all in all, both in the beginning and progress of a Christian life. It is not from faith to works, as if faith put us into a justified status, and then works preserved and maintained us in it: but it is all along from faith to faith. As II Cor. 3:18 said **'from glory to glory'**: It is increasing, continuing, persevering faith; faith pressing forward, and getting ground of unbelief" [Henry, 216].

I believe that Paul, at times, is purposely vague. His vagueness in this case encourages us to meditate on the vast, multifarious, multi-dimensional connection between **“faith”** and righteousness. Any or all of the interpretations of this phrase mentioned above could be valid, and by being forced to ponder this phrase, we are better for it, and we have a deeper understanding of **“faith’s”** connection to **“righteousness”** through the gospel.

Paul ends his thought here by citing an Old Testament verse: **“...just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’”** (vs. 17). It is a major theme in the Epistle to the Romans that the connection between **“faith”** and **“righteousness”** is an Old Testament concept, whose exact meaning is made clear through the gospel. So Paul here is introducing that theme by citing Habakkuk 2:4. “The Old Testament is the Word of God, and is the foundation of the New” [Robinson, 71].

The actual full passage in the book of Habakkuk, from verses 2 through 20, has the Lord Himself speaking most immediately about the deliverance (i.e., salvation) of the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity, but the passage itself hints that there is a deeper meaning which will be revealed later. The Lord says in verses 2 and 3: **“Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false”** (Hab. 2:2-3). The Lord goes on: **“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith”** (Hab. 2:4, ESV). “The passage itself is quoted from the prophecies of Habakkuk, and is generally supposed to relate, in its primary sense, to the deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, which was a type of the deliverance obtained by the Gospel. Through faith in the Divine promises the first was obtained, and the second in like manner is obtained through faith. But in whatever sense the Prophet used these words, the Apostle, speaking by the same Spirit, assigns to them their just and legitimate extension. They are

true in respect to an earthly and temporal deliverance, and are equally true in respect to a spiritual deliverance... The great temptation [in interpreting this passage] is the fact that such prophecies generally, as they lie in the Old Testament, are obviously applied to temporal events, whereas, in the New, they are applied to the affairs of Christ and His kingdom. But this is a difficulty to none who understand the nature of the Old Testament dispensation... Not only the ceremonies, but the personages, facts, and whole history of the Jewish people, have a letter and a spirit, without the knowledge of which they cannot be understood either in their true sense, or in a sense at all worthy of God. That the Old Testament predictions, then, should primarily refer to temporal events in the Jewish history, and in a secondary but more important view, to the Messiah and the Gospel, is quite in accordance with what is taught us everywhere by the New Testament. Instead of creating a difficulty, this peculiarity is entirely consistent with the prominent features of Christianity, and calls for fresh admiration of the Divine wisdom. It is one of those characteristics which prove the Bible to be God's own book” [Haldane, 50-51].

This simple citation—**“The righteous will live by faith”**—can be seen as a summary of the whole gospel message. Throughout history, this simple statement has been remarkably influential. Both Augustine and Martin Luther changed their whole philosophies and outlooks on life because of this verse. As such, this single verse was a catalyst that brought about the Protestant Reformation, and changed the course of both religious and secular world history. The historian Merle d’Aubigne wrote of the effect that these words had on Martin Luther: “It was especially in meditating upon [the Epistle to the Romans] that the light of truth entered [Martin Luther’s] heart. In the retirement of his tranquil cell, he devoted whole hours to the study of the divine word, with St. Paul’s Epistle open before him. One day having proceeded as far as the 17th verse of the first chapter, he there read this passage of the prophet Habakkuk: **‘The just shall live by faith.’** The precept strikes him. There is then for the just another life than

that possessed by the rest of men; and this life is the fruit of faith. This word, which he receives into his heart as if God himself had planted it there, discloses to him the mystery of the Christian life, and increases that life in his soul. In the midst of his struggles in after life, the words often recurred to him, **“The just shall live by faith.”** [Merle d’Aubigne, *History of the Great Reformation*, vol. I, pg. 160].

True to the typical depth of Paul’s writings, there is a bit of an ambiguity in the use of the word **“live”** in the statement, **“The righteous will live by faith”**. **“Live”** can refer to eternal life of salvation, or **“live”** can refer to existence in everyday life. I think this is a purposeful ambiguity, and that both senses are true: 1. The righteous will gain eternal life **“by faith”**; 2. The righteous will carry out their day-to-day lives continually walking **“by faith.”** “The salvation Paul spoke of is more than forgiveness of sin. It includes the full scope of deliverance from the results of Adam’s sin. It involves justification (being set right with God), sanctification (growth in holiness), and glorification (the ultimate transformation into the likeness of Christ; cf. 1 John 3:2)” [Mounce, 49]. As mentioned above, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, and in the teaching of John 3:16, we learn of the *initial stage* of the Christian faith, the *entrance* to the life of righteousness lived by faith. Paul in this great Epistle to the Romans, continues on from there, and describes the life of faith in day-to-day living, including our mystical union with the risen Christ in our spirit, while all the while we continue to battle with the desires of the flesh (see ch. 6), with all its struggles and pitfalls (see ch. 7), until the life of faith ends in final glory (see ch. 8) [from Sanday-Headlam, 37].

We have mentioned that **“faith”** entails believing that Jesus Christ, through His sacrifice, paid the price for our sins. Through **“faith”** in this gift of **“righteousness”** from God, we shall **“live”**, in the first sense mentioned above, that is, have eternal life. But for Paul, this same **“faith”** has manifestations in the second meaning of **“live”** mentioned above, that is, our day-to-day existence. How so? “Here let

it be noted that such faith is not, in Paul’s mind, a bare holding of either the Atoning Work of Christ or any other truths of revelation for true: it is a loving and soul-constraining self-surrender to them, so that they are grasped by the *moral* no less than by the *intellectual* man... With Paul, justifying faith is always *practically* inseparable from hope and love... It may be parted from them in our ideas; but it is bound up with them in the living fact... Paul says that if he had all faith so that he could remove mountains, and had not charity, he is nothing.” [Liddon, 20].

One could go on, and on, dissecting and studying these two verses, vs. 16-17. The Epistle to the Romans, in the next dozen or so chapters, can be seen as Paul expanding on what he has said in these two verses. In effect, in these two brief verses, Paul has basically jam-packed the whole of the Christian religion. They contain the basic theme of the entire Bible, and even life itself.

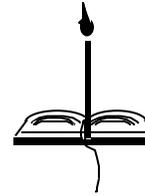
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## *A Topical Study: Communion with God*

*[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. 2

**"...On Thee do I wait all the day."**

(Psalm 25:5).

**Second.** It speaks a constant attendance upon him in a way of duty. And so we understand the day literally. It was David's practice to wait upon God all the day: it signifies both every day, and all the day long; it is the same with that command, **"Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."** (Prov. 23:17).

*Doctrine:* It is not enough for us to begin every day with God, but on him we must wait every day, and all the day long.

For the opening of this, I must show, (1.) What it is to wait upon God; and, (2.) That we must do this every day, and all the day long.

*For the First,* Let us inquire, what it is to wait on God. You have heard how much it is our duty in the morning to speak to him in solemn prayer. But have we then done with him for all day? No: we must still be waiting on him, as one to whom we stand very nearly related, and very strongly obliged. To wait on God, is to live a life of desire towards him, delight in him, dependence on him, and devotedness to him.

1. It is to live a life of desire towards God; to wait on him as the beggar waits on his benefactor, with earnest desire to

receive supplies from him; as the sick and sore in Bethesda's pool waited for the stirring of the water, and attended in the porches with desire to be helped in and healed. When the prophet had said, "**Lord, in the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee,**" he explained himself thus in the next words, "**The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee; and with my soul have I desired thee**" (Isa. 26:8-9). Our desire must be not only towards the good things that God gives, but towards God himself: his favour and love, the manifestation of his name to us, and the influences of his grace upon us. Then we wait on God, when our souls pant after him and his favour, when we thirst for God, for the living God. *O that I may behold the beauty of the Lord! O that I may taste his goodness! O that I may bear his image, and be entirely conformed to his will! For there is none in heaven or earth that I can desire in comparison of him. O that I may know him more, and love him better, and be brought nearer to him, and made fitter for him.* Thus, upon the wings of holy desire, should our souls be still soaring upwards towards God, still pressing forward, forward towards heaven.

We must not only pray solemnly in the morning, but that desire, which is the life and soul of prayer, like the fire upon the altar, must be kept continually burning, ready for the sacrifices that are to be offered upon it. The bent and bias of the soul, in all its motions, must be towards God, the serving of him in all we do, and the enjoying of him in all we have. And this is principally intended in the commands given us to pray always, to pray without ceasing, to continue in prayer. Even when we are not making actual addresses to God, yet we must have habitual inclinations towards him; as a man in health, though he is not always eating, yet hath always a disposition in him towards the nourishment and delights of the body. Thus must we be always waiting on God, as our chief good, and moving towards him.

2. It is to live a life of delight in God, as the lover waits on his beloved. Desire is love in motion, as a bird upon the wing; delight is love at rest, as a bird upon the nest; now,

though our desire must still be so towards God, as that we must be wishing for more of God, yet our delight must be so in God, as that we must never wish for more than God. Believing him to be a God all-sufficient, in him we must be entirely satisfied; let him be mine, and I have enough. Is it our delight to love God? Is it a pleasure to us to think that there is a God? That he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be? That he is our God by creation, to dispose of us as he pleaseth? Our God in covenant, to dispose of all for the best to us? This is waiting on our God, always looking up to him with pleasure.

Something or other the soul has that it values itself by, something or other that it reposes itself in; and what is it? God or the world? What is it that we pride ourselves in? Which we make the matter of our boasting? It is the character of worldly people, that they boast themselves in the abundance of their riches (see Psalm 49:6), and of their own might, and the power of their own hands, which they think has gotten them this wealth. It is the character of godly people, that they boast all the day long, (see Psalm 44:8). To wait on God, is having our eye always upon him with a secret complacency, as men have on that which is their glory, and which they glory in.

What is it that we please ourselves with, which we embrace with the greatest satisfaction, in the bosom of which we lay our heads, and in having which we hug ourselves, as having all we would have. The worldly man, when his barns are full of corn, saith, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry"—the godly man can never say so until he finds his heart full of God, and Christ, and grace; and then, return unto thy rest, O my soul, here repose thyself. The gracious soul dwells in God, is at home in him, and there dwells at ease, is in him perpetually pleased; and whatever he meets with in the world to make him uneasy, he finds enough in God to balance it.

3. It is to live a life of dependence on God, as the child waits on his father whom he has confidence in, and on whom he casts all his care. To wait on God, is to expect all good to come to us from him, as the worker of all good for us, and in

us, the giver of all good to us, and the protector of us from all evil. Thus David explains himself, **“My soul, wait thou only upon God”** (Ps. 42:5), and continue still to do so; **“for my expectation is from him.”** I look not to any other for the good I need; for I know that every creature is that to me, and no more, than he makes it to be, and from him every man’s judgment proceeds. Shall we lift up our eyes to the hills? Doth our help come from thence? Doth the dew that waters the valleys come no further than from the tops of the hills? Shall we go higher and lift up our eyes to the heavens, to the clouds? Can they of themselves give rain? No, if God hear not the heavens, they hear not the earth; we must therefore look above the hills, above the heavens; for all our help cometh from the Lord. It was the acknowledgment of a king, and no good one neither, if the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee, out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press.

And our expectations from God, as far as they are guided by, and grounded upon, the word which he hath spoken, ought to be humbly confident, and with a full assurance of faith. We must know and be sure, that no word of God shall fall to the ground, that the expectation of the poor shall not perish. Worldly people say to their gold, thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, thou art my confidence; and the rich man’s wealth is his strong city; but God is the only refuge and portion of the godly man here in the land of the living; it is to him only that he saith, and he saith it with a holy boldness, thou art my hope and my confidence. The eyes of all things wait on him, for he is good to all; but the eyes of his saints especially, for he is in a peculiar manner good to Israel, good to them. They know his name, and therefore will trust and triumph in him, as those that know they shall not be made ashamed of their hope.

4. It is to live a life of devotedness to God, as the servant waits on his master, ready to observe his will, and to do his work, and in everything to consult his honour and interest. To wait on God, is entirely and unreservedly to refer our-

selves to his wise and holy directions and disposals, and cheerfully to acquiesce in them, and comply with them. The servant that waits on his master chooseth not his own way, but follows his master step by step. Thus must we wait on God, as those that have no will of our own, but what is wholly resolved into his, and must therefore study to accommodate ourselves to his. It is the character of the redeemed of the Lord, that they follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes, with an implicit faith and obedience. As the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, and the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress, so must our eyes wait on the Lord, to do what he appoints us, to take what he allots us. Father, thy will be done; Master, thy will be done.

The servant waits on his master, not only to do him service, but to do him honour; and thus must we wait on God, that we may be to him for a name and for a praise. His glory must be our ultimate end, to which we, and all we are, have, and can do, must be dedicated. We must wear his livery, attend in his courts, and follow his motions as his servants for this end, that he may in all things be glorified.

To wait on God, is to make his will our rule.

1. To make the will of his precepts the rule of our practice, and to do every duty with an eye to that. We must wait on him to receive his commands, with a resolution to comply with them, how much soever they may contradict our corrupt inclinations or secular interests. We must wait on him, as the holy angels do, that always behold the face of their Father; as those that are at his beck, and are ready to go upon the least intimation of his will, though but by a wink of his eye, wherever he sends them. Thus must we do the will of God, as the angels do it that are in heaven, those ministers of his that do his pleasure, and are always about his throne in order to it; never out of the way.

David here prays, that God would show him his way, and lead him, and teach him, and keep him, and forward him in the way of his duty; and so the text comes in as a plea to enforce that petition; **“for on thee do I wait all the day,”** ready to

receive the law from thy mouth, and in everything to observe thine orders. And then it intimates this, that those, and those only, can expect to be taught of God, who are ready and willing to do as they are taught. If any man will do his will, be stedfastly resolved, in the strength of his grace, to comply with it, he shall know what his will is. David prays, **“Lord, give me understanding;”** and then promiseth himself, I shall keep thy law, yea, I shall observe it, as the servant that waits on his master (see Ps. 119:34). They that go up to the house of the Lord, with an expectation that he will teach them his ways, it must be with a humble resolution that they will walk in his paths (see Isa. 2:3). Lord, let the pillar of cloud and fire go before me; for I am determined, with full purpose of heart, to follow it, and thus to wait on my God all the day.

2. To make the will of his Providence the rule of our patience, and to bear every affliction with an eye to that. We are sure it is God that performeth all things for us; and he performeth the thing that is appointed for us; we are sure that all is well that God doth, and shall be made to work for good to all that love him; and in order to that, we ought to acquiesce in, and accommodate ourselves to, the whole will of God. To wait on the Lord, is to say, it is the Lord, let him do with me as seemeth good to him; because nothing seemeth good to him but what is really good; and so we shall see when God’s work appears in a full light. It is to say, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt;” for should it be according to my mind? It is to bring our mind to our condition in everything, so as to keep that calm and easy, whatever happens to make us uneasy.

And we must therefore bear the affliction, whatever it is, because it is the will of God; it is what he has allotted us, who doth all according to the council of his own will. This is Christian patience: I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, not because it was to no purpose to complain, but because thou didst it, and therefore I had no reason to complain. And this will reconcile us to every affliction, one as well as another,

because whatever it is, it is the will of God; and in compliance with that, we must not only be silent because of the sovereignty of his will, but we must be satisfied, because of the wisdom and goodness of it. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker. Whatever the disposals of God’s providence may be concerning those that wait on him, we may be sure, that as he doth them no wrong, so he means them no hurt: Nay, they may say as the Psalmist did, even then when he was plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, however it be, yet God is good; and therefore, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, yet will I wait on him.

I might open this duty, of waiting on God, by other scripture expressions which speak the same thing, and are as this, comprehensive of a great part of that homage which we are bound to pay to him, and that communion which it is our interest to keep up with him. Truly thus our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

It is to set God always before us (see Psalm 16:8). To look upon him as one always near us, always at our right hand, and who has his eye upon us, wherever we are, and whatever we are doing; nay, as one in whom we live, and move, and have our being, with whom we have to do, and to whom we are accountable. This is pressed upon us as the great principle of gospel obedience; “walk before me, and be thou upright.” Herein consists that uprightness which is our evangelical perfection, in walking at all times as before God, and studying to approve ourselves to him.

It is to have our eyes ever towards the Lord, as it follows here (see Psalm 25:15). Though we cannot see him by reason of our present distance and darkness, yet we must look towards him, towards the place where his honour dwells; as those that desire the knowledge of him and his will, and direct all to his honour as the mark we aim at, labouring in this, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. To wait on him, is to follow him with our eye in all those things wherein he is pleased to manifest himself, and to admit the discoveries of his being and perfections.

It is to acknowledge God in all our ways (see Prov. 3:6); in all the actions of life, and in all the affairs of life, we must walk in his hand, and set ourselves in the way of his steps. In all our undertakings we must wait upon him for direction and success, and by faith and prayer commit our way to him to undertake for us; and him we must take with us wherever we go: "If thy presence go not up with us, carry us not up hence." In all our comforts we must see his hand giving them out to us; and in all our crosses we must see the same hand laying them upon us—that we may learn to receive both good and evil, and to bless the name of the Lord both when he gives and when he takes.

It is to follow the Lord fully, as Caleb did (see Num. 14:24). It is to follow after the Lord, so the word is; to have respect to all his commandments, and to study to stand complete in his whole will. Wherever God leads us, and goes before us, we must be followers of him as dear children, must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, and take him for our guide whithersoever we go.

This is to wait on God, and those that do so may cheerfully wait for him; for he will without fail appear in due time to their joy; and that word of Solomon shall be made good to them, "**he that waits on his master shall be honoured**" (Prov. 27:18), for Christ hath said, where I am, there shall also my servant be.

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

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## *A Study in Wisdom: Proverbs 4*

A Study by Scott Sperling

### Proverbs 4:1-9 – A Father's Instruction

- <sup>1</sup> Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction;  
pay attention and gain understanding.
- <sup>2</sup> I give you sound learning,  
so do not forsake my teaching.
- <sup>3</sup> For I too was a son to my father,  
still tender, and cherished by my mother.
- <sup>4</sup> Then he taught me, and he said to me,  
"Take hold of my words with all your heart;  
keep my commands, and you will live.
- <sup>5</sup> Get wisdom, get understanding;  
do not forget my words or turn away from them.
- <sup>6</sup> Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;  
love her, and she will watch over you.
- <sup>7</sup> The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.  
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
- <sup>8</sup> Cherish her, and she will exalt you;  
embrace her, and she will honor you.
- <sup>9</sup> She will give you a garland to grace your head  
and present you with a glorious crown."

In this chapter, again, we have Solomon addressing his son concerning the value of wisdom. Solomon here covers similar material as in the previous chapters, though with subtle variations and emphases. We may question why there are similarities between the teaching here, and in the previous chapters. The answer to this can be found in the stubbornness of the human mind in allowing such teachings to sink in and become a part of one's existence, such that they are reflected in the actions we take and decisions we make in life. We need this in-

struction drilled into our heads. “When the things of God are to be taught, precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, not only because the things themselves are of great worth and weight, but because men’s minds, at the best, are unapt to admit them and commonly prejudiced against them; and therefore Solomon, in this chapter, with a great variety of expression and a pleasant powerful flood of divine eloquence, inculcates the same things that he had pressed upon us in the foregoing chapters” [Henry, 809]. “So drowsy are we all that we need our attention to be continually aroused” [JFB, 423]. “A mind like Solomon’s, **‘large even as the sand that is on the seashore’** (see I Kings 4:29), might readily have made every sentence a fresh discovery of his knowledge. But more suitable to our sluggish and forgetful heart is **‘the word of the LORD, precept upon precept’** (see Isa. 28:13)” [Bridges, 43-44]. There are three sections in this chapter, each beginning with a direct address by Solomon to, in his words, **“my son.”**

The chapter begins: **“Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching”** (vss. 1-2). It is an obligation for parents to teach their children godly wisdom. Such an education is an act of love. We in our worldliness think that buying gifts and giving our kids a comfortable life is the best way to show our love for them. No. Far better it is to educate them in the ways of the Lord, to give them a clear understanding of right and wrong, and to lead them to an appreciation of the sacrifice that Jesus made for them. The poorest parent can give their children these valuable gifts. “Training discipline, not foolish indulgence, is the truest evidence of affection to our *tender and beloved ones*” [Bridges, 45]. “It is the truest mark of love on the part of the parent to teach the child in the ways of heavenly wisdom; and to leave a child untaught is virtually to act as if you hated him” [JFB, 423]. “If my infancy is spent among those whose main thought is ‘to get’ riches, I acquire imperceptibly the love of money.... But if in infancy I live

with those whose love is wholly centred upon Religion, who cherish her with unaffected ardour and respond to her claims with kindling emotion, I may in after life be seduced from her holy ways for awhile, but I am always haunted by the feeling that I have left my first love, I am restless and uneasy until I can win back that ‘old bride-look of earlier days.’... The first thing, then, is to give our children an atmosphere to grow up in; to cultivate their affections, and set their hearts on the things eternal; to make them associate the ideas of wealth and honour, of beauty and glory, not with material possessions, but with the treasures and rewards of Wisdom” [Horton, 55].

Such an education is best given by the parents themselves, not surrogates such as Sunday-school teachers (much as their roles are valuable). “The father (and mother), not the professional teacher or the pastor or government official, has the most profound responsibility and opportunity to lead a young person in the right way. Only a parent can implore the young person to do what is right with the depth of love and concern displayed here” [Garrett, 88]. “God has no kinder gift to give us than a hallowed home, the memory of lessons from the lips of father and mother, the early impressions of virtue and wisdom, the sacred streams which rise from that fountainhead, and that alone, and run freshening and singing and broadening all through our lives” [Horton, 53].

It is best that this education begin early in the child’s life. “The branch is easily bent when it is young and tender” [Bridges, 810]. “Early instruction will be retained, recalled, and reproduced” [*Pulpit*, 99]. “There is always a measure of identification between father and son, so that a son understands and thinks ‘when I grow up, that’s what I will be.’ The father-status already exists as a potentiality in the son” [Waltke, 381]. “Wisdom doth live with children round her knees” [the poet Wordsworth].

As it is the obligation for the parent to teach, so it is the obligation for the child to listen, as Solomon says: **“Listen, my sons...; pay attention...”** “The obligation is reciprocal. It

lies on parents to *teach*; it lies on children to *learn*” [Wardlaw, 127].

And though best taught to youth, all of us benefit from learning or re-learning, as the case may be, godly truths. Though we may be grown, ’tis not an excuse to ignore this teaching. “Let all that would receive instruction come with the disposition of children, though they be grown persons. Let all prejudices be laid aside, and the mind be as white paper. Let them be dutiful, tractable, and self-diffident, and take the word as the word of a father, which comes both with authority and with affection” [Henry, 810]

Solomon speaks personally of receiving this same instruction from his father David: **“For I too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. Then he taught me, and he said to me, ‘Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live’”** (vss. 3-4). The idea that the instruction is passed down, generation after generation, strengthens the teaching. “The writer is fortifying and strengthening his instruction by the authority of his father, showing that what he was laying before others he had had placed before him” [*Pulpit*, 84]. “By recalling his own upbringing and citing his father, the teacher both identifies with the present struggles in his son’s life and reinforces the paternal dignity of his words” [Garrett, 89]. “When the father refers to and quotes his father, he signals that the authority of his teaching rests not primarily on his life experience or position in the family but on the generations before him. The father passes on information, beliefs, and customs that the community has tested and reclaimed time and again” [Yoder, 76]. “This linking of three generations demonstrates how a love of the best things will be transmitted mainly by personal influence, along the channels of affection” [Kidner, 63]. “Divine wisdom is the best of family heirlooms; yet, divine wisdom will not remain as a family heirloom without special care in retaining and transmitting it... Piety should be a family tradition” [*Pulpit*, 92]. “Families are reckoned honourable, when a

rich estate passes from father to son, through many generations; but it is a far more lovely sight, to behold the same faith dwelling in a rising family, that dwelt in their mother, and father, and remote ancestor” [Lawson, 77].

Solomon repeats his father’s teaching: **“Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them”** (vs. 5). Literally, Solomon says (expressing the value of wisdom), *buy* wisdom, *buy* understanding [Zockler, 71]. In another expression of wisdom’s value, Solomon pictures wisdom as a protecting spouse: **“Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you”** (vs. 6).

Solomon encourages persistence: **“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding”** (vs. 7). The instruction is clear: **“Get wisdom, get understanding,... Get wisdom, get understanding”** (vss. 5, 7). “You begin to be wise when you begin to love and seek wisdom” [JFB, 423].

Solomon relates the value of wisdom in no uncertain terms: **“Though it cost all you have, get understanding”** (vs. 7). “Whatever he treasured in his heart as more precious than wisdom and in which he invested his time, energy, and resources must be given up to get wisdom” [Waltke, 387]. “A miser will never forget where his treasure lies, and he will lose his life sooner than be robbed of his precious store. The love of wisdom will in like manner induce us to lay it up in our hearts, and to keep fast hold of it in defiance of every danger... Setting so high a value upon it himself, it was his great desire that his beloved son should get it also. And those parents who are possessed of David’s spirit, would rather see their children wise unto salvation, than rich and great in the world. Evil parents are not so bad as to refuse bread and fishes to their children. Good parents use every means to make them sharers of that wisdom, which they have found to be their own happiness” [Lawson, 79].

Solomon continues with the picture of wisdom as a treasured loved-one: **“Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown”** (vss. 8-9). Youth of a certain age can identify with this. Our closeness, and intimacy (if you will), with wisdom should rival that as with a man or woman whom we **“cherish”**. Such an intimacy with Wisdom brings benefits: **“She will exalt you... she will honor you... She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown.”** With wisdom, naturally comes honor, and even exaltation. Do you want to “get ahead in life”? Practice godly wisdom.

### Proverbs 4:10-19 – Walking in Wisdom

- <sup>10</sup> Listen, my son, accept what I say,  
and the years of your life will be many.
- <sup>11</sup> I instruct you in the way of wisdom  
and lead you along straight paths.
- <sup>12</sup> When you walk, your steps will not be hampered;  
when you run, you will not stumble.
- <sup>13</sup> Hold on to instruction, do not let it go;  
guard it well, for it is your life.
- <sup>14</sup> Do not set foot on the path of the wicked  
or walk in the way of evildoers.
- <sup>15</sup> Avoid it, do not travel on it;  
turn from it and go on your way.
- <sup>16</sup> For they cannot rest until they do evil;  
they are robbed of sleep  
till they make someone stumble.
- <sup>17</sup> They eat the bread of wickedness  
and drink the wine of violence.
- <sup>18</sup> The path of the righteous is like the morning sun,  
shining ever brighter till the full light of day.
- <sup>19</sup> But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;  
they do not know what makes them stumble.

Solomon’s common phrase, **“Listen, my son,...”** signals the beginning of a new section. In this section, Solomon speaks of walking through life in the way of Wisdom. He begins: **“Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths”** (vss. 10-11). He mentions first that the way of Wisdom will, in general, lead to long life, as **“the years of your life will be many.”** Certainly, we know of the health benefits of living wisely, not only of, say, remaining sober and drug-free, but also the health benefits of living a simple godly life, depending on God, and avoiding the stress that profligate living brings. Sin inevitably brings consequences, many of them unhealthy, many of them dangerous.

Solomon, as the advising father, teaches not just with words, but with actions. He says, **“I instruct you...”** and **“I lead you...”** “Teaching and leading are closely allied, but not identical. It is possible, and common, to have the first in large measure, where the second is wanting. They are two elements which together make up a whole. With both, education in a family will go prosperously on: where one is wanting, it will be halting and ineffectual... It is easier to tell another the right way, than to walk in it yourself... Great is the effect when parents consistently and steadfastly go before their children, giving them a daily example of their daily precepts” [Arnot, 116].

The instruction is in the **“way of wisdom”**, and the leading is **“along the straight paths.”** When traveling, we seek the **“straight paths”**: the paths with fewest obstacles; the paths that get us safely and quickly to our destination.

Solomon speaks of the benefits of walking through life *along the straight path*. **“When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble”** (vs. 12). *Steps* can be seen as steps through life, a metaphor for each decision [Waltke, 393]. Wisdom contributes to correct decisions, thus limiting being **“hampered.”** We normally **“walk”** through life, but at times, we **“run”**, in times of urgencies and

emergencies, times when prompt and decisive action is called for. Through Wisdom, in these times, we **“will not stumble.”**

Given these benefits of wisdom, Solomon advises to grasp and guard it: **“Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life”** (vs. 13). “Having received the heavenly doctrine with joy, do not let it go, through impatience or weariness, or through carelessness” [JFB, 424]. “Truths received only in the understanding, not becoming the daily nourishment of the soul, never fix on the heart. *The fast hold of instruction* is by a personal living faith; including an intense interest, and persevering pursuit” [Bridges, 46]. Solomon expresses clearly the great value of living wisely: **“...for it is your life.”**

Solomon makes clear his advice to avoid the way of the wicked: **“Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way”** (vss. 14-15). His rapid exhortations add urgency to his commands: **“Do not set... [Do not] walk... Avoid it... Do not travel... Turn from it... Go on.”** Solomon gives “six different ways of saying ‘Don’t go there’” [Koptak, 146]. As Solomon is speaking to his son, he knows well the importance of this instruction to the young. “All who have, or ever have had, the charge of the young, must be aware of the natural predisposition to evil. Account for it as you will, the fact is beyond question, established by the recorded experience of all the thousands of years of the world’s history. Were the original bent of our nature to good, the difficulty would be to persuade to evil” [Wardlaw, 138].

The essence of this teaching is the total avoidance of evil: no dabbling allowed, not even one step on the **“path of the wicked.”** “It is far more easy to shun the occasion of sin, than the sin when the occasion presents it; to resist the beginnings, than the progress, of sin. There must, therefore, be no tampering with it; no trial of strength, to see how far our resolutions will keep us... To pretend to dread sin with-

out fearing temptation, is self-delusion” [Bridges, 48]. Though we think we are immune to sin, we are easily seduced by it. “Of little sins we are not afraid, but say within ourselves, ‘These sins are attended with little danger, are they not little ones? Surely our souls shall not die though we fall into them.’ We are as little afraid of great sins, because we think them so shocking that we cannot fall into them. Frequently does it happen, that labouring under such misapprehensions as these, men lay down their heads upon the lap of temptation, and awake like Samson in the hands of their enemies” [Lawson, 85-86]. “Do not delay a moment, or dally with temptation, but flee the least occasions of sin with the promptness with which Joseph fled from Potiphar’s wife (see Gen. 39:10)” [JFB, 424].

Solomon next describes the mindset and life-style of the evildoers: **“For they cannot rest until they do evil; they are robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble. They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence”** (vss. 16-17). “They are so addicted to evil that it has become their sedative by night and their food and drink by day. Whereas the uncommitted youth are complacent toward evil (see 1:20-33), evil has now taken over, triumphed, and destroyed those who did not avoid it” [Waltke, 391]. “There is more than irony in this picture of upside-down morality, where wickedness has become meat and drink and even duty. It is a warning against setting foot on a path which one might think adventurous and diverting, for it can lead as far as this. The Bible does not hide the fact that one can become as zealous for evil as for good” [Kidner, 64]. The irony is that evildoers consider themselves *free*, as they live with no bounds, but they are, in truth, slaves to sin, **“robbed of sleep”**, not content without the **“bread of wickedness”** and the **“wine of violence.”** “They are very slaves, for they are in bondage to impetuous passions, which prescribe service hard and impossible to be performed” [Lawson, 82].

Even more sadly, evildoers are not content to sin by themselves. They are **“robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble”** (vs. 16). They get satisfaction from corrupting oth-

ers. They get no rest until they have entrapped others in the same enslaving web.

This picture of the sinful life should teach us “how zealous we ought to be of good works. Why should the servants of the best Master labour in his service with less fidelity and resolution than those that serve the devil, and work for his poor wages? If we have David’s spirit, we will not give sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids, till we have done the work of the day for God. The faithful followers of Christ will count it their meat and their drink to do the will of their heavenly Father” [Lawson, 85].

Solomon gives a concluding comparison: **“The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble”** (vss. 18-19). The contrast between living godly, and the way of the wicked is as great as the **“full light of day”** and **“deep darkness.”** God is light; sin is darkness. *“Light is emblematic of knowledge, holiness, and joy... Darkness is, as an image, the opposite of light. It represents ignorance, unholiness, and misery... The way of the wicked being ‘as darkness,’ implies at once its cheerlessness and its danger”* [Wardlaw, 141, 142, 143]. *“The way of sin is in all respects one of darkness. It is dark in its origin, dark in its course, and dark in its end”* [Pulpit, 97]. Children are wise to be afraid of the dark.

### Proverbs 4:20-27 – Wisdom in the Whole Body

**20 My son, pay attention to what I say;  
turn your ear to my words.**

**21 Do not let them out of your sight,  
keep them within your heart;**

**22 for they are life to those who find them  
and health to one’s whole body.**

**23 Above all else, guard your heart,  
for everything you do flows from it.**

**24 Keep your mouth free of perversity;  
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.**

**25 Let your eyes look straight ahead;  
fix your gaze directly before you.**

**26 Give careful thought to the paths for your feet  
and be steadfast in all your ways.**

**27 Do not turn to the right or the left;  
keep your foot from evil.**

In this section, Solomon speaks of the role the whole body has in walking the way of wisdom. He speaks of the ears, the heart, the mouth, the lips, the eyes, and the feet. “Assaulted as we are at every point, every inlet of sin must be strongly guarded” [Bridges, 53].

First he speaks of the ears, the sight and the heart: **“My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body”** (vss. 20-22). He exhorts his son to first **“pay attention”** and **“turn your ear to my words.”** Much of the success of living a godly life depends on where we choose to **“turn”** our ears, and keep our **“sight”**. Exposure to the ways of sin through turning our ears toward bawdy talk, and our sight toward movies and media which espouse the ways of the wicked, is more harmful than we think. Though we think it is harmless just to hear or see, and not participate, through the hearing and seeing, sin finds its way into our hearts. Sadly, modern media is rife with ungodly themes. It is near impossible to find solid, life-affirming, godly movies, music and books. Important is the exhortation to **“turn our ears”** toward godly influence and instruction, to **“not let them out of our sight.”**

Solomon emphasizes the importance of keeping the ways of sin from infiltrating the heart: **“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it”** (vs. 23). Jesus gave similar teaching: **“A good man brings good things out**

of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Luke 6:45). In the Bible, the *heart* is the seat of affections, emotions, and the will, and represents the true, inner self, as opposed to outer visible actions. At times, we can fool others with our outer actions, which may not always truly reflect what is in our heart. But eventually, our actions and speech will reflect what is in our heart. **“For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”** So Solomon here exhorts: **“Guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it”** (vs. 23). “As the heavenly Ten Commandments were housed in the ark in the center of the holy of holies, the father’s teaching should be housed right in the middle of the son’s heart” [Waltke, 403]. “If the citadel be taken, the whole town must surrender. If the heart be seized, the whole man — the affections, desires, motives, pursuits — all will be yielded up” [Bridges, 53]. “If we guard our house, much more must the heart be guarded; the watches must there be doubled” [Zockler, 93].

Solomon continues: **“Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips”** (vs. 24). “The tongue is a world of iniquity, and needs a world of care to manage it” [Lawson, 91]. Lying, gossip, slander, backbiting, encouraging evil, cursing: there are many sins of the tongue. James also speaks of the importance of controlling one’s speech: **“We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check... Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly**

poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be” (James 3:2,5-10). “Words offer the first and readiest egress for evil... While we speak, we should never forget that God is one of the listeners” [Arnot, 126].

Next, Solomon speaks of discipline concerning where we look: **“Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you”** (vs. 25). Through where we look, we can get distracted, and misled, from the way of wisdom. “One must not turn aside from the plain way of integrity, nor even look wishfully at any other course” [Stuart, 187].

Finally, Solomon speaks of the paths our feet take: **“Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil”** (vss. 25-26). It is important to **“give careful thought”** to any path we choose to take. We must look ahead as to exactly where it will lead. “The best time to ponder any path, is not at the end, not even at the middle, but at the beginning of it... Those who ponder after they have entered it, are not in a position either to obtain the truth or to profit by it... Every step is great, because it affects the destiny of an immortal soul” [Arnot, 128]. “Snares are laid out for every path, yea for every step in your path” [Bridges, 54]. “God’s holy law is our heavenly King’s highway. We must not in the least turn aside from it into the by-ways of superstitious will-worship on the one hand, and unbelieving self-sufficiency on the other” [JFB, 426]. “Keep the king’s highway: keep within God’s precincts, and ye keep under His protection” [Trapp].

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## *A Sermon: Remembrance of Christ*

**A Sermon by the Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon**

**The Remembrance of Christ – I Cor. 11:24**

**(Preached at New Park Street Chapel,  
London, Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1855)**

**“This do in remembrance of me” (I Corinthians 11:24)**

It seems, then, that Christians may forget Christ. The text implies the possibility of forgetfulness concerning him whom gratitude and affection should constrain them to remember. There could be no need for this loving exhortation, if there were not a fearful supposition that our memories might prove treacherous, and our remembrance superficial in its character, or changing in its nature. Nor is this a bare supposition: it is, alas, too well confirmed in our experience, not as a possibility, but as a lamentable fact. It seems at first sight too gross a crime to lay at the door of converted men. It appears almost impossible that those who have been redeemed by the blood of the dying Lamb should ever forget their Ransomer; that those who have been loved with an everlasting love by the eternal Son of God, should ever forget that Son; but if startling to the ear, it is alas, too apparent to the eye to allow us to deny the fact. Forget him who ne'er forgot us! Forget him who poured his blood forth for our sins! Forget him who loved us even to the death! Can it be possible? Yes it is not only possible, but conscience confesses that it is too sadly a fault of all of us, that we can remember anything except Christ. The object which we should make the monarch of our hearts, is the very thing we are most inclined to forget. Where one would think

that memory would linger, and unmindfulness would be an unknown intruder, that is the spot which is desecrated by the feet of forgetfulness, and that the place where memory too seldom looks. I appeal to the conscience of every Christian here: Can you deny the truth of what I utter? Do you not find yourselves forgetful of Jesus? Some creature steals away your heart, and you are unmindful of him upon whom your affection ought to be set. Some earthly business engrosses your attention when you should have your eye steadily fixed upon the cross. It is the incessant round of world, world, world; the constant din of earth, earth, earth, that takes away the soul from Christ. Oh! my friends, is it not too sadly true that we can recollect anything but Christ, and forget nothing so easy as him whom we ought to remember? While memory will preserve a poisoned weed, it suffereth the Rose of Sharon to wither.

The cause of this is very apparent: it lies in one or two facts. We forget Christ, because regenerate persons as we really are, still corruption and death remain even in the regenerate. We forget him because we carry about with us the old Adam of sin and death. If we were purely new-born creatures, we should never forget the name of him whom we love. If we were entirely regenerated beings, we should sit down and meditate on all our Saviour did and suffered; all he is; all he has gloriously promised to perform; and never would our roving affections stray; but centered, nailed, fixed eternally to one object, we should continually contemplate the death and sufferings of our Lord. But alas! we have a worm in the heart, a pest-house, a charnel-house within, lusts, vile imaginations, and strong evil passions, which, like wells of poisonous water, send out continually streams of impurity. I have a heart, which God knoweth, I wish I could wring from my body and hurl to an infinite distance; a soul which is a cage of unclean birds, a den of loathsome creatures, where dragons haunt and owls do congregate, where every evil beast of ill-omen dwells; a heart too vile to have a parallel—"deceitful above all things and desperately wick-

ed." This is the reason why I am forgetful of Christ. Nor is this the sole cause; I suspect it lies somewhere else too. We forget Christ because there are so many other things around us to attract our attention. "But," you say, "they ought not to do so, because though they are around us, they are nothing in comparison with Jesus Christ: though they are in dread proximity to our hearts, what are they compared with Christ?" But do you know, dear friends, that the nearness of an object has a very great effect upon its power? The sun is many, many times larger than the moon, but the moon has a greater influence upon the tides of the ocean than the sun, simply because it is nearer, and has a greater power of attraction. So I find that a little crawling worm of the earth has more effect upon my soul than the glorious Christ in heaven; a handful of golden earth, a puff of fame, a shout of applause, a thriving business, my house, my home, will affect me more than all the glories of the upper world; yea, than the beatific vision itself: simply because earth is near, and heaven is far away. Happy day, when I shall be borne aloft on angels' wings to dwell for ever near my Lord, to bask in the sunshine of his smile, and to be lost in the ineffable radiance of his lovely countenance. We see then the cause of forgetfulness; let us blush over it; let us be sad that we neglect our Lord so much, and now let us attend to his word, "This do in remembrance of me," hoping that its solemn sounds may charm away the demon of base ingratitude.

We shall speak, first of all, concerning the blessed object of memory; secondly, upon the advantages to be derived from remembering this Person; thirdly, the gracious help, to our memory—"This do in remembrance of me;" and fourthly, the gentle command, "This do in remembrance of me." May the Holy Ghost open my lips and your hearts, that we may receive blessings.

I. First of all, we shall speak of the glorious and precious object of memory—"This do in remembrance of *Me*." Christians have many treasures to lock up in the cabinet of memory. They ought to remember their election—"Chosen of God ere time began." They ought to be mindful of their extraction, that

they were taken out of the miry clay, hewn out of the horrible pit. They ought to recollect their effectual calling, for they were called of God, and rescued by the power of the Holy Ghost. They ought to remember their special deliverances—all that has been done for them, and all the mercies bestowed on them. But there is one whom they should embalm in their souls with the most costly spices—one who, above all other gifts of God, deserves to be had in perpetual remembrance. One I said, for I mean not an act, I mean not a deed; but it is a Person whose portrait I would frame in gold, and hang up in the state-room of the soul. I would have you earnest students of all the deeds of the conquering Messiah. I would have you conversant with the life of our Beloved. But O forget not his person; for the text says, “This do in remembrance of me.” It is Christ’s glorious person which ought to be the object of our remembrance. It is his image which should be enshrined in every temple of the Holy Ghost.

But some will say, “How can we remember Christ’s person, when we never saw it? We cannot tell what was the peculiar form of his visage; we believe his countenance to be fairer than that of any other man—although through grief and suffering more marred—but since we did not see it, we cannot remember it. We never saw his feet as they trod the journeys of his mercy; we never beheld his hands as he stretched them out full of lovingkindness; we cannot remember the wondrous intonation of his language, when in more than seraphic eloquence, he awed the multitude, and chained their ears to him; we cannot picture the sweet smile that ever hung on his lips, nor that awful frown with which he dealt out anathemas against the Pharisees; we cannot remember him in his sufferings and agonies, for we never saw him.” Well, beloved, I suppose it is true that you cannot remember the visible appearance, for you were not then born; but do you not know that even the apostle said, though he had known Christ after the flesh, yet, thenceforth after the flesh he would know Christ no more. The natural appear-

ance, the race, the descent, the poverty, the humble garb, were nothing in the apostle’s estimation of his glorified Lord. And thus, though you do not know him after the flesh, you may know him after the spirit; in this manner you can remember Jesus as much now as Peter, or Paul, or John, or James, or any of those favoured ones who once trod in his footsteps, walked side by side with him, or laid their heads upon his bosom. Memory annihilates distance and over leapeth time, and can behold the Lord, though he be exalted in glory.

Ah! let us spend five minutes in remembering Jesus. Let us remember him in his baptism, when descending into the waters of Jordan, a voice was heard, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Behold him coming up dripping from the stream! Surely the conscious water must have blushed that it contained its God. He slept within its waves a moment, to consecrate the tomb of baptism, in which those who are dead with Christ are buried with him. Let us remember him in the wilderness, whither he went straight from his immersion. Oh! I have often thought of that scene in the desert, when Christ, weary and way-worn, sat him down, perhaps upon the gnarled roots of some old tree. Forty days that he fasted, he was hungered, when in the extremity of his weakness there came the evil spirit. Perhaps he had veiled his demon royalty in the form of some aged pilgrim, and taking up a stone, said, “Way-worn pilgrim, if thou be the Son of God command this stone to be made bread.” Methinks I see him, with his cunning smile, and his malicious leer, as he held the stone, and said, “If,”—blasphemous if,—“If thou be the Son of God, command that this stone shall become a meal for me and thee, for both of us are hungry, and it will be an act of mercy; thou canst do it easily; speak the word, and it shall be like the bread of heaven; we will feed upon it, and thou and I will be friends for ever.” But Jesus said—and O how sweetly did he say it—“Man shall not live by bread alone.” Oh! how wonderfully did Christ fight the tempter! Never was there such a battle as that. It was a duel foot to foot—a single-handed combat—when the champion lion of the pit, and the mighty

lion of the tribe of Judah, fought together. Splendid sight! Angels stood around to gaze upon the spectacle, just as men of old did sit to see the tournament of noted warriors. There Satan gathered up his strength; here Apollyon concentrated all his satanic power, that in this giant wrestle he might overthrow the seed of the woman. But Jesus was more than a match for him; in the wrestling he gave him a deadly fall, and came off more than a conqueror. Lamb of God! I will remember thy desert strivings, when next I combat with Satan. When next I have a conflict with roaring Diabolus, I will look to him who conquered once for all, and broke the dragon's head with his mighty blows.

Further, I beseech you remember him in all his daily temptations and hourly trials, in that life-long struggle of his, through which he passed. Oh! what a mighty tragedy was the death of Christ! and his life too? Ushered in with a song, it closed with a shriek. "It is finished." It began in a manger, and ended on a cross; but oh, the sad interval between! Oh! the black pictures of persecution, when his friends abhorred him; when his foes frowned at him as he passed the streets; when he heard the hiss of calumny, and was bitten by the foul tooth of envy; when slander said he had a devil and was mad: that he was a drunken man and a wine-bibber; and when his righteous soul was vexed with the ways of the wicked. Oh! Son of God, I must remember thee; I cannot help remembering thee, when I think of those years of toil and trouble which thou didst live for my sake. But you know my chosen theme—the place where I can always best remember Christ. It is a shady garden full of olives. O that spot! I would that I had eloquence, that I might take you there. Oh! if the Spirit would but take us, and set us down hard by the mountains of Jerusalem, I would say, see there runs the brook of Kedron, which the king himself did pass; and there you see the olive trees. Possibly, at the foot of that olive, lay the three disciples when they slept; and there, ah! there, I see drops of blood. Stand here, my soul, a moment; those drops of blood—dost thou behold them? Mark them;

they are not the blood of wounds; they are the blood of a man whose body was then unwounded. O my soul picture him when he knelt down in agony and sweat,—sweat, because he wrestled with God,—sweat, because he agonized with his Father. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." O Gethsemane! thy shades are deeply solemn to my soul. But ah! those drops of blood! Surely it is the climax of the height of misery; it is the last of the mighty acts of this wondrous sacrifice. Can love go deeper than that? Can it stoop to greater deeds of mercy? Oh! had I eloquence, I would bestow a tongue on every drop of blood that is there; that your hearts might rise in mutiny against your languor and coldness, and speak out with earnest burning remembrance of Jesus. And now, farewell, Gethsemane.

But I will take you somewhere else, where you shall still behold the "Man of Sorrows." I will lead you to Pilate's hall, and let you see him endure the mockeries of cruel soldiers: the smitings of mailed gloves; the blows of clenched fists; the shame; the spitting, the plucking of the hair: the cruel buffetings. Oh! can you not picture the King of Martyrs, stript of his garments; exposed to the gaze of fiend-like men? See you not the crown about his temples, each thorn acting as a lancet to pierce his head? Mark you not his lacerated shoulders, and the white bones starting out from the bleeding flesh? Oh, Son of Man! I see thee scourged and flagellated with rods and whips, how can I henceforward cease to remember thee? My memory would be more treacherous than Pilate, did it not every cry, *Ecce Homo*,—"Behold the man."

Now, finish the scene of woe by a view of Calvary. Think of the pierced hands and the bleeding side; think of the scorching sun, and then the entire darkness; remember the broiling fever and the dread thirst; think of the death shriek, "It is finished!" and of the groans which were its prelude. This is the object of memory. Let us never forget Christ. I beseech you, for the love of Jesus, let him have the chief place in your memories. Let not the pearl of great price be dropped from your careless hand into the dark ocean of oblivion.

I cannot, however, help saying one thing before I leave this head: and that is, there are some of you who can very well carry away what I have said, because you have read it often, and heard it before; but still you cannot spiritually remember anything about Christ, because you never had him manifested to you, and what we have never known, we cannot remember. Thanks be unto God, I speak not of you all, for in this place there is a goodly remnant according to the election of grace, and to them I turn. Perhaps I could tell you of some old barn, hedge-row, or cottage; or if you have lived in London, about some garret, or some dark lane or street, where first you met with Christ; or some chapel into which you strayed, and you might say, "Thank God, I can remember the seat where first he met with me, and spoke the whispers of love to my soul, and told me he had purchased me."

"Dost mind the place, the spot of ground,  
Where Jesus did thee meet?"

Yes, and I would love to build a temple on the spot, and to raise some monument there, where Jehovah-Jesus first spoke to my soul, and manifested himself to me. But he has revealed himself to you more than once—has he not? And you can remember scores of places where the Lord hath appeared of old unto you, saying, "Behold I have loved you with an everlasting love." If you cannot all remember such things, there are some of you that can; and I am sure they will understand me when I say, come and do this in remembrance of Christ—in remembrance of all his loving visitations, of his sweet wooing words, of his winning smiles upon you, of all he has said and communicated to your souls. Remember all these things tonight, if it be possible for memory to gather up the mighty aggregate of grace. "Bless the Lord. O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

**II.** Having spoken upon the blessed object of our memory, we say, secondly, a little upon the benefits to be

derived from a loving remembrance of Christ.

Love never says, "Cui bono?" Love never asks what benefit it will derive from love. Love from its very nature is a disinterested thing. It loves; for the creature's sake it loves, and for nothing else. The Christian needs no argument to make him love Christ; just as a mother needs no argument to make her love her child. She does it because it is her nature to do so. The new-born creature must love Christ, it cannot help it. Oh! who can resist the matchless charms of Jesus Christ?—the fairest of ten thousand fairs, the loveliest of ten thousand loves. Who can refuse to adore the prince of perfection, the mirror of beauty, the majestic Son of God? But yet it may be useful to us to observe the advantages of remembering Christ, for they are neither few nor small.

And first, remembrance of Jesus will tend to give you hope when you are under the burden of your sins. Notice a few characters here tonight. There comes in a poor creature. Look at him! He has neglected himself this last month; he looks as if he had hardly eaten his daily bread. What is the matter with you? "Oh!" says he, "I have been under a sense of guilt; I have been again and again lamenting, because I fear I can never be forgiven; once I thought I was good, but I have been reading the Bible, and I find that my heart is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' I have tried to reform, but the more I try, the deeper I sink in the mire, there is certainly no hope for me. I feel that I deserve no mercy; it seems to me that God must destroy me, for he has declared, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die;' and die I must, be damned I must, for I know I have broken God's law." How will you comfort such a man? What soft words will you utter to give him peace? I know! I will tell thee that there is one, who for thee hath made a complete atonement; if thou only believest on him thou art safe for ever. Remember him, thou poor dying, hopeless creature, and thou shalt be made to sing for joy and gladness. See, the man believes, and in ecstasy exclaims, "Oh! come all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul."

“Tell it unto sinners, tell,  
I am, I am out of hell.”

Hallelujah! God hath blotted out my sins like a thick cloud! That is one benefit to be derived from remembering Christ. It gives us hope under a sense of sin, and tells us there is mercy yet.

Now, I must have another character. And what does he say? “I cannot stand it any longer; I have been persecuted and ill-treated, because I love Christ; I am mocked, and laughed at, and despised: I try to bear it, but I really cannot. A man will be a man; tread upon a worm and he will turn upon you; my patience altogether fails me; I am in such a peculiar position that it is of no use to advise me to have patience, for patience I cannot have; my enemies are slandering me, and I do not know what to do.” What shall we say to that poor man? How shall we give him patience? What shall we preach to him? You have heard what he has to say about himself. How shall we comfort him under this great trial? If we suffered the same, what should we wish some friend to say to us? Shall we tell him that other persons have borne as much? He will say, “Miserable comforters are ye all!” No, I will tell him, “Brother, you are persecuted; but remember the words of Jesus Christ, how he spake unto us, and said, ‘Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.’” My brother! think of him, who, when he died, prayed for his murderers, and said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” All you have to bear, is as nothing compared with his mighty sufferings. Take courage; face it again like a man; never say die. Let not your patience be gone; take up your cross daily, and follow Christ. Let him be your motto; set him before your eyes. And, now, receiving this, hear what the man will say. He tells you at once—“Hail, persecution; welcome shame. Disgrace for Jesus shall be my honor, and scorn shall be my highest glory.

“Now, for the love I bear his name,  
What was my gain I count my loss,  
I pour contempt on all my shame,  
And nail my glory to his cross.”

There is another effect, you see, to remembering Christ. It tends to give us patience under persecution. It is a girdle to brace up the loins, so that our faith may endure to the end.

Dear friends, I should occupy your time too much if I went into the several benefits; so I will only just run over one or two blessings to be received. It will give us strength in temptation. I believe that there are hours with every man, when he has a season of terrific temptation. There was never a vessel that lived upon the mighty deep but sometimes it had to do battle with a storm. There she is, the poor barque, rocked up and down on the mad waves. See how they throw her from wave to wave, and toss her to mid heaven. The winds laugh her to scorn. Old Ocean takes the ship in his dripping fingers, and shakes it to and fro. How the mariners cry out for fear! Do you know how you can put oil upon the waters, and all shall be still? Yes. One potent word shall do it. Let Jesus come; let the poor heart remember Jesus, and steadily then the ship shall sail, for Christ has the helm. The winds shall blow no more, for Christ shall bid them shut their mighty mouths, and never again disturb his child. There is nothing which can give you strength in temptation, and help you to weather the storm, like the name of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. Then again, what comfort it will give you on a sick bed—the name of Christ! It will help you to be patient to those who wait upon you, and to endure the sufferings which you have to bear; yea, it shall be so with you, that you shall have more hope in sickness than in health, and shall find a blessed sweetness in the bitterness of gall. Instead of feeling vinegar in your mouth, through your trouble, you shall find honey for sweetness, in the midst of all the trial and trouble that God will put upon you, “For he giveth songs in the night.”

But just to close up the advantages of remembering Christ,

do you know where you will have the benefit most of all? Do you know the place where chiefly you will rejoice that you ever thought of him? I will take you to it. Hush! Silence! You are going up stairs into a lonely room. The curtains hang down. Some one stands there weeping. Children are around the bed, and friends are there. See that man lying? That is yourself. Look at him; his eyes are your eyes; his hands are your hands. That is yourself. You will be there soon. Man! that is yourself. Do you see it? It is a picture of yourself. Those are your eyes that soon will be closed in death—your hands, that will lie stiff and motionless—your lips that will be dry and parched, between which they will put drops of water. Those are your words that freeze in air, and drop so slowly from your dying lips. I wonder whether you will be able to remember Christ there. If you do not, I will picture you. Behold that man, straight up in the bed; see his eyes starting from their sockets. His friends are all alarmed; they ask him what he sees. He represses the emotion; he tells them he sees nothing. They know that there is something before his eyes. He starts again. Good God! what is that I see—I seem to see? What is it? Ah! one sigh! The soul is gone. The body is there. What did he see? He saw a flaming throne of judgment; he saw God upon it, with his sceptre; he saw books opened; he beheld the throne of God, and saw a messenger, with a sword brandished in the air to smite him low. Man! that is thyself; there thou wilt be soon. That picture is thine own portrait. I have photographed thee to the life. Look at it. That is where thou shalt be within a few years—ay, within a few days. But if thou canst remember Christ, shall I tell thee what thou wilt do? Oh! thou wilt smile in the midst of trouble. Let me picture such a man. They put pillows behind him; he sits up in bed, and takes the hand of the loved one, and says, “Farewell! weep not for me; the kind God shall wipe away all tears from every eye.” Those round about are addressed, “Prepare to meet your God, and follow me to the land of bliss.” Now he has set his house in order. All is done. Behold him, like good old Jacob,

leaning on his staff, about to die. See how his eyes sparkle; he claps his hands; they gather round to hear what he has to say; he whispers “Victory!” and summoning a little more strength, he cries, “Victory!” and at last, with his final gasp, “Victory, through him that loved us!” and he dies. This is one of the great benefits to be derived from remembering Christ—to be enabled to meet death with blessed composure.

**III.** We are now arrived at the third portion of our meditation, which is a sweet aid to memory.

At schools we used certain books, called “Aids to Memory.” I am sure they rather perplexed than assisted me. Their utility was equivalent to that of a bundle of staves under a traveler’s arm: true he might use them one by one to walk with, but in the mean time he carried a host of others which he would never need. But our Saviour was wiser than all our teachers, and his remembrances are true and real aids to memory. His love tokens have an unmistakeable language, and they sweetly win our attention.

Behold the whole mystery of the sacred Eucharist. It is bread and wine which are lively emblems of the body and blood of Jesus. The power to excite remembrance consists in the appeal thus made to the senses. Here the eye, the hand, the mouth, find joyful work. The bread is tasted, and entering within, works upon the sense of taste, which is one of the most powerful. The wine is sipped—the act is palpable. We know that we are drinking, and thus the senses, which are usually clogs to the soul, become wings to lift the mind in contemplation. Again, much of the influence of this ordinance is found in its simplicity. How beautifully simple the ceremony is—bread broken and wine poured out. There is no calling that thing a chalice, that thing a paten, and that a host. Here is nothing to burden the memory—here is the simple bread and wine. He must have no memory at all who cannot remember that he has eaten bread, and that he has been drinking wine. Note again, the mighty pregnancy of these signs—how full they are of meaning. Bread broken—so was your Saviour broken. Bread to be eaten—so his flesh is meat indeed. Wine

poured out, the pressed juice of the grape—so was your Saviour crushed under the foot of divine justice: his blood is your sweetest wine. Wine to cheer your heart—so does the blood of Jesus. Wine to strengthen and invigorate you—so does the blood of the mighty sacrifice. Oh! make that bread and wine to your souls tonight a sweet and blessed help of remembrance of that dear Man who once on Calvary died. Like the little ewe lamb, you are now to eat your Master's bread and drink from his cup. Remember the hand which feeds you.

But before you can remember Christ well here, you must ask the assistance of the Holy Spirit. I believe there ought to be a preparation before the Lord's Supper. I do not believe in Mrs. Toogood's preparation, who spent a week in preparing, and then finding it was not the Ordinance Sunday, she said she had lost all the week. I do not believe in that kind of preparation, but I do believe in a holy preparation for the Lord's Supper: when we can on a Saturday if possible, spend an hour in quiet meditation on Christ, and the passion of Jesus; when, especially on the Sabbath afternoon, we can devoutly sit down and behold him, then these scenes become realities, and not mockeries, as they are to some. I fear greatly that there are some of you who will drink the wine, and not think of his blood: and vile hypocrites you will be while you do it. Take heed to yourselves, "He that eateth and drinketh" unworthily, eateth and drinketh—what?—"damnation to himself." This is a plain English word; mind what you are doing! Do not do it carelessly; for of all the sacred things on earth, it is the most solemn. We have heard of some men banded together by drawing blood from their arms and drinking it all round; that was most horrid, but at the same time most solemn. Here you are to drink blood from the veins of Christ, and sip the trickling stream which gushed from his own loving heart. Is not that a solemn thing? Ought anybody to trifle with it? To go to church and take it for sixpence? To come and join us for the sake of getting charities? Out upon it! It is an awful blasphemy against

Almighty God; and amongst the damned in hell, those shall be among the most accursed who dared thus to mock the holy ordinance of God. This is the remembrance of Christ. "This do in remembrance of me." If you cannot do it in remembrance of Christ, I beseech you, as you love your souls, do not do it at all. Oh! regenerate man or woman, enter not into the court of the priests, lest Israel's God resent the intrusion.

IV. And now to close up. Here is a sweet command: "This do in remembrance of me." To whom does this command apply? "This do ye." It is important to answer this question—"This do ye," Who are intended? Ye who put your trust in me. "This do ye in remembrance of me." Well, now, you should suppose Christ speaking to you tonight; and he says, "This do ye in remembrance of me." Christ watches you at the door. Some of you go home, and Christ says, "I thought I said, 'This do ye in remembrance of me.'" Some of you keep your seats as spectators. Christ sits with you, and he says, "I thought I said, 'This do ye in remembrance of me.'" "Lord, I know you did." "Do you love me then?" "Yes, I love thee; I love, Lord; thou knowest I do." "But, I say, go down there—eat that bread, drink that wine." "I do not like to, Lord; I should have to be baptized if I joined that church, and I am afraid I shall catch cold, or be looked at. I am afraid to go before the church, for I think they would ask some questions I could not answer." "What," says Christ, "is this all you love me? Is this all your affection to your Lord. Oh! how cold to me, your Saviour. If I had loved you no more than this, you would have been in hell: if that were the full extent of my affection, I should not have died for you. Great love bore great agonies; and is this all your gratitude to me?" Are not some of you ashamed, after this? Do you not say in your hearts, "it is really wrong?" Christ says, "Do this in remembrance of me," and are you not ashamed to stay away? I give a free invitation to every lover of Jesus to come to this table. I beseech you, deny not yourselves the privilege by refusing to unite with the church. If you still live in sinful neglect of this ordinance, let me remind you that Christ has said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me in this genera-

tion, of him will I be ashamed, when I come in the glory of my Father." Oh, soldier of the cross, act not the coward's part!

And not to lead you into any mistakes, I must just add one thing, and then I have done. When I speak of your taking the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, do not imagine that I wish you for one moment to suppose that there is anything saving in it. Some say that the ordinance of baptism is non-essential, so is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, it is non-essential, if we look upon it in the light of salvation. Be saved by eating a piece of bread! Nonsense, confounded nonsense! Be saved by drinking a drop of wine! Why, it is too absurd for common sense to admit any discussion upon. You know it is the blood of Jesus Christ; it is the merit of his agonies; it is the purchase of his sufferings; it is what he did, that alone can save us. Venture on him; venture wholly, and then you are saved. Hearest thou, poor convinced sinner, the way of salvation? If I ever meet thee in the next world, thou mightest, perhaps, say to me, "I spent one evening, sir, in hearing you, and you never told me the way to heaven." Well, thou shalt hear it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in his righteousness, and thou art saved beyond the vengeance of the law, or the power of hell. But trust in thine own works, and thou art lost as sure as thou art alive.

Now, O ever glorious Son of God, we approach thy table to feast on the viands of grace, permit each of us, in reliance upon thy Spirit, to exclaim in the words of one of thine own poets:

"Remember thee, and all thy pains,  
And all thy love to me—  
Yes, while a pulse or breath remains,  
I will remember thee.  
And when these failing lips grow dumb,  
And thought and memory flee;  
When thou shalt in thy kingdom come,  
Jesus, remember me!"



## *A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist*

### **Upon Going Up a High Mountain, by William Spurstowe (1666)**

*Lord, who shall dwell in the mountain of thy holiness?* (Ps. 15:1) was a question made by the prophet David, but the answer returned was by the Spirit of God, who can give the best character of all those who shall be received into a fellowship of glory and bliss, as Tertullian expresses it. The *situation* of the place, the *quality* of the persons do both speak it to be a work of difficulty, and discover also the ground of the paucity of the travelers in whose hearts those ways and ascensions are that seek God. Most of the men of the world, like Abraham's servants, stay below at the foot of the hill, while he and his son go up to worship (see Gen. 22:5); or choose rather, like Ahimaaz, to run the way of the plain than, with Cush, the way that was craggy and mountainous (see II Sam. 18:23). But few there be that see under what a necessity they lie of obtaining Heaven, and of dwelling in the mountain of God's holiness, or understand the comfort that a continued progress in this journey yields to those to whom salvation is nearer than when they first believed. Can it therefore be amiss to evince those who are yet to make the first step towards their own happiness, what timely diligence they had need to use, that in the end they may not fall short of it? And to encourage those that are on their way, that they may go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion. And how may I better do either, than by showing to one, the great distance in which they stand from Heaven; and to the other, the good *proficiency* they have made, which is oft-times as indiscernible to themselves, as the swift motion of the ship is to them that are in it.

There is no complaint more frequent in the mouths of

saints, than that they have got no farther than what many years since they judged themselves to have attained unto. The *natural* man's distance is far greater than he thinks of, so that he cannot easily step into Heaven as he presumes. He is not born near its confines or borders; but in the very extremity of remoteness from it. The distance is not only a distance of *place*, but of *disproportion*, and *unlikeness*, whereby he is wholly unmeet for it. Yea, there is in him not only a *dissimilitude*, but a formal *contrariety* and *opposition* against Heaven, which must be destroyed and taken away before he can come thither. He is *darkness*, and Heaven is an *inheritance in light*. He is a sink of *filthiness*, and Heaven is a place of *purity*; he is wholly *carnal*, and the happiness of Heaven is *spiritual*. And what **“fellowship”** (said the Apostle) **“hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?”** (II Cor. 6:14). Can it then be rationally thought an easy task to subdue this contrariety; and to make flesh and blood meet to inherit heaven? Does not the straitness of the way, and the height of its ascent, require a putting off, and a casting away, every sin that hinders from running the Christian race, and ascending the holy hill? Is it not necessary, that the opposition and dissimilitude extending itself over the whole man, that an answerable change should be made in every part?

I have read, that it is affirmed by excellent *artists*, that though *gladness* and *grief* be opposites in nature, yet they are such neighbors and *confiners* in art, that the least touch of the pencil will translate a *crying* into a *laughing* face. But such is not the opposition between sin and grace, as to admit so facile a change in the turning of a sinner into a saint. It is not effected by a small touch made upon the *face*, but by a powerful work upon the heart, yea, upon the whole soul. Does not the scriptures set it forth by a *new birth*, by a *new creation*, which are of all mutations that greatest, and fully evince the vast distance that is between every natural man and salvation? Deceive not yourselves, therefore, O ye loose *professors*,

nor ye fond and presumptuous *moralists*, who are apt to think that the shadows of your duties and civilities will extend themselves to the top of this holy mountain; and who when you read of the young man who answered Christ discreetly, that he was not far from the Kingdom of Heaven, judge yourselves both in knowledge and practice his equals, and that you want not many steps of entering into that blessed Canaan of rest and glory. For what will proximities or degrees of nearness avail, if the end itself be not attained?

Exaltations towards heaven, if they lift not into heaven, serve only to make the downfall the greater, and no man stumbles more dangerously, than he who is upon the brow of a high mountain, in respect of ruin. It is not then a ground for any to slacken their pace, or intermit their diligence in heaven's way, upon the confidence that they have not far to go, but rather to intend their care and pains, that they lose not those things which they have wrought, but that they may receive a full reward. And this let me say, if an apprehended nearness work not such effects, it is a *dream*, not a *reality*; a *presumption*, rather than a *progress*, and will have as sad an issue as the happiness of that poor fisherman, who, sleeping in the sides of a rock, dreamed that he was a king, and leaping up suddenly for joy, found himself miserably broken and rent in the bottom of it.

But I fear that while I propound the difficulties, which are great, as well as many, intending thereby to shake only the pillars of those men's confidence, who consider neither the length of the way, nor the hardness of the task by which salvation is attained; that I may dishearten others, who, after all their travel and labor, complain that they have striven much and gained little; and that their hopes of laying hold on eternal life do rather languish than increase, doubting that the journey is much too long for their short life to finish. Gladly therefore I would lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees, that they might be animated in the way, and not despair of the end. Now how can this be better done, than by giving such signs and evidences that will best serve to manifest

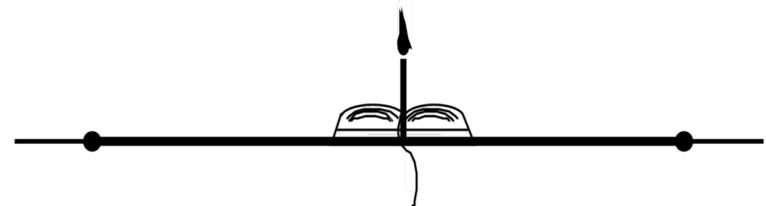
their motion and proficiency; the not discerning of which is the ground of those fears of their spending their strength in vain, and their laboring for nought? And is not this more readily perceived by looking downwards to those objects that are below, than by looking upwards to the heavens, which will, after all climbing to them, seem to be still at the like distance as they were at first.

Suppose that a man after hard labor and toil in reaching the top of some high and steep cliff, should conclude that he had wearied himself to no purpose, in the gaining of a delightful prospect, because the sun appears to be at the same distance, and also of equal bigness, as when he was at the bottom of it; or that the stars seem still to be but as so many twinkling watch lights, without the least increase of their dimensions, or variation of their figure. Might he not be easily refuted, by bidding him to look down to those plains from whence he had ascended, and behold into what narrow scantlings and proportions those stately buildings and towers were shrunk and contracted, whose greatness as well as beauty he erewhile so much admired? And may I not with the like facility answer and resolve the discouraged Christian, who calls in question the truth of heavenly progress, because all those glorious objects which his faith eyes, and his soul desires to draw nigh unto, seem still to be as remote from him, as at his first setting out, by wishing him to consider, whether he cannot say, that though heavenly objects do not increase in their magnitude or luster, by the approach that he makes to them; that yet all earthly objects do sensibly lose theirs by the distance that he is gone from them? And if he can but so do, surely he has no cause of despairing to obtain heaven, who has traveled so far on the way as to lose well near the sight of earth. If once his faith raised him to that height, as to make the glory of the world to disappear, and to be as a thing of nought, it will quickly land him in heaven, where his fears of miscarrying as well as his lassitude in working will be swallowed up in an everlasting rest. And he that did once believe more than he saw, shall forever see far

more than ever he could have believed. Lord therefore, do thou, who gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might, increase strength to me, who waits upon thee; renew my strength, that I may mount up with wings as an eagle, and may run and not be weary, and walk and not faint, until I come to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills, and behold thy face in glory.

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### Possessing Faith

"The chief part of faith lies in... an *affiance* to the truth; not the believing it merely, but the taking hold of it as being ours, and in the resting on it for salvation... Leaning on it; saying, 'This is truth, I trust my salvation on it.' Now, true faith, in its very essence rests in this - a leaning upon Christ. It will not save me to know that Christ is a Saviour; but it will save me *to trust him* to be *my* Saviour. I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come by believing that his atonement is sufficient, but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge, and my all. The pith, the essence of faith lies in this - a casting one-self on the promise."

- C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

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