

# SCRIPTURE STUDIES

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

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## Old Testament Study: Exodus 12

### The Accompaniments of the Passover, pt. 1 by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

<sup>29</sup>And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn, of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captives that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. <sup>30</sup>And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead (Ex. 12:29-30 AV).

<sup>40</sup>Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. <sup>41</sup>And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. <sup>42</sup>It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.

<sup>43</sup>And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: <sup>44</sup>But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. <sup>45</sup>A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof.

<sup>46</sup>"In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. <sup>47</sup>All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. <sup>48</sup>And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof" (Ex 12:40-48 AV).

Though we have entitled this paper "the Accompaniments of the Passover", other things will come before us. The instructions which Jehovah gave to Israel concerning the observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread

are found part in Exodus 12 and part in Exodus 13. Therefore as these two chapters are to be the portion for our study, we must not pass by other incidents recorded in them.

First, then, a brief word upon the carrying out of the death-sentence upon the Egyptians. **“And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn, of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captives that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead”** (12:29, 30). The very first message which the Lord commanded Moses to deliver to Egypt’s ruler was, **“Thus saith the Lord, ‘Israel is My son, even my firstborn; And I say unto thee, ‘Let My son go, that he may serve Me’; and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn”** (4:22, 23). It is evident from the sequel that Pharaoh did not believe this message. In this he accurately represented the men of this world. All through this Christian dispensation the solemn word has been going forth, **“Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish”** (Luke 13:3): **“He that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:16). But, for the most part, the Divine warning has fallen on deaf ears. The vast majority do not believe that God means what He says. Nevertheless, though oftentimes men’s threats are mere idle words and empty bombast, not so is it with the threatenings of Him who cannot lie. It is true that God is **“slow to anger”** and long does He leave open the door of mercy, but even *His* long-sufferance has its limits. It was thus with Pharaoh and his people. Pharaoh received plain and faithful warning and this was followed by many appeals and preliminary judgments. But the haughty king and his no less defiant subjects only hardened their hearts. And now the threatened judgment from heaven fell upon them, and neither wealth nor poverty provided any exemption — **“there was not a house where there was not one dead”**. A most solemn proof is this unto rebels against God today, that in a short while at most, unless they truly repent, Divine wrath *shall* smite *them*.

**“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt”** (12:40, 41). It is very striking to observe the accuracy of the type here. It was not until the day following the Passover-night that Israel was delivered from Egypt. As we have gone over the first twelve chapters of Exodus we have witnessed the tender compassion of God (2:23-25); we have seen the appointment of a leader (3:10); we have listened to the Divine promises (6:6-8); and we have beheld remarkable displays of Divine power (in the plagues), and yet not a single Israelite was delivered from

the house of bondage. It was not until the blood of the “**lamb**” was shed that redemption was effected, and as soon as it *was* shed, even the very next morning, Israel marched forth a free people — remarkable is the expression here used: “**All the hosts of the Lord**” (not “of Israel”) “**went out from the land of Egypt**” (12:41). They were the Lord’s by purchase — “**bought with a price**”, and that price “**not corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of a Lamb**” (I Peter 1:18).

The same thing is to be seen in the Gospels. Notwithstanding all the blessed display of grace and power in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, at the close of His wonderful works of mercy among men, had there been nothing more, He must have remained alone. Listen to His own words: “**Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit**” (John 12:24). As another has well said, “Blessed as was that ministry, great as were His miracles, heavenly as was His teaching, holy as was His life, yet had He not died, the Just for the unjust, not one of all the sons of Adam could possibly have been saved. What a place this gives to redemption!” (Mr. C. Stanley). How sadly true. Though Christ “**spake as never man spake**” (John 7:46), and though men confessed “**He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak**” (Mark 7:37), yet at the close we read, even of His apostles, “**they all forsook Him and fled**”. But how different after His precious blood had been shed! Then He is no longer “**alone**”. Then, for the first time, He speaks of the disciples as His “**brethren**” (John 20:17).

The *order* of truth in Exodus 12, like every other chapter in the Bible, is according to *Divine* wisdom, yet the writer has to confess dimness of vision in *perceiving* the purpose and beauty of the arrangements of its contents. One thing is very clear, it evidences plainly that it was not of Moses’ own design. Here, as ever, God’s thought and ways are different from ours. A trained mind, accustomed to think in logical sequence, would certainly have reversed the order found here. Yet we have not the slightest doubt that *God’s* order is infinitely superior to that of the most brilliant human intellect. These remarks are occasioned by what is found in verses 43-50. After telling us in verse 45 that “**The self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt**”, verses 43 to 50 give us the “**ordinance of the Passover**”, and then in verse 51 it is repeated that “**The Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt**”. The strange thing is that this ordinance was for Israel’s guidance in the *future*, hence one would naturally have expected to find these instructions given at a later date, as a part of the ceremonial law. But though, at present, we can offer no satisfactory explanation of this, several points of interest in the “**ordinance**” itself are clear, and these we will briefly consider.

“**And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, ‘This is the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof; but every**

man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof" (vv. 43-45). Here we learn that three classes of people were debarred from eating the Passover. **First**, no *stranger* was to eat thereof. This Feast was for Israel alone, and therefore no foreigner must participate. The reason is obvious. It was only the children of Abraham, the family of faith, who had participated in God's gracious deliverance, and they alone could commemorate it. **Second**, no *hired servant* should eat the Passover. This too is easily interpreted. An "**hired**" servant is an outsider; he is actuated by self-interest. He works for pay. But no such principle can find a place in that which speaks of redemption: "**To him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness**" (Romans 4:5). **Third**, no *uncircumcised person* should eat thereof. (v. 48). This applies to Israel equally as much as to Gentiles. "**Circumcision**" was the sign of the Covenant, and only these who belonged to the Covenant of Grace can feed upon Christ. Circumcision was God's sentence of death written upon nature. Circumcision has its antitype in the Cross (Colossians 2:11, 12).

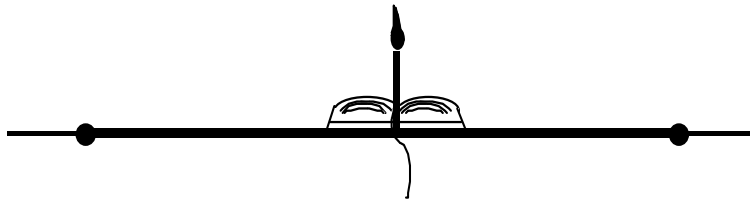
"**But every man's servant that is bought for money when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof... and when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof**" (vv. 44, 48). A wall was erected to shut out enemies, but the door was open to receive friends. No hired servant could participate in the Feast, but a bond-servant who had been purchased and circumcised, and who was now one of the household, could. So, too, the foreigner who *sojourned* with Israel, provided he would submit to the rite of circumcision. In this we have a blessed foreshadowing of Grace reaching out to the Gentiles, who though by nature were "**aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise**", are now, by grace "**no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God**" (Ephesians 2:12, 19). — a statement which manifestly looks back to Exodus 12.

"**In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof**" (v. 46). "The lamb was to be eaten under the shelter of the atoning blood, and there alone. Men may admire Christ, as it is the fashion very much to do, while denying the whole reality of His atoning work, but the Lamb can only be eaten really where its virtue is owned. Apart from this, He cannot be understood or appreciated. Thus the denial of His *work* leads to the denial of His *person*. Universalists and Annihilationists slip naturally into some kind of Unitarian doctrines as is evidenced on every

hand.

“Thus this unites naturally with the commandment ‘Neither shall ye break a bone thereof’. God will not have the perfection of Christ disfigured as it would be in type by a broken bone. With the bones perfect, a naturalist can show the construction of the whole animal. Upon the perfection of the bones depends the symmetry of form. God will have this preserved with regard to Christ. Reverent, not rash handling, becomes us as we seek to apprehend the wondrous Christ of God. And looking back to what is in connection with this, how suited a place to preserve reverence, the place **‘in the house’** under the shelter which the precious blood has provided for us! With such a one, so sheltered, how could rationalism or irreverence, we might ask, be found? And yet, alas, the injunction, we know too well is not unneedful” (Mr. Grant).

It is indeed blessed to mark how God guarded the fulfillment of this particular aspect of the type. That there might be no uncertainty that Christ Himself, the Lamb of God, was in view here, the Spirit of prophecy also caused it to be written (in one of the Messianic Psalms), **“He keepeth all His bones; not one of them is broken”** (34:20). And in John 19 we behold the antitype of Exodus 12 and the fulfillment of Psalm 34. **“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation that the bodies should not remain upon the Cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs *might be broken*, and that they might be taken away”** (John 19:31). Here was Satan, in his malignant enmity attempting to falsify and nullify the written Word. Vain effort was it. **“Then came the soldiers and break the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him”** (v. 32). Thus far might the agents of the Roman empire go, but no farther — **“But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, *they broke not His legs,*”** (John 19:33). Here we are given to see the Father **“*keeping*”** (preserving) all the bones of His blessed Son. Pierce His side with a spear a soldier might, and this, only that prophecy might be fulfilled, for it was written, **“They shall look on Him whom they *pierced,*”** (Zechariah 12:10). But break His legs they could not, for **“a bone of Him *shall not be broken*”**, and *it was not!*



# A Classic Study: The Danger of Prosperity



## A Classic Study by William Bates (1635–1699)

[Here we continue a study by the eminent English Puritan William Bates, concerning the danger of prosperity.]—*Ed.*

### The Danger of Prosperity, pt. 3

**The prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (Prov. 1:32, AV).**

Prosperity inclines sinners to an impious neglect of God, which is a sin of the highest nature, and prolific of innumerable evils. All sin is an irregularity, either in the excess or the defective extreme, either in overvaluing and loving the creature, or in the disesteem and indifference to the Creator. Prosperity increases the aversion of the carnal heart from God, in the same degrees as it strengthens the prosperity to the world. For the opening of this, it will be necessary to consider the essential and eternal respects due from the reasonable Creature to God. And they are four comprehensive of all the rest.

1. A solemn thankful recognition of him as the author of our brings, and all the comforts we enjoy.
2. Supreme love to Him.
3. A humble fear of his displeasure.
4. Entire obedience to His will.

As in this regular universe, every kind of being has its proper end; so it cannot be denied, without the most evident absurdity, that God in all these respects is the chief end of man.

1. A solemn thankful recognition of God, as the Author of our beings, and all our comforts, is continually due to Him. The neglect of this is so contumelious to the majesty and glory of God, and so contrary to those most binding obligations to His mercy and goodness, that 'tis an offence infinitely provoking. In every transgression, the authority of the Lawgiver is despised; but this immediately reflects dishonor upon the Deity. As a common felony is a breach of the King's laws, but treason not only violates His laws, but strikes immediately at His person and dignity.

Now, prosperity inclines sensual persons to this wretched neglect of God. The world, with all its desirable things, has the dominion and full



possession of the understandings, memories, and hearts of men. 'Tis the character of a wicked person, but most proper to him in his prosperity, God is not in all his thoughts. Of this impiety there are several degrees: the highest is explicit atheism, a disbelief of God and His providence, of His being, and bounty; and this is sometimes occasioned by plentiful prosperity. And the consequences are, pride that blasts the mind, as it were, with lightning, and confidence in the things of this world. Of this we have astonishing instances in the Scripture. Nebuchadnezzar transported in a vain-glorious flush of joy, at the view of his magnificent works, breaks forth in those lofty insolent expressions: **"Is not this great Babel that I have built, for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and the honor of my majesty?"** (Dan. 4:30), as if he had been raised by his own power, and did not own his greatness to the King of Heaven. This 'tis charged against the prince of Tyrus: **"Thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches; and you have said, 'I am a God and sit in the seat of God'; and you set thine heart as the Heart of God"** (Ezek. 28:2). He presumed that his throne for glory and stability was like the divine kingdom that cannot be shaken, and forgot that he was a frail man in a mutable world. Plentiful prosperity is so strong a temptation to atheism, that a wise and holy saint earnestly deprecated it as a pernicious snare: **"Give me not riches, lest I befall and deny thee, and say, 'Who is the Lord?'"** (see Prov. 30:8,9). The carnal heart, in the full fruition of the world, is apt to ascribe all to the course of nature, or to humane contrivance and endeavors, without any serious acknowledgment of the divine liberality and beneficence. Prodigious ingratitude and equal folly! As if one should imagine that a fountain of water had not its original from the sea, but from the marble stones, through which it immediately and visibly springs. Or as if it were requisite the hand of the giver should be as visible as his gifts.

Now although few arrive to this height of impiety in actual thoughts and open words; yet prosperous sinners are always guilty of an interpretative and virtual denial of God: they have not a solemn grateful remembrance of their benefactor and His benefits, and a due sense of their dependence upon Him. It was the wise and holy counsel of Moses to Israel, when they should be possessed of Canaan, a place full of delight and profit, **"When you shall have eaten, and are full, then beware lest you forget the Lord"** (Deut. 6:12). The caution so enforced, intimates a sinful disposition in the carnal heart, in prosperity to neglect God. There may be a notional remembrance of Him in the mind, a naked ascription of all good things to His providence, a complemental visit in exterior worship; yet without an inward cordial sense of our dear obligations for His most free favors. The apostle charges the rich in this world, not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God. So foolishly are men prone to depend for protection, reputation, and provision of all things upon their estates, as if they were inconsumable, and neglect God their rock, who is the alone

sufficient foundation of all our hopes and comfort.

2. Supreme love to God is an indispensable duty from men upon the account of His most amiable excellencies and benefits. **“You shall love the Lord with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with the thy mind; this is the first and great commandment”** (Luke 10:27), and consequently a coldness and indifference to God, much more a strong aversion from Him, is a sin of the most heinous nature. Now, prosperity has a special malignity to disincline the heart from God. The supreme love of God includes an act of the understanding, a transcendent esteem of His favor: **“Thy loving kindness is better than life”** (Ps. 63:3). It inspires the soul with ardent desires after Him: **“My soul follows hard after Thee”** (Ps. 63:8); it produces the most joyful satisfaction in communion with Him. The thoughts of God are unspeakably precious and sweet; the ordinances, the blessed means of conveying His grace, are highly valued; and sin that displeases and separates from God is hated as the greatest evil. Now, the soul must be refined to a heavenly temper, to some degrees of angelical purity, before 'tis capable of light to see spiritual excellencies, and love to enjoy them. And if the soul does not make the body heavenly and spiritual, the body will make the soul earthly and fleshly. From hence it is that the affluence of things pleasing to the senses, fastens the carnal heart to the world as its happiness and heaven: it darkens the mind, and vitiates the affections, that the soul can neither taste nor see how good the Lord is. 'Tis the universal character of men in the carnal state; they are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. And a remiss degree of love is comparative hatred: a sin of astonishing guilt, and not less odious to God, and damning in its nature, tho' little observed and resented by carnal men. For the highest dishonor of God is complicated with disobedience in it. A sin that deserves and inflicts the sorest punishment; for God alone, whose goodness is infinite, can make us perfectly and eternally happy; and the spiritual separation from Him is such an invaluable loss that, when truly understood, is the foundation of the heaviest sorrow.

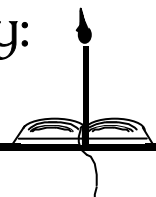
3. The fear of God is a most distant affection from the heart of the foolish sinner in his prosperity. The fear, reverence, and the awful esteem of God, that proceeds from the reflection upon His glorious greatness, is a grace that remains in heaven: the angels in all their bright degrees of excellence cover their faces before His throne. The fear of circumspection that restrains from displeasing Him upon the account of His justice and power, is a proper affection to men in the present state. The blessed in heaven are above this fear, being confirmed in a state of unchangeable perfection and felicity. The damned in hell are below this fear, in that no chance can make their condition worse: but 'tis most useful and congruous in this middle state. This fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, the first and chiefest part of it in respect of order and dignity. For the true notion

of wisdom, consists in the foresight of evils, in the choice and use of effectual means to avoid it, and it is the best wisdom that avoids the greatest danger. This fear is the principle of conversion from sin to holiness; exciting us to make God our friend, who is so dreadful an adversary, so holy and just, that He will not connive at sin, and spare the guilty and impenitent; and so powerful, that with one stroke He can utterly destroy His most stubborn enemies. Carnal security is directly opposite to this fear of God, and nothing does more harden and fortify men in security, than a prosperous state. The voluptuous and sensual are without apprehension of danger, till imminent and in their view. **“Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God”** (Ps. 55:19). Uninterrupted prosperity tempts them to atheistical security. The long enjoyment of plenty, and ease, and peace, renders men constantly secure and fearless, as if the tenor of their prosperity were invariable, and no evil could disturb it; or at least they will set back the expectation of evil at a great distance, like those profane scorners mentioned by the prophet: **“They say, the vision he sees is for many days to come, he prophesies of the times afar off”** (Ezek. 12:27), and with a brutish stupidity, slight the divine threatenings. And from hence it follows, that none are so rebelliously and boldly disobedient as the prosperous sinner, which is the fourth thing to be considered:

4. Entire obedience is due to the Supreme lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy forever. Yet He is mercifully inclined to pardon the infirmities of men, and greater sins, retracted by repentance. There are sins of ignorance, when a man dashes blindfold against the law; and of sudden corruption, when there is no time to deliberate and for recollection; and the best are not exempted here from sins of this nature. These are sins of deadly malignity, when men are careless of God’s commands, and indulge their lusts, though not without some remorse. But the prosperous sinner is usually most presumptuous. He sins with a high hand, and incurs a greater guilt, and shall be exposed to greater punishment. When the fear of God is extinguished, luxury takes the reins, and breaks through the hedge of the Law, without feeling the wounding thorns, the fearful threatenings in it; and drives on through all the degrees of sin. ’Tis the aggravation of the Israelites ingratitude: Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. They were like beasts high fed, that became fierce and untractable, and would endure no yoke upon them. The prosperous sinner securely despises the commands of God, and by an implicit blasphemy dares His offended omnipotence, as if he were stronger than the Lord. He concludes his safety from his present success, and says in his heart, **“I shall have peace, tho’ I walk in the imagination of mine heart and add sin to sin. The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord shall smoke against that man to his destruction”** (Deut. 29:19,20).

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## New Testament Study: Matthew 21:33-46



### Parable of the Evil Tenants

<sup>33</sup>“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. <sup>34</sup>When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

<sup>35</sup>“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup>Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup>Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

<sup>38</sup>“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup>So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

<sup>40</sup>“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

<sup>41</sup>“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’

<sup>43</sup>“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup>He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

<sup>45</sup>When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them.

<sup>46</sup>They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

In the previous section, Jesus told the first of a series of parables aimed specifically at the hypocritical religious leaders of the day. Here, He

begins another parable, telling the religious leaders to pay special attention: **“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey”** (vs. 33). Immediately, we see here a similarity (certainly purposeful) between this parable of Jesus’ and the parable of the vineyard in the book of Isaiah: **“I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard. My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit”** (Isa. 5:1–2). Later, we learn: **“The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of His delight. And He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress”** (Isa. 5:7). Here in Matthew also, the vineyard is **“the house of Israel”**. So then, the **“tenants”** in Jesus’ parable are the religious leaders over Israel. As we will see, in Jesus’ parable also, there is no **“justice”** or **“righteousness”**, just **“bloodshed”** and **“cries of distress”**.

Note also, in both parables, the landowner made all the necessary preparations so that the vineyard would be successful. He **“put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower”** (vs. 33). Thus, the renters could not excuse their poor behavior by saying that it was they who did all the work to make the vineyard successful. No, it was the Lord, the landowner in the parable, who did the work that would guarantee prosperity for the vineyard.

Jesus continues: **“When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way”** (vss. 35–36). Reflected here in the parable is the mistreatment of God’s prophets by the leaders of God’s people. This is spoken of directly in Hebrews: **“They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them”** (Heb. 11:36–38). It is a demonstration of God’s love that he sends prophets who speak for Him to us, when we need to hear them. Obviously, it is a great affront to God for us to ignore those prophets, and worse still, of course, to persecute them. In the parable, it is the **“tenants”** (who represent the religious leaders of the people) who mistreat God’s servants. Certainly, religious leaders should be in tune with what God is trying to say. Their role should always

be one of support for those who are speaking God's word. In this, the **"tenants"** gravely failed.

It was time for the landowner to take even more drastic action: **"Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him"** (vss. 37–39). It was an act of great patience and grace for the landowner to send his son. Certainly, he could have had the tenants punished severely by the law for beating, killing and stoning his servants. In fact, the patience of the landowner is quite absurd. And indeed, the patience of God is (to put it coarsely) quite absurd, in that He gives us opportunity to repent far beyond what we deserve. His absurd patience is due to His great love for us, and His desire that none of us perish.

The actions of the tenants are also quite absurd. Don't they consider the consequences of their actions? Don't they see that great judgment will come on them for mistreating the son of the landowner? Any listener to the parable would recognize that they are evil and foolish, even those who are represented in the parable. Jesus asks them directly: **"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"** The religious leaders, about whom the parable is speaking, condemn themselves: **"'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,' they replied, 'and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time'"** (vs. 41).

Lest his listeners misinterpret the parable, Jesus applies the parable directly to them: **"Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed'"** (vss. 42–44). The religious leaders thought, by virtue of their genealogy and their status as religious leaders, that the kingdom of God was theirs. We must be careful not to fall into the same trap. We think we have a right to God's blessing because we live in a Christian land, or we live among Christians, or we go to church, or our parents are Christians, etc. We feel we have appropriated the blessings of God because those around us have. However, though we worship as a congregation, God looks at the heart of each person. Each person individually must heed God's Word, call on the name of the Lord Jesus, and accept Him as his or her Lord.



## A Topical Study: On Prayer

[Here we continue a series on Prayer. This continues a study by the great intellect of Stephen Charnock. In the study, he digs deep into Phil. 4:6.]—*Ed.*

### Pray for Everything, pt. 2 by Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)

**But in everything by prayer and supplication with  
thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.  
(Phil. 4:6, AV).**

The third particular propounded is: how we must pray. Take an account of this in these severals.

1. Pray much and often. This we are enjoined when he bids us to pray **“in everything”**. We must pray whenever we have occasion, and everything gives us occasion for some request. We have occasion to pray from what concerns our eternal state, our spiritual state, and our outward conditions. Thus, we have occasions to pray from everything. We have either wants or fears, which respect every state; and therefore frequent constant occasions to pray, and so we should be much and often in this duty. It is called for in like expressions, such as in Eph. 6:18: **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints.”** What is here implied, is there expressed; praying always whenever opportunity or occasion is offered; this is offered frequently. And so we are enjoined to continue in prayer: **“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with Thanksgiving”** (Col. 4:2). **“Pray continually without ceasing”** (1 Thess. 5:17). The meaning of these expressions is not that we should do nothing but pray, that this should take up all our time, and we should be every moment in its employment; but that we should be much and often in it. We should always keep a praying temper. We should always be disposed to it, always ready for it when the occasion is offered. No employment should wear off this temper, or indispose us to this duty. As when the apostle says, **“I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart”** (Rom.9:2). Not that the acts and expressions of this sorrow were never discontinued. We

know he was often rejoicing upon other occasions, but their sad condition had made a lasting impression of grief upon his heart, which he was ready and disposed to express when occasion was offered. Though the act of prayer be intermitted, and discontinued through other employments, yet the disposedness to it should last; the heart should be ready for it whenever there is occasion and opportunity. Such a continual disposition, and readiness to pray is, as we call, an habitual praying. And in this respect we may be said to rejoice always evermore.

But that is not all. As we must be always ready to pray, so we must frequently show this readiness, this habitual frame: We must be praying actually. It must be our daily employment, our daily sacrifice. As the priests might be said always to sacrifice, because they constantly offered sacrifice evening and morning; or as Mephibosheth is said to eat meat with David continually (see 2 Sam. 9:7), because he did eat with him at his set meals; so we, that we may answer those commands which require us to pray continually, must have our times for prayer everyday, as they had for their sacrifice, and we have and they had for their daily meals.

But this is not all either; we have many times repasts and refreshments besides our set meals. And they had many other sacrifices, besides those offered evening and morning: Some extraordinary, and some upon particular occasions. So should we, besides our ordinary and daily addresses to God, make our requests known in an extraordinary manner, when we have extraordinary occasion, public or personal. We should apply ourselves to Him at any time (besides those seasons which we daily observe) when we have more particular and special occasion. We must take all occasions to offer our requests, which the providence of God offers us; both those that are continued and in course, and those that are emergent and bring special reason for it. In everything, both of this and that nature, our requests must be made known; and so much and often, such a frequency, as may be called a continuance in prayer.

2. Pray carefully: instead of being careful about other things, be careful in this. Pray carefully; take care how you perform this duty, and show this care about prayer in everything you pray for. Not that you should pray with anxiousness, solicitousness, perplexity; but that you should pray carefully. This care in praying is expressed by watching, frequently joined to this duty in scripture. **“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving”** (Col. 4:2). **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance”** (Eph. 6:18). **“Be sober, and watch unto prayer”** (I Pet. 4:7). There must be diligence and care in praying. We must be watchful about it, as that which requires our care. We are careful about that which keeps us waking and watchful. Watchfulness denotes the importance of that which we watch, and some danger in it, and the sense of both. It is of things of consequence that we think ourselves concerned to be watchful



about. We should go about this duty, as a matter of great importance. We should be sensible who it is with whom we have to do; of what importance it is to make an address to the great God; and of what importance our necessities are, which we spread before Him. If we pray with sleepy, drowsy, listless hearts, we slight the great God, and slight our own necessities, our own interest; and slight a duty, wherein both the Lord and ourselves are so much concerned. If we go about this duty with a sleepy soul, we offer to God a dream instead of a real supplication; we affront Him and show a wretched disregard of our own concernments. And therefore, we should awake ourselves when we come before God, as Deborah. **“Awake, awake, Deborah, awake, awake, utter a song”** (Judges 5:12). And David: **“Awake psalter and harp, I myself will awake early; Awake up my Glory, ...”** etc. (Ps. 57:8). We should stir up ourselves to lay hold on Him: we should rouse mind and heart, graces, and affections, that all may be stirring and active, and not shut up in a careless, drowsy, listlessness. This is to watch unto prayer; this is to be vigilant and careful about it.

Watchfulness denotes a sense of danger. When we are watchful we apprehend some danger, and this is signified when watchfulness in prayer is called for, **“Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation”** (Mark 26:41). **“Take heed, watch and pray”** (Mark 13:33). **“What ye therefore and pray always”** (Luke 21:36). There is danger, for there is temptation which attends our prayers. There is danger; lest our minds and hearts should wander from God, when they should be set on Him. There is danger, lest such distempers seize on, and cleave to our souls in praying, as may turn our prayers into sin. So there is danger lest our prayers should miscarry. We should be apprehensive of the danger, and so watchful to prevent it, to avoid it. Careful and vigilant that we enter not into the temptation, to which we are subject when we pray; watchful to expect it that we not be surprised; to resist it that we be not overcome; that though it attacks us, it may not carry us along with it, we may not enter into it. Vigilant to prevent wanderings and distractions; those loose vagaries of our vain minds and hearts, into which they are apt to run, when they should be most fixed, and have that before them which should wholly take them up; as Abraham watched his sacrifice. Vigilant and careful to discern and shake off inward distempers, which are wont to mix themselves with our prayers, and spoil them.

3. Pray earnestly. It is the property of the Hebrew tongue to express vehemency by joining diverse words of the same signification together. The apostle being a Hebrew of Hebrews, usually follows that style, and that may be one thing intended here, by adding diverse words of the like signification to express prayer. He would have us to pray with some vehemence and earnestness, as Elijah did; his vehemence in praying is so expressed (see James 5:17) as greatly, earnestly, vehemently desired. Our hearts and affections in prayer, should not only be roused, but extended,

drawn out in some earnestness; not only awakened, but warmed. There should be a spiritual heat and fervor in them. We should be fervent in spirit, when we are thus serving the Lord. Pray as the church for Peter (see Acts 12:5), where fervent prayer is made (the same word is also found in I Peter 4:8). And so it is said, "**The tribes served God in fervency**" (Acts 26:7); or which is all one in effect, with souls stretched to Him. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God; and therein the soul should stretch forth itself to the utmost, to get heard unto God. To pray lazily, slothfully, is to pray as though we prayed not; and that will not have answerable returns from Him; will not provoke Him to hear, as though He did not hear; to regard our requests, as though He regarded them not. He that begs coldly, bespeaks a denial. He may be used like an idle beggar, too lazy, not only to work, but to seek relief. The Lord, if He love you, will whip you out of such intolerable sloth.

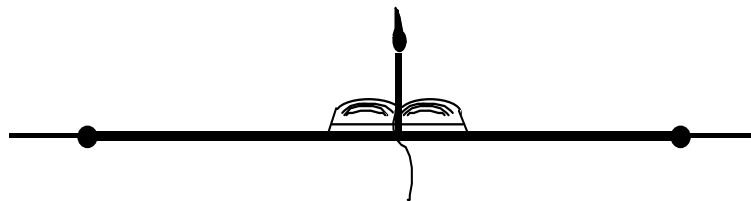
This earnestness the Lord expects in prayer, such as is expressed in scripture, by crying out of the depths (see Ps. 130:1), by mighty cries (see Jonah 3:8), strong cries (see Heb. 5:7), such as those of a woman in travail (see Isa. 26). The soul should cry, as pained with its spiritual wants, inward distempers and corruption, as one in anguish until delivered.

By striving: "**Strive together with me in your prayers to God for us**" (Rom. 15:30); such as wrestlers use, when they put forth all their strength, use all their might and prevail.

By wrestling: So Jacob wrestled with God (see Gen 32:26). And herein his wrestling consisted (see Hos. 12:4): he wept and made supplications; he prayed earnestly, affectionately; his heart melted and ran out in his supplications.

If we would take care to pray thus, the other carefulness, wherewith we trouble ourselves, would be needless. This would do our work, both for the things of time and eternity. "**The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, avails much**" (James 5:16).

*(This study will continue in the next issue, D.V.)*





## A Study in Psalms: Psalm 72

### Psalm 72 - The Coming Kingdom

Of Solomon.

- <sup>1</sup>Endow the king with Your justice, O God,  
the royal son with Your righteousness.
- <sup>2</sup>He will judge Your people in righteousness,  
Your afflicted ones with justice.
- <sup>3</sup>The mountains will bring prosperity to the people,  
the hills the fruit of righteousness.
- <sup>4</sup>He will defend the afflicted among the people  
and save the children of the needy;  
He will crush the oppressor.
- <sup>5</sup>He will endure as long as the sun,  
as long as the moon, through all generations.
- <sup>6</sup>He will be like rain falling on a mown field,  
like showers watering the earth.
- <sup>7</sup>In his days the righteous will flourish;  
prosperity will abound till the moon is no more.
- <sup>8</sup>He will rule from sea to sea  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- <sup>9</sup>The desert tribes will bow before him  
and his enemies will lick the dust.
- <sup>10</sup>The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores  
will bring tribute to him;  
The kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts.
- <sup>11</sup>All kings will bow down to him  
and all nations will serve him.
- <sup>12</sup>For he will deliver the needy who cry out,  
the afflicted who have no one to help.
- <sup>13</sup>He will take pity on the weak and the needy  
and save the needy from death.
- <sup>14</sup>He will rescue them from oppression and violence,  
for precious is their blood in his sight.
- <sup>15</sup>Long may he live!  
May gold from Sheba be given him.  
May people ever pray for him  
and bless him all day long.
- <sup>16</sup>Let grain abound throughout the land;  
on the tops of the hills may it sway.

Let its fruit flourish like Lebanon;  
 let it thrive like the grass of the field.  
<sup>17</sup>May his name endure forever;  
 may it continue as long as the sun.  
 All nations will be blessed through him,  
 and they will call him blessed.

<sup>18</sup>Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel,  
 who alone does marvelous deeds.  
<sup>19</sup>Praise be to his glorious name forever;  
 may the whole earth be filled with his glory.  
 Amen and Amen.

<sup>20</sup>This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.

This psalm contains a prayer (vss. 1-2), and then a prophecy (vss. 3-17) about a coming kingdom. On one level, the kingdom referred to is Solomon's; and yet, there are passages in the psalm which could only refer to the coming kingdom of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. For instance, the Psalmist speaks of an everlasting kingdom, a universal kingdom, a kingdom of perfect peace, a kingdom of perfect submission of its inhabitants, and a kingdom through which all peoples on earth are blessed. These passages could only refer to the Kingdom of Christ, who will rule as a perfect ruler. "Though Solomon's name is here made use of, Christ's kingdom is here prophesied of under the type and figure of Solomon's. David knew what the Divine oracle was, that '**of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on His throne**' (Acts 2:30)." [Henry]. "Transported with joy and gratitude at the crowning of Solomon, David addressed this Psalm to God, in which he prays Him to pour out His blessings on the young king and upon the people. He then, rapt in a divine enthusiasm, ascends to a higher subject, and sings the glory of the Messiah, and the magnificence of His reign. So that in this Psalm we may see a great number of expressions which cannot relate to Solomon, unless in a hyperbolical and figurative sense: but applied to Christ, they are literally and rigorously exact" [Calmet, in Plumer].

There is a bit of a controversy among commentators as to who wrote this Psalm, Solomon or David. The last verse of the psalm seems to indicate that it was the last prayer psalm that David wrote. The inscription, "**Of Solomon**", seems, at first glance, to indicate that Solomon wrote the psalm. Those who believe that Solomon wrote the Psalm argue that the last verse does not apply to this psalm only, but is a postscript tacked on to the entire second book of Psalms (this Psalm ends the second book of Psalms). Those who believe that David wrote it, interpret the inscription as not meaning "**Of Solomon**" in the sense that he wrote it, but meaning "**Of Solomon**" as if to say "*About Solomon*". Though I tend to slightly lean toward the latter view, either view is sustainable. In my view, it

seems unlikely that Solomon would write about his own reign such predictions as are found in this psalm. For the purposes of consistent commentary, I will assume for now that David wrote the psalm. Suffice it to say that, whoever is the true author, the meaning of the psalm is fairly straight-forward: It is a prayer for Solomon's reign, with an eye toward the future reign of the Messiah.

David begins with a prayer: **"Endow the king with Your justice, O God, the royal son with Your righteousness"** (vs. 1). It is significant that, no matter how powerful a king may be on earth, there is one more powerful: the Lord of the Universe. Even the most powerful kings need our prayers. "A king may command within his kingdom many things, but he cannot command a blessing on his own government; he must make suit for this to God" [Dickson, 437].

David prays that Solomon would be endowed with *God's* justice and *God's* righteousness. "Nothing is more conducive to make a king's government prosperous and blessed than equity and justice, according to the revealed will of God" [Dickson, 437]. "This is a prayer that God would bestow on him the qualifications which would tend to secure a just, a protracted, and a peaceful reign" [Barnes]. "The best thing we can ask for children or rulers is that they may be governed by God's decisions, and controlled by His Word" [Plumer, 707].

We should all pray for our governmental leaders, that they themselves would be governed by God's justice and righteousness, that they would lead the land according to the will and purposes of God, that they would be guided and directed by God. We should pray for our leaders, even if we do not agree with them politically.

This prayer of David's was not just a prayer for his leader. In this case, David was praying for his son, **"the royal son"**. "It is the prayer of a father for his child, a dying blessing, such as the patriarchs bequeathed to their children. The best thing we can ask of God for our children is that God will give them wisdom and grace to know and do their duty; that is better than gold" [Henry].

Starting in verse 2, David continues the psalm with an extended prophecy about the government of Solomon. And yet, as we shall see, the prophecy reaches far beyond Solomon's government, to the government of the Messiah. While Solomon's government partially fulfilled most of the elements of David's prophecy, they could only be completely fulfilled by a perfect ruler, of a perfect government. Solomon's government showed much promise early on, but Solomon was a sinful man, and his sin seemed to grow as he grew older. The Lord Jesus Christ's government will persevere in perfect righteousness and perfect justice. In fact, in David's enumeration of twenty or so attributes of Christ's government, we may find a description of the perfect government: a model of governmental perfection, to which all governments should aspire.

David begins his prophecy: **“He will judge Your people in righteousness, Your afflicted ones with justice”** (vs. 2). To the extent governments are righteous and just, is the extent to which they are successful in the eyes of God. “It is one of the primary ideas in the character of a king that he is the fountain of justice; the maker of the laws; the dispenser of right to all his subjects” [Barnes]. Solomon partially fulfilled this prophecy, especially at the beginning of his reign, but the complete fulfillment will be found in Christ’s kingdom. Isaiah prophecies similarly: **“With righteousness He will judge the needy, with justice He will give decisions for the poor of the earth”** (Isa. 11:4). Christ will ever and always judge righteously. There will be no need to worry about being unjustly imprisoned, or worry about the guilty getting off scot-free.

**“The mountains will bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness”** (vs. 3). This describes the prosperity of the coming kingdom. Even **“the mountains”** and **“the hills”**, normally infertile areas, will be fruitful.

**“He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; He will crush the oppressor”** (vs. 4). In a good government, the weak and powerless need not worry: oppressors cannot thrive. A good government is a protector of the **“afflicted”** and **“needy”**.

**“He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations”** (vs. 5). This clearly points to Christ’s kingdom, not Solomon’s, for David knew that Solomon would not **“endure as long as the sun, endure as long as the moon.”** Now, interestingly, the phrase **“as long as the sun, as long as the moon”** is not, in the Bible, a synonym for “forever”. For, after Christ’s millennial reign at the end of the age, there will be **“a new heaven and new earth”** (see Rev. 21:1). At that time, **“the city [will] not need the sun or the moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light”** (Rev. 21:23); and the inhabitants **“will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light”** (Rev. 22:5). And so, David, when he says, **“He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations”**, is saying that Christ’s is the dynasty under which the affairs of the world will be wrapped up.

**“He will be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth”** (vs. 6). Clean, cool, refreshing: this is a beautiful picture of the reign of the King of Peace.

**“In his days, the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more”** (vs. 7). In this fallen world, it does not always happen that the **“righteous flourish”**. Some see this as proof that God does not exist. But this is not proof that God does not exist; rather, it is proof that men do not carry out the will of God, and that their governments—even the best of them—are imperfect.

*(The study of this psalm will continue in the next issue, D.V.)*

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### **God's Early Guidance**

"God's providence towards His people dates not at the time of their being called to a knowledge of Himself, but long before. In the formation of their bodies, what goodness appears. No man has ever been able to suggest how the form or figure of the human frame could be improved. In this indeed the wicked share the same bounty of God. In their early infancy how amazing was God's care over them. Think too of the early and deep impressions which God often makes on the minds and hearts of His chosen, even years before their conversion. In a solitary wood among huge rocks, or hoary mountains, or by some gentle stream, or noble river, or vast expanse of waters, what conceptions of God has many a child had! In an escape from danger, what a sense of God's goodness has stolen over the hearts of His people, even before their conversion... Even where such impressions do not end in a speedy conversion, they are often very salutary in preserving the young from the worst forms of evil."

-- *William Plumer* (1802-1880)

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