

# Scripture Studies

VOL. XVI, No. 6

NOVEMBER  
2017

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

---

## Old Testament Study:

- Exodus 32**.....3  
*The Molten Calf*, by C. H. Mackintosh (1858)

## A Classic Study:

- Job 1:13-15 (part 1)**.....13  
*The Time of Affliction*, by Joseph Caryl (1644)

## New Testament Study:

- Romans 1:18-20**.....24  
*The Wrath of God, the Sin of Man*, pt. 1, by Scott Sperling

## A Topical Study:

- Communion with God**.....34  
*How to Spend Every Day with God*, pt. 3, by M. Henry (1710)

## A Study in Wisdom:

- Psalms 78 (pt. 1)**.....45  
*Lessons from History*, pt. 1, by Scott Sperling

## A Sermon:

- Spurgeon Sermon, No. 14** .....54  
*The Victory of Faith — I John 5:4*; by C. H. Spurgeon (1855)

## A Meditation:

- The Spiritual Chemist**.....71  
*A Meditation Upon the Bible*, by W. Spurstowe (1666)

## Postscript:

- New Life: Necessary**.....77



*Scripture Studies* (ISSN: 1520-4308) is edited and published by Scott Sperling. It is distributed via the internet free of charge.

If you would like to be added to the email list, send your request to:

**[ssper@scripturestudies.com](mailto:ssper@scripturestudies.com)**

Back issues are available, free of charge, on the World Wide Web at:

**<http://www.ScriptureStudies.com>**

Most of the bibliographic resources can be found on the World Wide Web, free of charge, at:

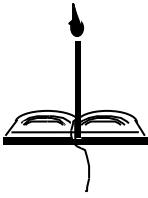
**<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>**

For readability's sake, some of the classic articles have been lightly edited, so that they follow modern English usage for certain words. Very occasionally, they are edited in other ways, also. Every attempt is made to maintain the author's original meaning and wording. If such editing irks you, I apologize.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™

May God bless you as you study His Word.

Copyright © 2017, Scott Sperling



## *Old Testament Study: Exodus 32*

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

### Exodus 32 – The Molten Calf

<sup>1</sup> And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. <sup>2</sup> And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. <sup>3</sup> And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. <sup>4</sup> And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. <sup>5</sup> And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord. <sup>6</sup> And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

<sup>7</sup> And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: <sup>8</sup> They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup> And the Lord said unto Moses,

I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: <sup>10</sup> Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. <sup>11</sup> And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? <sup>12</sup> Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. <sup>13</sup> Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. <sup>14</sup> And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

<sup>15</sup> And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. <sup>16</sup> And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. <sup>17</sup> And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. <sup>18</sup> And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

<sup>19</sup> And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. <sup>20</sup> And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. <sup>21</sup> And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? <sup>22</sup> And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. <sup>23</sup> For

they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. <sup>24</sup> And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

<sup>25</sup> And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies;) <sup>26</sup> Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. <sup>27</sup> And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. <sup>28</sup> And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. <sup>29</sup> For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

<sup>30</sup> And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. <sup>31</sup> And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. <sup>32</sup> Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin — ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. <sup>33</sup> And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. <sup>34</sup> Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. <sup>35</sup> And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made. (KJV)

We have now to contemplate something very different from that which has hitherto engaged our attention. “The

**pattern of things in the heavens”** (Heb. 9:23) has been before us—Christ in His glorious Person, gracious offices, and perfect work, as set forth in the tabernacle and all its mystic furniture. We have been, in spirit, on the mount, hearkening to God’s own words—the sweet utterances of heaven’s thoughts, affections, and counsels, of which Jesus is **“the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last”** (Rev. 22:13).

Now, however, we are called down to earth, to behold the melancholy wreck which man makes of everything to which he puts his hand. **“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him. Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him”** (vs. 1). What degradation is here! *Make us gods!* They were abandoning Jehovah, and placing themselves under the conduct of manufactured gods — gods of man’s making. Dark clouds and heavy mists had gathered round the mount. They grew weary of waiting for the absent one, and of hanging on an unseen but real arm. They imagined that a god formed by **“a graving tool”** was better than Jehovah; that a calf which they could *see* was better than the invisible, yet everywhere present, God; a visible counterfeit, than an invisible reality.

Alas! alas! it has ever been thus in man’s history. The human heart loves something that can be seen; it loves that which meets and gratifies the senses. It is only faith that can **“endure, as seeing him who is invisible”** (Heb. 11:27). Hence, in every age, men have been forward to set up and lean upon human imitations of divine realities. Thus it is we see the counterfeits of corrupt religion multiplied before our eyes. Those things which we know, upon the authority of God’s word, to be divine and heavenly realities, the professing Church has transformed into human and earthly imitations. Having become weary of hanging upon an invisible arm, of

trusting in an invisible sacrifice, of having recourse to an invisible priest, of committing herself to the guidance of an invisible head, she has set about **“making”** these things; and thus, from age to age, she has been busily at work, with **“graving tool”** in hand, graving and fashioning one thing after another, until we can, at length, recognize as little similarity between much that we see around us, and what we read in the word, as between **“a molten calf”** and the God of Israel.

**“Make us gods!”** What a thought! Man called upon to make gods, and people willing to put their trust in such! My reader, let us look within, and look around, and see if we cannot detect something of all this. We read, in 1 Corinthians 10 in reference to Israel’s history, that **“all these things happened unto them for ensamples”**, (or *types*), **“and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come”** (I Cor. 10:11). Let us, then, seek to profit by the **“admonition.”** Let us remember that, although we may not just form and bow down before **“a molten calf,”** yet, that Israel’s sin is a *type* of something into which we are in danger of falling. Whenever we turn away in heart from leaning exclusively upon God Himself, whether in the matter of salvation or the necessities of the path, we are, in principle, saying, **“up, make us gods.”** It is needless to say we are not, in ourselves, a whit better than Aaron or the children of Israel; and if they acknowledged a calf instead of Jehovah, we are in danger of acting on the same principle, and manifesting the same spirit. Our only safeguard is to be much in the presence of God. Moses knew that the **“molten calf”** was not Jehovah, and therefore he did not acknowledge it. But when we get out of the divine presence, there is no accounting for the gross errors and evils into which we may be betrayed.

We are called to live by faith; we can see nothing with the eye of sense. Jesus is gone up on high, and we are told to wait patiently for His appearing. God’s word carried home to the heart, in the energy of the Holy Ghost, is the ground of



confidence in all things, temporal and spiritual, present and future. He tells us of Christ's completed sacrifice; we, by grace, believe, and commit our souls to the efficacy thereof, and know we shall never be confounded. He tells us of a great High Priest passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, whose intercession is all-prevailing; we, by grace, believe, and lean confidently upon His ability, and know we shall be saved to the uttermost. He tells us of the living Head to whom we are linked, in the power of resurrection life, and from whom we can never be severed by any influence, angelic, human or diabolical; we, by grace, believe, and cling to that Blessed Head, in simple faith, and know we shall never perish. He tells us of the glorious appearing of the Son from heaven; we, through grace, believe, and seek to prove the purifying and elevating power of **"that blessed hope,"** and know we shall not be disappointed. He tells us of **"an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God"** (I Pet. 1:4), for entrance thereinto in due time; we, through grace, believe and know we shall never be confounded. He tells us the hairs of our head are all numbered, and that we shall never want any good thing; we, through grace, believe, and enjoy a sweetly tranquillized heart.

Thus it is, or, at least, thus our God would have it. But then the enemy is ever active in seeking to make us cast away these divine realities, take up the **"graving tool"** of unbelief, and **"make gods"** for ourselves. Let us watch against him, pray against him, believe against him, testify against him, act against him: thus he shall be confounded, God glorified, and we ourselves abundantly blessed.

As to Israel, in the chapter before us, their rejection of God was most complete. **"And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me... And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf:**

and they said, *These be thy gods, Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said. Tomorrow is a feast unto the Lord.*" (vss. 2, 4-5). This was entirely setting aside God, and putting a calf in His stead. When they could say that a calf had brought them up out of Egypt, they had, evidently, abandoned all idea of the presence and character of the true God. How **"quickly"** they must **"have turned aside out of the way"** (vs. 8), to have made such a gross and terrible mistake! And Aaron, the brother and yoke-fellow of Moses, led them on in this; and with a calf before him, he could say, **"to-morrow is a feast unto Jehovah!"** How sad! How deeply humbling! God was displaced by an idol. A thing, **"graven by art and man's device,"** was set in the place of **"the Lord of all the earth."**

All this involved, on Israel's part, a deliberate abandonment of their connection with Jehovah. They had given Him up; and accordingly we find Him, as it were, taking them on their own ground. **"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them .... I have seen this people, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a greater nation"** (vss. 7-10). Here was an open door for Moses; and here he displays uncommon grace and similarity of spirit to that Prophet whom the Lord was to raise up like unto him. He refuses to be or to have anything without the people. He pleads with God on the ground of His own glory, and puts the people back upon Him in these touching words, **"Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them**

out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth. Turn from thy fierce wrath and repent of this evil against *thy* people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever” (vss. 11-13). This was powerful pleading. The glory of God, the vindication of His holy name, the accomplishment of His oath. These are the grounds on which Moses entreats the Lord to turn from His fierce wrath. He could not find, in Israel’s conduct or character, any plea or ground to go upon. He found it all in God Himself.

The Lord had said unto Moses, “**Thy people which thou broughtest up;**” but Moses replies to the Lord, “**Thy people which thou hast brought up.**” They were the Lord’s people notwithstanding all; and His name, His glory, His oath were all involved in their destiny. The moment the Lord links Himself with a people, His character is involved, and faith will ever look at Him upon this solid ground. Moses loses sight of himself entirely. His whole soul is engrossed with thoughts of the Lord’s glory and the Lord’s people. Blessed servant! How few like him! And yet when we contemplate him in all this scene, we perceive how infinitely he is below the blessed Master. He came down from the mount, and when he saw the calf and the dancing, “**his anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands and brake them beneath the mount**” (vs. 19). The covenant was broken and the memorials thereof shattered to pieces; and then, having executed judgment in righteous indignation, “**he said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin**” (vs. 30).

How different is this from what we see in Christ! He came down from the bosom of the Father, not with the tables in His hands, but with the law in His heart. He came down, not

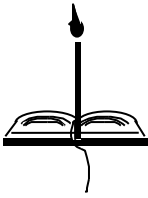
to be made acquainted with the condition of the people, but with a perfect knowledge of what that condition was. Moreover, instead of destroying the memorials of the covenant and executing judgment, He magnified the law and made it honourable, and bore the judgment of His people, in His own blessed Person, on the cross; and, having done all, He went back to heaven, not with a **“peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin,”** but to lay upon the throne of the majesty in the highest, the imperishable memorials of an atonement already accomplished. This makes a vast and truly glorious difference. Thank God, we need not anxiously gaze after our Mediator to know if haply He shall accomplish redemption for us, and reconcile offended Justice. No, He has done it all. His presence on high declares that the whole work is finished. He could stand upon the confines of this world, ready to take His departure, and, in all the calmness of a conscious victor—though He had yet to encounter the darkest scene of all—say, **“I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”** (John 17:4). Blessed Saviour! We may well adore thee, and well exult in the place of dignity and glory in which eternal justice has set thee. The highest place in heaven belongs to thee; and thy saints only wait for the time when **“every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father”** (Phil. 2:9). May that time speedily arrive!

At the close of this chapter Jehovah asserts His rights, in moral government, in the following words: **“Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore, now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine angel shall go before thee: nevertheless, in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them”** (vs. 33-34). This is God *in government*, not God *in the gospel*. Here He speaks of blotting out the *sinner*; in the gospel He is seen blotting out *sin*. A wide difference!

The people are to be sent forward, under the mediatorship of Moses by the hand of an angel. This was very unlike the condition of things which obtained from Egypt to Sinai. They had forfeited all claim on the ground of law, and hence it only remained for God to fall back upon His own sovereignty and say, **“I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy”** (Ex. 33:19).

---

This article is taken from: Mackintosh, C. H. *Notes on the Book of Exodus*. London: George Morrish, 1858. A PDF file of this book can be downloaded, free of charge, at <http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>.



## *A Classic Study: Job 1:13-14 (part 1)*

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

### A Study by Joseph Caryl (1644)

#### Job 1:13-15 (part 1) - The Time of Affliction

**<sup>13</sup>And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: <sup>14</sup>And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them. <sup>15</sup>And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.**  
(KJV)

In the former context we showed you the affliction of Job, moved by Satan and permitted by God, *Touch all that he hath*, is Satan's motion; *All that he hath is in thine hand*, is God's permission. From this 13<sup>th</sup> verse to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> the afflictions of Job are particularly described; and we may observe six particulars in the context concerning his afflictions.

1. *The time or season of his afflictions:* **“And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house”** (vs. 13).

2. *The instruments or the means of his afflictions.* Satan who undertook the afflicting of Job, stands as it were behind the door; he does not appear in it, but sets on others. His instruments were first cruel and bloody-minded men, the Sabeans (see vs. 15), and the Chaldeans (see vs. 17). Secondly, those active creatures, devouring fire (see vs. 16), and stormy winds (see vs. 19).
3. *The matter of his affliction,* or in what he was afflicted, it was in his outward estate.
4. *The variety of his affliction.* He was not smitten in some one thing, in some one part of his outward estate, but he was afflicted in all: his oxen, his asses, and his camels violently taken away; his sheep burnt up by the fire; his sons and his daughters overwhelmed and crushed by the fall of a house; all his servants attending upon these slain, consumed, destroyed, excepting only one from every stroke, to be the sad relater or messenger of these calamities.
5. *The suddenness of his afflictions.* They came all upon him in one day.
6. *The incessantness of the report of these afflictions.* The sound of them all was in his ears at once, as they were all brought upon him in one day, so they are all told him in one hour, yea by the story it appears there were but very few moments between the first and the last. For the text says that no sooner had one messenger ended his doleful news, but another begins, nay they did not stay so long as to let one another make an end; but the text says,

**“While the former was yet speaking, there came another and said...”** And so, while the next was yet speaking, there came another. So Satan did not give Job so much as the least minute of intermission to breathe a while or recollect himself. His troubles both in the acting and in the reporting, were close linked together, like a chain one within another, and him within them all *fast bound, and yet free*.

These are observable, through the whole context concerning this great affliction of Job. Now we will consider the afflictions themselves, their several parts, and open the words in which they are presented to us.

**“And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house”** (vs. 13)

**“And there was a day...”** – *To everything there is a season,* said Solomon, *and a time for every purpose under the sun* (Eccl. 3:1). God has a time for his purposes; God has his day. Man has a time for his purposes, and so does Satan: not just any day will serve his turn; he picks and chooses. *There was a day:* it intimates an extraordinary day, and there is an express addition in the original, which puts an *emphasis* upon it, and makes it more than a day. There was *that day*, or *that special day*. So it is used in II Kings 4:8: **“And it fell on a day that Elisha passed to Shunem,”** or upon that day, a notable day wherein so many great things were done.

But what day was this? It is explained in the words, in the latter part of the verse. It was a notable day, for it was a day or that day, **“when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house.”**



There are three things in those words, which prove that this was an extraordinary day:

1. It was a feasting day, and feasting days are extraordinary days.
2. It was an extraordinary, not an ordinary feasting day, for it is said: **“...they were eating and drinking wine.”** In the beginning of the chapter (where the feasts of Job’s children are described) it is said only, that **“his sons went every one their day, to eat and to drink”** (Job 1:4). But here it is said that they did **“eat and drink wine,”** which notes an extraordinary feast. For still in Scripture, when we read of a banquet of wine, or of a feast of wine, an extraordinary feast is meant. For instance, Queen Esther invited the king and Haman to a *banquet of wine* (Esth. 5:6), not that there was nothing but wine at the banquet, but that addition implies that it was a plentiful banquet, a solemn banquet. It is more to make a *banquet of wine*, than to make a *banquet*, though scarce any banquet is made without wine. So when there wanted wine, the solemnity and glory of the feast was thought to be blemished. **“They have no wine”** (John 2:4), said the mother of Christ to him at the marriage feast in Cana. And when the spouse would set forth the wonderful fulness of spiritual delights, which she had from Christ, she expresses it thus, **“He brought me into the banqueting house”** (Song. 2:4); the Hebrew word is, *he brought me into the house of wine*; the house of wine notes extraordinary spiritual refreshing. What sort of banquet had the spouse for her soul there? Christ called her to eat and drink abundantly, to be filled with his love. See the like in Isa. 25:6. So Job’s

children were eating and drinking wine, so they were at a plentiful and solemn feast that day.

3. It was a day of feasting in their **“eldest brother’s house”**; that is another which proves it was an extraordinary feast day. It was a feast, and a feast of wine, and a feast of wine in their eldest brother’s house, who had a larger estate, a fuller portion, and to answer the dignity of his primogenitor, ought to make a more solemn feast than the rest did. This was the day that Satan picks out and chooses to bring all these sad afflictions upon Job; an ordinary day would not serve his turn. Without doubt this was not the immediate day or time, after which he got that commission from God, **“All that he hath is in thine hand...”** (vs. 12). Satan went away; he would have been at it as soon as he could but yet he waited for a special time, wherein he might do it with greatest advantage; and that is the point I shall observe from this:

*That Satan observes and watches his time to fasten his temptations most strongly upon the soul.* He watches a day, **“There was a day...”**, and there was not a day in the whole year, upon which he could have done it with greater advantage than upon that day. This is just as the mercies of God are exceedingly endeared to us by the season in which they come to us. When they come to us in our special need, how sweet is a mercy then! And as our obedience is exceedingly commended to the acceptance of God, when it is upon a fit day, when it is on the day wherein he calls for and expects it, so are our sins exceedingly aggravated by the season and time wherein they are committed. What! Sin upon this day? A day of trouble, a day of humiliation? Just as Elisha rebuked Gehazi, **“Is this a time to receive money and to receive garments”** etc. (II

Kings 5:26). Is this a time for your heart to run out sinfully after the world? So likewise, the temptations of Satan and the afflictions which he brings upon the servants of God, are exceedingly embittered by the season, and he knows well enough what seasons will make them most bitter. What can more embitter a cup of sorrow than to have it brought us upon a day of rejoicing? Solomon tells us, that **“as he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings a song to a heavy heart”** (Prov. 25:20). If joy be troublesome in our sorrows, how troublesome is sorrow in the midst of our joys.

So then, Satan could never have found out such a time as this. Must he needs be afflicting the father, when the children were feasting? Could he find out no other time but this? Must his tears be mingled with their wine? Must the children’s rejoicing day be the father’s mourning day? Must Satan show malice against the father, when the children were showing their love to one another? It was a love-feast.

Thus he did with Christ; it is observed that when Christ had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, and afterwards was hungry, then the tempter came. He lays hold of this advantage; he would not come till Christ was hungry, to persuade him to turn stones into bread. What a strength had this temptation from the season? Who would not make bread for himself if he can, when he is hungry? Had Christ been full, there had not been such an edge upon, such a weight in the temptation. How many does Satan provoke to turn stones into bread, when he comes to them in their hunger? You who are in a strait, likely to starve and perish, turn stones into bread; that is, procure for yourself meat and provision by unlawful and sinful ways. This is indeed to turn stones into bread. So here, at this time, when Job was rejoicing (as doubtless he did) to see the love and unity of his children, now at this time Satan attempts to turn their bread into a stone, to bruise and break the heart of their tender father. *Afflictions press most when they are least expected.*

Let us observe then this mixture of malice and cunning in Satan, in choosing his time. To carry a man from one extremity to another puts him upon the greatest extremity. To make the day of a man's greatest rejoicing to be the day of his deepest sorrows, this is cutting, if not killing sorrow. To be brought from extreme sorrow to extreme joy suddenly, does amaze rather than comfort the spirit of man. It is said that, **“When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, the people were like them that dream”** (Ps. 126:1). The change was so great, so sudden, that they were rather astonished and amazed, rather than comforted with it, for a while. So, much more to be hurried from extreme joy to extreme sorrow, from the borders of comfort to the brink of death all of the sudden, is not so much to afflict a man as to confound and distract him. This course Satan takes with Job.

It would be well if we could be wise in this respect to imitate Satan, to choose out our day to do good when there is greatest probability of success, as he chose out his day to do mischief. It is the Apostle's rule, **“as you have opportunity do good”** (Gal, 6:10); if we could be wise to lay hold upon opportunities, it would be a wonderful advantage to us; as a **“word fitly spoken”** is a word upon the wheel, so a work fitly done is a work upon the wheel: it goes on, takes upon the heart both of God and man. Let us consider whether now we have not a season, whether this be not a day that holds forth to us a glorious opportunity. Surely, we may present this day to you, as a day to be doing in. Let us therefore be as quick in this our day to do good, as Satan was in that day to do hurt. This is a day wherein great things are a-doing, and grievous things are a-suffering by many of our brethren. Therefore you should be working this day, make a day of it. This is a day in which sons of Belial, men that will not bear Christ's yoke, are combining to break it, and to cast his cords from them. Then join, this day, to help Christ; else, as Mordecai said to Esther, **“If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time”** (this was a day for Esther to work in) **“then shall there**

**enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed"** (Esth. 4:14). So I may say to you in reference to the present opportunity, if you altogether hold your peace, hold your purses, and hold your hands at this time, at such a day as this, enlargement will come to the church some other way, but you may be destroyed, who think to hold and keep your peace either by saying or doing nothing. If ever you will appear, this is a day to appear in to do good. Let us be wise to manage and improve our day, that it may never be said of us as our Lord Christ did of Jerusalem: **"If ye had known, even ye, in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace"** (Luke 19:42). It is a sadder thing to have had a season and not to know it (or not to use it) than not to have had it. Solomon tells us that **"Because to every purpose there is a time and judgement, therefore the misery of man is great upon him"** (Eccl. 8:6). Misery cannot be great to a man, because there is a time for every purpose, but because men are either so blind that they cannot see, or so sluggish that they will not make use of the proper time for every purpose. Thus the preacher himself expounds it, **"For man knoweth not his time, as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds are taken in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them"** (Eccl. 9:12). Consider what Solomon's experience taught him. Let not your inadvertency of these times make you a new experiment of that ancient truth. And leave men that should be wise, especially that pretend to wisdom, to be numbered among, and compared with a silly bird, a silent fish.

Then again, forasmuch as it was the day of their great feast, of their feast with wine, upon which this great affliction assaulted Job, observe,

*That the fairest and clearest day of our outward comfort may be clouded and overcast before the evening.* It was as fair a day as ever began in Job's family, a feast, and a feast with wine, and that

in the eldest brother's house, and yet all was darkness before night.

This is true in reference to ungodly men, great and terrible judgements fall suddenly upon them; their light is turned into darkness in a moment, as Christ compares it to the days of Noah and the days of Lot: **“As I was”** (said he) **“in the days of Noah, they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all; and as it was in the days of Lot”** etc. (Luke 17:26ff). And the Apostle said, **“When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction commeth”** (I Thess. 5:3). Thus it is with ungodly men, their sun often sets at noon, when they say, yea when they conclude, all's well, then judgement mixed with wrath is at the door. This is a truth also in reference unto godly men and the churches of God, all their outward comforts may be clouded in a day, while they are eating and drinking, nor sinfully but in a holy manner, even as the Apostle advises, **“to the glory of God”** (I Cor. 10:31), yet even at that time all may presently be taken away. And therefore as the Apostle said, **“Rejoice as if you rejoiced not”** in the creature (I Cor. 7:30), and eat as if you did not eat, and buy as if you possessed not. Why? For the fashion of this world, the scheme of this world passes away.

You see it did with Job. In what a goodly fashion was his worldly estate in the morning; how was it dressed and adorned in perfect beauty, in all its excellencies (as we heard it before described), yet before night all the fashion of it passed away, and the beauty of it was quite blasted. Therefore, you that have great estates, and good estates, estates well gotten, and well governed, be not high-minded, trust not in uncertain riches. If riches increase, and if they increase in a right way, **“yet set not your hearts upon them”** (I Tim. 6:17), for the fashion of worldly things quickly passes away. Riches make themselves wings to fly away, when you are making doors and locks, bolts and bars to keep them in.

But what did Satan *do* upon this day? That is set forth in the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, and so on.

**“And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them”**  
(vs. 14).

**“There came a messenger...”** – The Jewish Rabbins and some of the fathers tell us that those messengers were devils, evil spirits in the likeness of men. But surely the opinion has little likeness with the truth, therefore with Beza, I lay it by and reject it amongst the tales of the Rabbins. These messengers were really the escaped servants of Job, as we shall see afterward.

Now the messenger bespeaks Job thus, **“The oxen were plowing”**, they were hard at their work, **“and the asses were feeding besides them.”** The word in the Hebrew is this, *the asses were feeding at their hand*, or at hand. To be at hand denotes nearness. In our language, we say that such a thing is at hand, or such a man is at hand, the day of our fear is at hand, when we mean they are near. **“The Lord is at hand”** (Phil. 4:5), i.e., nigh unto us for our help. So also in II Thess. 2:2. It is applied also to nearness of place, as well as of time, as in Neh. 3:2, where the building of the wall of Jerusalem is described, it is said, **“Next unto him built the men of Jericho”**, the Hebrew is, *at the hand of him build the men of Jericho*, that is, *next to him in place*.

Now the messenger describes all in such a posture, **“The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding.”** By this, to assure Job of the care and diligence of his servants about his business for the securing of his cattle, and improving of his ground; as if he should have said, *This sad affliction which is come upon thee, did not come through our negligence or improvidence, we were about our business according to our several places*, **“The oxen were plowing, and the asses were feeding by them”**; they were

not carelessly left to danger, but our eye was upon them, yet notwithstanding they were all surprised and taken away.

From this relation of the posture of Job's servants and cattle at the time when this affliction fell upon them, we may observe thus much:

*That all our care and diligence cannot secure outward things unto us.* Afflictions may take us in the midst of our best and most honest endeavors. A man may be looking to and ordering his estate, and yet at the very time while his eye is upon it, he may see it take its flight like an eagle towards heaven; while he is ordering of it, he may see disorder and confusion coming upon it; while he is settling of it by honest care, he may quickly see it unsettled, removed and all broken to pieces, as it was here with Job; he was in a very good way; his servants were honestly employed, but suddenly all is gone. The oxen were taken away, and the asses that fed by them.

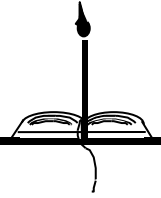
---

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

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



# *New Testament Study:* *Romans 1:18-20*



A Study by Scott Sperling

## Romans 1:18-20 – The Wrath of God, the Sin of Man, pt. 1

[<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.”]

<sup>18</sup> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup> since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Having introduced us to the gospel message in the summarizing verses 16 and 17, Paul tells us, starting in verse 18, of the need that every person has of the saving grace given in the gospel message. Specifically: we are all sinners who, by virtue of our sin, are in danger of experiencing the **“wrath of God.”** “The apostle having stated that the only righteousness available in the sight of God is that which is obtained by faith, proceeds to prove that such is the case... The apostle’s object is to prove the doctrine of the preceding verse, viz., that righteousness is by faith. To do this it was necessary to show

that men in themselves are exposed to condemnation, or are destitute of any righteousness which can satisfy the demands of God" [Hodge, 34,35]. "Instead of plunging at once into an exposition of the gospel, Paul launches into a lengthy exposure of the sinfulness of man. This is sound procedure, for until men are persuaded of their lost condition they are not likely to be concerned about deliverance. So Paul undertakes to demonstrate in the human situation a grievous lack of the righteousness God requires" [Harrison]. "He is intent and eager to bring his reader into sight and possession of the fulness of the eternal mercy, revealed and secured in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Sacrifice and Life. But for this very purpose he labours first to expose man to himself; to awaken him to the fact that he is before everything else a sinner; to reverse the Tempter's spell, and to let him see the fact of his guilt with open eyes. 'The Gospel,' someone has said, 'can never be proved except to a bad conscience.'" [Moule, 55]. "Paul has just stated what the Gospel is; he now goes on to show the necessity for such a Gospel. The world is lost without it" [Sanday-Headlam, 40].

Paul teaches: **"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them"** (vss. 18-19). In many translations (including the NIV), there is a section break between verses 17 and 18, with a section title. These section breaks are not part of the original manuscript that Paul wrote. In fact, I think it is wrong to put a section break between verses 17 and 18, because Paul tied the two verses together through his wording in the original Greek. Most other Bible translations begin verse 18 with the word "For", saying **"For the wrath of God..."** (see KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, NET, et. al.). The word "For" or "Therefore" is in Paul's original Greek writing; inexplicably, the NIV leaves that word out. The word "For" explicitly ties verse 18 with verse 17.

Additionally, in the original Greek, verse 18 begins with the word translated “*being revealed*”. By beginning the verse with “*being revealed*”, Paul is giving emphasis to the *revealing*, and also tying (through juxtaposition) the *revealing* of God’s wrath, with the *revealing* of God’s righteousness, spoken of in verse 17 [see Meyer]. To illustrate this, here is a translation of verses 17 and 18 that reflects the word order in the original Greek: “*For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’ Being revealed therefore is the wrath of God from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness...*” Notice how, by preserving the original word order, we see the strong tie between the *revealing* of God’s wrath (in verse 18) and the *revealing* of God’s righteousness in the gospel (in verse 17). “The revelation of God’s salvation is at the same time a revelation of *God’s wrath*... It is a vain delusion to imagine that we can separate the doctrine of redemption from that of wrath... Redeeming love is the absolute and personal energy of Divine righteousness in the saving exercise of love. Can a soul enjoy the experience of salvation by faith, without passing through an internal judgment, and feeling of Divine displeasure?” [Lange, 89]. “The eighteenth verse, about wrath, gives significance to the preceding two, about grace. Sin is the measure of salvation. Only they know what it is to be saved who know what it is to be lost” [Stifler, 22]. “The wrath-revealing law prepares for the peace-revealing gospel” [Robinson, 74].

And so, in order to understand the full gospel message, we must understand “**the wrath of God.**” *The wrath of God* is the outworkings of God’s anger against sin; it is His “punitive justice”, brought about by His determination to punish sin [Hodge, 35]. Because God is fully and perfectly righteous, He hates sin, such that it provokes His punitive justice. “His righteousness must react to human depravity with wrath” [Osbourne]. “There is an essential relationship between God’s righteousness and his wrath. If God responded to wickedness with no more than a benign tolerance, his righteousness could

be called into question. That which is *right* necessarily stands over against and defines by contrast that which is *wrong*” [Mounce, 53]. And because we all sin, we all sit under the threat of God’s wrath.

Unfortunately, and wrongly, many churches today avoid speaking about God’s wrath, and His righteous hatred of sin. In doing so, they teach an incomplete gospel. In order to understand the magnificence of the greatness of Christ’s sacrifice, we must understand the perfect righteousness of God, and of His complete hatred of sin. “God is Love, and is Light. But He is also, so also says His Word, consuming Fire (see Heb. 10:31, 12:29)” [Moule, 39].

Perhaps because of this wariness to teach the wrath of God, we tend to make light of sin. We don’t take it seriously. We need to hate sin, just as God hates sin. We should clearly understand God’s righteousness, and fear God’s wrath against sin. And make no mistake, God’s wrath is awe-inspiring, and awful. “*The wrath of God!*—What heart can conceive all that is implied in words so awful!—the wrath of a holy, just, omniscient, almighty, and unchangeable God! Of a *holy* God, whose hatred of sin is infinite; of a *just* God, who cannot but punish sin according to its true desert;—of an *omniscient* God, whose eye there is no eluding, who is ‘greater than our hearts and knoweth all things;’—of an *almighty* God, whose ability to punish no created power can resist; and of an *unchangeable* God, whose nature must continue eternally opposed to sin, whose knowledge no forgetfulness can ever impair, and whose power eternity cannot weaken” [Wardlaw, 100].

Paul tells us that God’s wrath **“is being revealed.”** By this, a “continuous revelation is indicated” [Schaff, 27]. In fact, Paul uses the present tense throughout verses 18 to 32, “suggesting that the revealing of God’s wrath, the suppression of the knowledge of God available in creation, and the recognition that certain sins deserve God’s judgment are constant aspects of human experience” [Moo, 98]. It was first revealed “when the sentence of death was first pronounced,

the earth cursed, and man driven out of the earthly paradise” [Haldane, 55]. So, every death, in effect, is a *revealing* of God’s wrath. Indeed, every day of *toil by the sweat of the brow* is also.

After God’s wrath was first revealed after the fall of man, the *revealing* of His wrath against sin continued. It is *revealed* in the Bible, “in every history, by every Prophet, by every Psalmist; this perhaps is the main bearing of his thought. But revealed also antecedently and concurrently in that mysterious, inalienable conscience, which is more truly part of man than his five senses. Conscience sees that there is an eternal difference between right and wrong, and feels, in the dark, the relation of that difference to a law, a Lawgiver, and a doom” [Moule, 39].

However, the most significant *revealing* of God’s wrath occurred on Calvary, through Christ’s sufferings, when He bore in His body the sins of the world.

Paul tells us that God’s wrath is being revealed **“from heaven”**, and so it is revealed “visibly, extensively, universally” [Robinson, 75]. It is revealed as “a sovereign act of judgment from the very throne of God” [Osbourne]. “Paul’s mention of the fact that God’s wrath is being revealed **‘from heaven’** adds weight to what Paul is saying: it ‘significantly implies the majesty of an angry God, and His all-seeing eye, and the wide extent of His wrath: whatever is under heaven, and yet not under the Gospel, is under this wrath’ (Bengel)” [Moo, 102].

God’s wrath is **“against the godlessness and wickedness of people.”** These two words, translated here *godlessness* and *wickedness*, are more commonly translated *ungodliness* and *unrighteousness* (see ASV, ESV, KJV, NKJV, NASB, et. al.), which is more in keeping with Paul’s literary style (Paul uses two words in Greek which both have the Greek equivalent of the prefix “un-”). The two words summarize the forms of sin perpetrated by us. The first word, *godlessness* or *ungodliness*, “is the fundamental form of personal misconduct toward God; but the word is more especially

significant in that it describes ungodliness as the *absence of reverence for God*” [Lange, 81]. It is “an impiety that arrays man against God, not simply in terms of neglect but also of rebellion” [Harrison].

The second word, *wickedness* or *unrighteousness*, describes sins which more directly harm other people. By summarizing sin in this way, Paul may have been implicitly referring to the two tables of the Ten Commandments: the first four of which focus on our duty toward God; and the last six of which focus on our duty toward others people.

However, in the ensuing verses where Paul expands on man’s *godlessness* and *wickedness*, he does more than just summarize the sins which fall under each of those categories. Paul explains how our *godlessness* actually leads to all sins committed by us. *Godlessness* is more the fountain of *wickedness*; *wickedness* is more the result of *godlessness*. In other words, all of our sins spring from an impiety and lack of true and complete reverence for God.

Paul says that the wrath of God is revealed against **“people who suppress the truth by their wickedness”** (vs. 18). The **“truth”** that they **“suppress”** is the truth of God’s existence, power and divinity, which Paul expands on a bit in verse 20. So, God’s wrath is against those who push God out of their lives, because they do not want to be accountable to Him, and His law. “Whenever the truth starts to exert itself and makes them feel uneasy in their moral nature, they hold it down, *suppress* it. Some drown its voice by rushing into their immoralities; others strangle the disturbing voice by argument and by denial” [Lenski, in Harrison]. “The beginning of all evil is in departure from God” [*Pulpit Comm.*, 23].

The reason that there is wrath from God for sin is given in verse 19: **“...since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”** This is a crucial and far-reaching doctrinal statement: **“What may be known about God is plain to them”** (“them” referring to anyone who, because of their sin, is the target of

God's wrath, i.e., *all of us*), **"because God has made it plain to them."** The word translated **"is plain"** comes from the Greek word for *shining*. So the knowledge of God given to everyone is *glaringly apparent*, it is *shining right before their eyes*, "it is a clear testimony set before the eyes of men" [Harrison].

Paul expands on how God has made plain knowledge about Himself: **"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse"** (vs. 20). First, the knowledge of God has been made known **"since the creation of the world."** There is no person who has ever existed on earth without this knowledge.

Next, we as reasoning humans are given the capability to see **"invisible qualities"** of God, inferred from the *visible* creation of God from **"what has been made."** Human beings, unique among the created beings on earth, are given reasoning capabilities, so as to be able to perceive the *invisible*. "From actions we infer attributes; from attributes a subject to which they belong... From things clearly indicating a design we infer a Designer. From evidences of wisdom, power, and goodness, visible in creation, we infer a wise, powerful, and benevolent Creator" [Robinson, 79]. The phrase **"being understood from what has been made"** implies that "the revelation does not stop with perception, but is expected to include reflection, the drawing of a conclusion about the Creator" [Harrison]. "Man has been endowed by the Creator with reasoning faculties. His high distinction is a mind capable of perceiving God in nature. Contemplation of God in His works is the noblest employment of the intellect" [Robinson, 84]. As mother used to say, "God gave you a brain, now use it!"

The qualities of God that we clearly see from what has been made are **"his eternal power and divine nature."** The complexity and magnificence of the creation clearly reflect God's **"eternal power."** The unity and perfection of the

creation reflect God's "**divine nature**": in looking at the creation, we should know that God transcends all. "The workman is known by his work. The variety, multitude, order, beauty, harmony, different nature, and excellent contrivance of the things that are made, the direction of them to certain ends, and the concurrence of all the parts to the good and beauty of the whole, do abundantly prove a Creator, and his eternal power and Godhead. Thus did the light shine in the darkness" [Henry, 217]. "Seeing the beauty and complexity of creation carries with it the responsibility of acknowledging the Creator both as powerful and as living above the natural order. Disbelief requires an act of rebellion against common sense" [Mounce, 54]. "The undevout astronomer is *mad*." [Kepler].

The clear revelation of Himself that God has given us through His creation render every human being to be "**without excuse**", vis-à-vis knowledge of God's eternal power and divine nature. To be *without excuse* suggests from a *legal standpoint* that there is no valid defense for any human being for not worshiping and serving the true and living God. "Before men can yield themselves up to atheism, polytheism, idolatry or ungodliness they must resist clear and strong convictions" [Plumer, 65]. "Both in reference to his own nature and to the rule of duty, he has, in his works and in the human heart, given sufficient light to render the impiety and immorality of men inexcusable" [Hodge, 44]. "*Every person is 'without excuse'* because every person — whether a first-century pagan or a twentieth-century materialist — has been given a knowledge of God and has spurned that knowledge in favor of idolatry, in all its varied manifestations. All therefore stand under the awful reality of the wrath of God, and all are in desperate need of the justifying power of the gospel of Christ" [Moo, 98].



### Bibliography and Suggested Reading

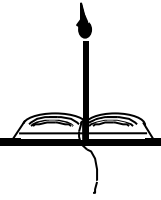
- Alford, Henry. *The Greek New Testament*, Vol. II. London: Rivington's, 1865.
- Bengel, John Albert. *Gnomon of the New Testament*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1873.
- Bonar, Horatius. *Light and Truth: The Acts and the Larger Epistles*. London: James Nisbet & Co., 1870.
- Calvin, John. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. London: Seeley and Sons, 1834. (Originally published in 1540).
- Chalmers, Thomas. *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*. New York: Carter and Brothers, 1863. (Originally published in 1842).
- Exell, Joseph S. and Henry Donald Spence-Jones, eds. *The Pulpit Commentary*. Vols. 43. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1884.
- Godet, Frederic. *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883.
- Haldane, Robert. *Exposition on the Epistle to the Romans*. Edinburgh: Oliphant and Co, 1874. (Originally published in 1835).
- Harrison, Everett F. "Romans" from *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. X, ed. by Frank Gaebelin. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.
- Henry, Matthew. *An Exposition of All the Books of the Old and New Testament*. Vol. V. London: W. Baynes, 1806. (Originally published in 1710).
- Hodge, Charles. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Philadelphia: Garner, 1883. (Originally published in 1864).
- Lange, John Peter, ed. and Philip Schaff, trans. *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*. New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1865.
- Liddon, Henry P. *Explanatory Analysis of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1893.
- Lloyd-Jones, D. M. *Romans*. 14 Volumes. Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985.
- Meyer, Heinrich. *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans*. In Two Volumes. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881.
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans's, 1996.
- Morris, Leon. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988.

- Moule, Handley. *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*. New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1903.
- Mounce, Robert H., *The New American Commentary: Romans*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995.
- Newell, William R. *Romans Verse-By-Verse*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Originally published 1938.
- Olshausen, Hermann. *Biblical Commentary on the New Testament*. Volume III. New York: Sheldon and Company, 1866.
- Osbourne, Grant. *Romans* (from “The IVP New Testament Commentary Series”, Vol. 6). Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Plumer, William S. *Commentary on Paul’s Epistle to the Roman*. New York: Randolph & Co, 1870.
- Robinson, Thomas. *A Suggestive Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*. London: R. D. Dickinson, 1878.
- Sanday, William, and Arthur Headlam. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895.
- Schaff, Philip. *The Epistles of St. Paul* (from “A Popular Commentary on the New Testament”, Vol. III). Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882.
- Shedd, William G. T. *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary upon the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*. New York: Scribner and Sons, 1879.
- Stifler, James. *The Epistle to the Romans – A Commentary: Logical and Historical*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897.
- Stuart, Moses. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1854.
- Trapp, John. *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*. Vol. V (Matthew to Revelation). Edmonton, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books ([www.PuritanDownloads.com](http://www.PuritanDownloads.com)). (Originally published c. 1660).
- Wardlaw, Ralph. *Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans*. Edinburgh: Fullarton & Co., 1869.

Many of these books (those in the public domain) can be downloaded free of charge from:

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

## *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. 3**

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

(Psalm 25:5).

*For the second thing.* Having showed you what it is to wait on God, I come next to show that this we must do every day, and all the day long.

We must wait on our God every day. *Omni die*, so some say. This is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, for the duty of every day requires it. Servants in the courts of princes have their weeks or months of waiting appointed them, and are tied to attend only at certain times. But God's servants must never be out of waiting: all the days of our appointed time, the time of our work and warfare here on earth, we must be waiting (see Job 14:14), and not desire or expect to be discharged from this attendance till we come to heaven, where we shall wait on God, as angels do, more nearly and constantly.

We must wait on God every day.

1. Both on Sabbath days and on week days. The Lord's day is instituted and appointed on purpose for our attendance on God in the courts of his house; there we must wait on him, to give glory to him, and to receive both commands and favours

from him. Ministers must then wait on their ministry (see Rom. 12:7), and people must wait on it too, saying, as Cornelius for himself and his friends, **“Now are we all here ready before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God”** (Acts 10:33). It is for the honour of God to help to fill up the assemblies of those that attend at the footstool of his throne, and to add to their number. The whole Sabbath time, except what is taken up in works of necessity and mercy, must be employed in waiting on our God. Christians are spiritual priests, and as such it is their business to wait in God’s house at the time appointed.

But that is not enough, we must wait upon our God on weekdays too; for every day of the week, we want mercy from him, and have work to do for him. Our waiting upon him in public ordinances, on the first day of the week, is designed to fix us to, and fit us for, communion with him all the week after; so that we answer not the intentions of the Sabbath, unless the impressions of it abide upon us, and go with us into the business of the week, and be kept always in the imagination of the thoughts of our heart. Thus, from one Sabbath to another, and from one new moon to another, we must keep in a holy gracious frame, must be so in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, as to walk in the Spirit all the week.

2. Both on idle days, and busy days, we must be found waiting on God. Some days of our lives are days of labour and hurry, when our particular calling calls for our close and diligent application; but we must not think that will excuse us from our constant attendance on God. Even then, when our hands are working about the world, our hearts may be waiting on our God, by a habitual regard to him, to his providence as our guide, and his glory as our end in our worldly business; and thus we must abide with him in them. Those that rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness in pursuit of the world, yet are concerned to wait on God, because otherwise all their care and pains will signify nothing, it is labour in vain (see Psalm 127:1-2); nay, it is labour in the fire.

Some days of our lives we relax in business and take our ease. Many of you have your time for diversion, but then when you lay aside other business, this of waiting upon God must not be laid aside. When you prove yourselves with mirth, as Solomon did, and say, you will enjoy pleasure a little, yet let this wisdom remain with you (Eccl. 2:1-3); let your eye be then up to God, and take heed of dropping your communion with him, in that which you call an agreeable conversation with your friends. Whether it be a day of work, or a day of rest, we shall find nothing like waiting upon God, both to lighten the toil of our work, and to sweeten the comfort of our repose. So that whether we have much to do or little to do in the world, still we must wait upon God, that we may be kept from the temptation that attends both the one and the other.

3. Both in days of prosperity, and in days of adversity, we must be found waiting upon God. Doth the world smile upon us, and court us? Yet let us not turn from attending on God, to make our court to it. If we have ever so much of the wealth of the world, yet we cannot say we have no need of God, no further occasion to make use of him; as David was ready to say, when, in his prosperity, he said he should never be moved; but soon saw his error, when God hid his face, and he was troubled (see Psalm 30:6). When our affairs prosper, and into our hands God bringeth plentifully, we must wait upon God as our great landlord, and own our obligations to him; we must beg his blessing on what we have, and his favour with it, and depend upon him both for the continuance and for the comfort of it. We must wait upon God for wisdom and grace, to use what we have in the world for the ends for which we are entrusted with it, as those that must give account, and know not how soon. And how much soever we have of this world, and how richly soever it is given us to enjoy it, still we must wait upon God for better things, not only that which the world gives, but that which he himself gives in this world. Lord, put me not off with this world for a portion.

And when the world frowns upon us, and things go very

cross, we must not so fret ourselves at its frowns, or so frighten ourselves with them, as thereby to be driven off from waiting on God, but rather let us thereby be driven to it. Afflictions are sent for this end, to bring us to the throne of grace, to teach us to pray, and to make the word of God's grace precious to us. In the day of our sorrow we must wait upon God for those comforts which are sufficient to balance our griefs. Job, when in tears, fell down and worshipped God, in His taking away, as well as giving. In the day of our fear we must wait upon God for those encouragements that are sufficient to silence our fears. Jehoshaphat, in his distress, waited on God, and it was not in vain, his heart was established by it: and so was David's often, which brought him to this resolution, which was an anchor to his soul: **"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee"** (Ps. 56:3).

4. Both in the days of youth, and in the days of old age, we must be found waiting on God. Those that are young cannot begin their attendance on God too soon. The child Samuel ministered to the Lord, and the Scripture story puts a particular mark of honour upon it; and Christ was wonderfully pleased with the hosannas of the children that waited on him, when he rode in triumph into Jerusalem. When Solomon, in his youth, upon his accession to the throne, waited upon God for wisdom, it is said the saying pleased the Lord. **"I remember thee"** (saith God to Israel) **"even the kindness of thy youth, when thou wentest after me, and didst wait upon me in the wilderness"** (Jer. 2:2). To wait upon God, is to be mindful of our Creator; and the proper time for that is in the days of our youth (see Eccl. 12:1). Those that would wait upon God aright, must learn betimes to do it; the most accomplished courtiers are those bred at court.

And may the old servants of Jesus be dismissed from waiting on him? No, their attendance is still required, and shall still be accepted: They shall not be cast off by their Master in the time of old age; and therefore let them not then desert his service. When, through the infirmities of age, they can no

longer be working servants in God's family, yet they may be waiting servants. Those that, like Barzillai, are unfit for the entertainments of the courts of earthly princes, yet may relish the pleasure of God's courts as well as ever. The Levites, when they were past the age of fifty, and were discharged from the toilsome part of their ministration, yet still must wait on God, must be quietly waiting to give honour to him, and to receive comfort from him. Those that have done the will of God, and their doing work is at an end, have need of patience to enable them to wait until they inherit the promise: and the nearer the happiness is which they are waiting for, the dearer should the God be they are waiting on, and hope shortly to be with eternally.

5. We must wait on our God all the day till we die, so we read it. Every day, from morning to night, we must continue waiting on God: whatever change there may be of our employment, this must be the constant disposition of our souls, we must attend upon God, and have our eyes ever towards him; we must not at any time allow ourselves to wander from God, or to attend on anything besides him, but what we attend on for him, in subordination to his will, and in subserviency to his glory.

We achieve this by:

1. We must cast our daily cares upon him. Every day brings with it its fresh cares, more or less; these wake with us every morning, and we need not go so far forward as to-morrow to fetch care; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. You that are great dealers in the world have your cares attending you all the day; though you keep them to yourselves, yet they sit down with you, and rise up with you; they go out and come in with you, and are more a load upon you than those you converse with are aware of. Some, through the weakness of their spirits, can scarcely determine anything but with fear and trembling.

Let this burden be cast upon the Lord, believing that his Providence extends itself to all your affairs, to all events

concerning you, and to all the circumstances of them, even the most minute and seemingly accidental; that your times are in his hand, and all your ways at his disposal; believe his promise, that all things shall be made to work for good to those that love him, and then refer it to him in everything, to do with you and yours as seemeth good in his eyes, and rest satisfied in having done so, and resolve to be easy. Bring your cares to God by prayer in the morning; spread them before him, and then make it to appear all the day, by the composedness and cheerfulness of your spirits, that you left them with him as Hannah did, who, when she had prayed, went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad (see I Sam. 1:18). Commit your way to the Lord, and then submit to his disposal of it, though it may cross your expectations; and bear up yourselves upon the assurances God has given you, that he will care for you as the tender father for his child.

2. We must manage our daily business for him, with an eye to his providence, putting us into the calling and employment wherein we are; and to his precept, making diligence in it our duty; with an eye to his blessing, as that which is necessary to make it comfortable and successful; and to his glory as our highest end in all. This sanctifies our common actions to God, and sweetens them, and makes them pleasant to ourselves. If Gaius brings his friends that he is parting with a little way on their journey, it is but a piece of common civility; but let him do it after a godly sort; let him in it pay respect to them, because they belong to Christ; and for his sake let him do it, that he may have an opportunity of so much more profitable communication with them; and then it becomes an act of Christian piety (see III John 6). It is a general rule by which we must govern ourselves in the business of every day. Whatever we do, in word or deed, let us do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (see Col. 3:17); and thus in and by the Mediator we wait on our God.

This is particularly recommended to servants, though their



employments are but mean, and they are under the command of their masters according to the flesh, yet let them do their servile work as the servants of Christ, as unto the Lord and not unto men; let them do it with singleness of heart as unto Christ, and they shall be accepted of him, and from him shall receive the reward of the inheritance (see Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-24). Let them wait on God all the day, when they are doing their day's work, by doing it faithfully and conscientiously, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by aiming at his glory even in common business. They work that they may get bread; they desire bread that they may live; not that they may live to themselves, and please themselves, but that they may live to God and please him. They work that they may fill up time, and fill up a place in the world, and because that God, who made and, maintains us, has appointed us with quietness to work and mind our own business.

3. We must receive our daily comforts from him; we must wait on him as our benefactor; as the eyes of all things wait upon him, to give them their food in due season, and what he giveth them, that they gather. To him we must look, as to our father, for our daily bread, and from him we are appointed to ask it, yea, though we have it in the house, though we have it upon the table; we must wait upon him for a covenant right to it, for leave to make use of it, for a blessing upon it, for nourishment by it, and for comfort in it. It is in the word and prayer that we wait on God, and keep up communion with him, and by these every creature of God is sanctified to us (see I Tim. 4:4-5), and the property of it is altered. To the pure all things are pure; they have them from the covenant, and not from common providence; which makes a little that the righteous man has, better than the riches of many wicked, and much more valuable and comfortable.

No inducement can be more powerful to make us see to it, that what we have we get it honestly, and use it soberly, and give God his due out of it, than this consideration, that we

have our all from the hand of God, and are entrusted with it as stewards, and consequently are accountable. If we have this thought as a golden thread running through all the comforts of every day, these are God's gifts; every bit we eat, and every drop we drink, is his mercy; every breath we draw, and every step we take, is his mercy: this will keep us continually waiting upon him, as the donkey on his master's crib, and will put a double sweetness into all our enjoyments. God will have his mercies taken fresh from his compassions, which for this reason are said to be new every morning; and therefore it is not once a-week that we are to wait upon him, as people go to market to buy provisions for the whole week, but we must wait on him every day, and all the day, as those that live from hand to mouth, and yet live very easy.

4. We must resist our daily temptations, and do our daily duties in the strength of his grace. Every day brings its temptations with it. Our Master knew that, when he taught us, as duly as we pray for our daily bread, to pray that we might not be led into temptation. There is no business we engage in, no enjoyment we partake of, but has its snares attending it. Satan by it assaults us, and endeavours to draw us into sin. Now sin is the great evil we should be continually upon our guard against, as Nehemiah was, in Neh. 6:13: **“That I should be afraid, and do so, and sin.”** And we have no way to secure ourselves but by waiting on God all the day; we must not only in the morning put ourselves under the protection of his grace, but we must all day keep ourselves under the shelter of it; must not only go forth, but go on in dependence upon that grace, which he hath said shall be sufficient for us, that care, which will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able. Our waiting upon God will furnish us with the best arguments to make use of in resisting temptations, and with strength according to the day; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and then we wait on the Lord all the day.

We have duty to do, many an opportunity of speaking

good words, and doing good works, and we must see and own that we are not sufficient of ourselves for anything that is good, not so much as to think a good thought: we must therefore wait upon God, must seek to him, and depend upon him, for that light and fire, that wisdom and zeal, which is necessary to the due discharge of our duty; that by his grace we may not only be fortified against every evil word and work, but furnished for every good word and work. From the fullness that is in Jesus Christ, we must by faith be continually drawing grace for grace; grace for all gracious exercises, grace to help in every time of need. We must wait on this grace, must follow the conduct of it, comply with the operations of it, and must be turned to it as wax to the seal.

5. We must bear our daily afflictions with submission to his will. We are taught to expect trouble in the flesh. Something or other happens that grieves us every day, something in our relations, something in our callings, events concerning ourselves, our families or friends, that are matter of sorrow: perhaps we have every day some bodily pain or sickness, or some cross and disappointment in our affairs; now in these we must wait upon God. Christ requires it of all his disciples, that they take up their cross daily (see Matt. 16: 24). We must not willfully pluck the cross down upon us, but must take it up when God lays it in our way, and not go a step out of the way of duty, either to court it or to miss it. It is not enough to bear the cross, but we must take it up, we must accommodate ourselves to it, and acquiesce in the will of God in it. Not, as in, this is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it; but, as in, this is an evil, and I will bear it, because it is the will of God.

We must see every affliction allotted us by our heavenly Father, and in it must eye his correcting hand, and therefore must wait on him to know the cause wherefore he contends with us, what the fault is for which we are in this affliction chastened; what the distemper is which is to be by this affliction cured, that we may answer God's end in afflicting

us, and so may be made partakers of his holiness. We must attend the motions of Providence, keep our eye upon our Father when he frowns, that we may discover what his mind is, and what the obedience is we are to learn by the things that we suffer. We must wait on God for support under our burdens; we must put ourselves into, and stay ourselves upon, the everlasting arms which are laid under the children of God, to sustain them when the rod of God is upon them. And him we must attend for deliverance; we must not seek to extricate ourselves by any sinful indirect methods, nor look to creatures for relief, but still wait on the Lord until he has mercy on us; well content to bear the burden until God ease us of it, and ease us in mercy (see Ps. 123:2). If the affliction be lengthened out, yet we must wait upon the Lord even when he hides his face (see Isa. 8:17), hoping it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment (Isa. 54:7-8).

6. We must expect the tidings and events of every day with a cheerful and entire resignation to the divine Providence. While we are in this world, we are still expecting, hoping well, fearing ill; we know not what a day, or a night, or an hour, may bring forth (see Prov. 27:1), but it is big with something, and we are too apt to spend our thoughts in vain about things future, which happen quite differently from what we imagined. Now, in all our prospects we must wait upon God.

Are we in hopes of good tidings, a good issue? Let us wait on God as the giver of the good we hope for, and be ready to take it from his hand, and to meet him with suitable affections then, when he is coming towards us in a way of mercy. Whatever good we hope for, it is God alone, and his wisdom, power, and goodness, that we must hope in. And therefore our hopes must be humble and modest, and regulated by his will. What God has promised us we may with assurance promise ourselves, and no more. If thus we wait on God in our hope, should the hope be deferred, it would not make the heart sick; no, not if it should be disappointed; for the God we wait on will over-rule all for the best. But when the desire

comes, in prosecution of which we have thus waited on God, we may see it coming from his love, and it will be a tree of life (see Prov. 13:12).

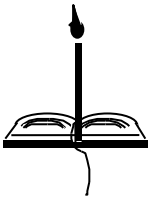
Are we in fear of evil tidings, of melancholy events, and a sad issue of the depending affair? Let us wait on God to be delivered from all our fears, from the things themselves we are afraid of, and from the amazing tormenting fears of them (see Psalm 34:4). When Jacob was, with good reason, afraid of his brother Esau, he waited on God, brought his fears to him, wrestled with him, and prevailed for deliverance. What time I am afraid, saith David, I will trust in thee, and wait on thee; and that shall establish the heart, shall fix it, so as to set it above the fear of evil tidings.

Are we in suspense between hope and fear, sometimes one prevails, and sometimes the other? Let us wait on God, as the God to whom belong the issues of life and death, good and evil, from whom our judgment, and every man's, doth proceed, and compose ourselves into a quiet expectation of the event, whatever it may be, with a resolution to accommodate ourselves to it. Hope the best, and get ready for the worst, and then take what God sends.

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

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

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



## *A Study in Wisdom: Psalm 78 (pt. 1)*

A Study by Scott Sperling

Psalm 78:1-8 –

Lessons from History, pt. 1

*A maskil of Asaph.*

- <sup>1</sup> My people, hear my teaching;  
listen to the words of my mouth.
- <sup>2</sup> I will open my mouth with a parable;  
I will utter hidden things, things from of old –
- <sup>3</sup> things we have heard and known,  
things our ancestors have told us.
- <sup>4</sup> We will not hide them from their descendants;  
we will tell the next generation  
the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,  
his power, and the wonders he has done.
- <sup>5</sup> He decreed statutes for Jacob  
and established the law in Israel,  
which he commanded our ancestors  
to teach their children,
- <sup>6</sup> so the next generation would know them,  
even the children yet to be born,  
and they in turn would tell their children.
- <sup>7</sup> Then they would put their trust in God  
and would not forget his deeds  
but would keep his commands.
- <sup>8</sup> They would not be like their ancestors –  
a stubborn and rebellious generation,  
whose hearts were not loyal to God,  
whose spirits were not faithful to him.

The inscription for this psalm introduces it as **“A *maskil* of Asaph.”** The term **“*maskil*”** denotes that the psalm is meant to instruct, and it is clear from the first eight verses that we are to learn from the events in the history of Israel, which are related to us starting in verse 9. “The general design of the ode is to *give instruction*. This is done, 1. by a succinct rehearsal of God’s mercies to Israel; 2. by recounting the ingratitude and disobedience of ancient Israel; 3. by giving fit and earnest warnings; and 4. by giving solemn and seasonable exhortations” [Plumer, 745].

The psalm was written, most likely, by *Asaph* himself (as opposed to one of the sons of Asaph), who was a worship-leader, and prophet during the time of David (see I Chron. 6:39; II Chron. 29:30). It appears to have been written during David’s life (or possibly shortly thereafter), because the history which is related only goes so far as the time when David began leading Israel.

Asaph begins the psalm, speaking authoritatively: **“My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth”** (vs. 1). Asaph takes his role as prophet seriously, speaking as if he were **“speaking the very words of God”** (I Pet. 4:11). He says, **“My people, hear my teaching.”** Such was the role of a prophet, one having “authority from above to instruct the world” [Horne, 275]. “The Psalmist was divinely inspired to set before the people: to which, in the name of the Lord, he demanded their reverent attention” [Scott, 298]. Asaph’s demand is to **“hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth”** (vs. 1). “When God gives his truth a tongue, and sends forth his messengers trained to declare his word with power, it is the least we can do to give them our ears and the earnest obedience of our hearts” [Spurgeon, 330]. “Such is our dullness and slowness of heart to understand and believe what the Lord saith to us, that we have great need to be admonished and stirred up to attention and hearing” [Dickson, in Plumer, 757].

Asaph speaks of his purpose: **“I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old – things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us”** (vss. 2-3). Asaph tells us that the history of Israel that he is to relate, is a **“parable.”** He will utter **“hidden things”** (also translated *dark sayings* or *riddles*). A parable, as we know from the teachings of Jesus, is a story which contains symbols and analogies, which convey a deeper meaning than the story at the surface. Often, parables are meant to be applied to our own lives, in some way. Other times, parables give us a deeper insight into the truths and doctrines of God. *Parables*, and *dark sayings*, since they contain symbols and analogies, cannot be fully understood without study and meditation. “The instructions of the sacred word are *dark sayings* to the inattentive and self-confident; and yet they are very plain to the humble, diligent, and obedient enquirer, who earnestly prays for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and reduces to practice, and realizes in his experience, what he learns from thence” [Scott, 302]. “Albeit the Word of the Lord be plain to the attentive believer, yet to the unattentive misbeliever, it is a hidden mystery, and for this reason, we have need to hear attentively and believingly” [Dickson, 198]. “Difficulty doth not discourage, but rather whet on heroic spirits to a more diligent inquiry” [Trapp, 592].

Asaph teaches us in this psalm that the history of Israel is, in fact, a **“parable”**, from which we can explore deeper meaning, and uncover **“hidden things.”** Paul agrees. In writing about the history of the children of Israel, he said: **“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come”** (I Cor. 10:11). “God’s past dealings with Israel are a parable of spiritual lessons for all ages, as illustrating His eternal principle of government” [JFB, 264]. “The Psalmist has no mere narrative of facts to recount, but a history full of significance for those who can penetrate its hidden meaning. It is a **‘parable’** not for Israel



only, but for every individual in the Christian Church” [Kirkpatrick, 465]. “Analogies are not only to be imagined, but are intended by God to be traced between the story of Israel and the lives of believers. Israel was ordained to be a type; the tribes and their marchings are living allegories traced by the hand of an all-wise providence” [Spurgeon, 331]. “The Psalm, being in itself a plain narrative of facts, can contain nothing parabolical or enigmatical in it, unless those facts were, what St. Paul affirms them to have been, **‘ensamples’** (see I Cor. 10:11, KJV), types, or representations of other facts relative to the Christian church. As facts they were **‘heard and known’**, and handed down from father to son; but with respect to the instructions and admonitions comprehended in them, and to be extracted by an application to parallel times and circumstances, they had the nature of a **‘parable’**, requiring wisdom and attention so to understand and apply them” [Horne, 275]. “There is throughout this Psalm a ‘concealed background of instruction’ (Hengstenberg), intimated at verse 2, just as Jesus, in speaking very obvious and plain things about the seed and the sower, the leaven and the mustard-tree, meant all the while to lead disciples to a ‘concealed background of instruction’—God’s ways toward man, and man’s toward God” [Bonar, 234]. “Full of warning and of instruction was the history of the people of Israel. Each mercy that had been shown them, each glory that had been given them, each judgment that had fallen on them, had its own peculiar lesson, and was a parable full of meaning” [*Plain*, 39].

Jesus, of course, used **“parables”** for teaching, and in fact, Matthew cites verse 3 of this psalm as pointing to Jesus’ use of parables: **“Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: ‘I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world’”** (Matt. 13:34-35). And so, Jesus used a method of teaching that

started long before he came to earth: parabolic teaching, teachings of depth that are not immediately discernable by the casual hearer. By citing verse 3 of this psalm, Matthew teaches us that this psalm prefigures the teaching method of Jesus, and points to its fulfillment in Jesus. “As the Psalmist used the facts of Israel’s history to convey the lesson which he desired to teach, so Christ used the phenomena of Nature and the experiences of Life” [Kirkpatrick, 465]. “If it doth not follow from Matthew’s citation, that the prophet actually speaks the Psalm in the person of Christ, yet thus much at least is evident from it, that the history of old Israel somewhat resembles the letter of the gospel parables, and contains, shadowed out under it, the history of a correspondent state of things in the *new* Israel, the Christian church” [Horne, 275].

For Asaph, the events in the history of the children of Israel were **“things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us”** (vs. 3). “He deeply feels the solidarity of the nation through all generations—how fathers and children are knit by mystic ties, and by possession of an eternal treasure, the mighty deeds of God, of which they are bound to pass on the record from age to age” [Maclaren, 387]. In the time of Asaph, when there was limited access to the written holy scriptures, oral tradition was necessary to keep alive the knowledge of God’s work over the generations of His people. And though now, the written scriptures are easily attainable, it is still necessary that the works and doctrines of God be transmitted orally from generation to generation to establish reverence for God in the family, and to witness to the next generation the goodness of God in our lives. “Scripture is the stay and corrective of oral tradition: it does not supplant, it supplements it. A single glance renders it evident, that the Psalmist himself drew his account directly from Scripture, and not from oral tradition. But the Scripture would have been to him a shut book, with which he would not have known how to commence anything, had he not been surrounded from his early youth with the atmosphere of

tradition” [Hengstenberg, 455]. “The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sabbath-school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mothers’ tears and fathers’ prayers” [Spurgeon, 331].

In fact, communication of God’s works and God’s commands to the next generation is itself a commandment of God: **“Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them”** (Deut. 4:9); then also: **“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up”** (Deut, 6:6-7).

Asaph resolves that the people will keep these commands: **“We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children”** (vs. 4). “We of this generation will be faithful in handing down these truths to future times. We stand between past generations and the generations to come. We are entrusted by those who have gone before us with great and important truths; truths to be preserved and transmitted in their purity to future ages. That trust committed to us we will faithfully discharge. These truths shall not suffer in passing from us to them. They shall not be stayed in their progress; they shall not be corrupted or impaired” [Barnes, 292]. “[Asaph] was determined, and aimed to induce others also, to deliver down the same to the rising race, and through them to the next generation, and thus successively to the end of time. For this was the proper method of bringing them to

trust in God and obey him; to imitate the faith and holiness of their pious ancestors; and to take warning not to copy the rebellion, unbelief, and ungodliness of such as had brought the judgments of God upon them by their sins” [Scott, 298]. “Thou must not only praise God thyself, but endeavour to transmit the memorial of his goodness to posterity. Children are their parents heirs; it were unnatural for a father, before he dies, to bury up his treasure in the earth, where his children should not find or enjoy it; now the mercies of God are not the least part of a good man’s treasure, nor the least of his children’s inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience.” [Gurnall, in Spurgeon, 348]. “The godly in every age ought to have the same care to transmit the Word of God to their posterity, which their ancestors had to transmit unto them, and to pay the debt they owe to their faithful ancestors unto succeeding generations” [Dickson, 198]. “It is awful to think how many parents, by their negligence and wickedness, become the murderers of the souls of their children” [Scott, 303].

Asaph goes on to state the purpose of Godly instruction at home: **“Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds, but would keep his commands”** (vs. 7). “The object was to give such exhibitions of his character and government as to inspire just *confidence* in him, or to lead men to trust in him; and not to trust in idols and false gods. All the laws which God has ordained are such as are fitted to inspire confidence in him as a just and righteous ruler; and all his dealings with mankind, when they are properly—that is, *really*—understood, will be found to be adapted to the same end” [Barnes, 293]. “Faith cometh by hearing. Those who know the name of the Lord will set their hope in him, and that they may be led to do so is the main end of all spiritual teaching” [Spurgeon, 332]. “The sin and misery of man is that he has hope in himself, in the creature, in vanity, in a thing of nought. The end of all sound religious instruction is to withdraw the desires and expectations from

all finite things and to raise them to God alone... If all our expectation is from God and is built on the history of his mercy to those who have gone before us, and on his *testimony*, we cannot easily *forget* him or his doings” [Plumer, 746]

Asaph underscores the importance of Godly instruction by pointing out, by and large, the failure of the children of Israel in this respect: **“They would not be like their ancestors — a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him”** (vs. 8). “How blessed would it be if each age improved upon its predecessor; but, alas, it is to be feared that decline is more general than progress, and too often the heirs of true saints are far more rebellious than even their fathers were in their unregeneracy” [Spurgeon, 332].

### Bibliography and Suggested Reading

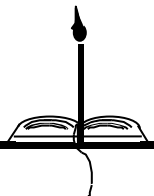
- Alexander, Joseph Addison. *The Psalms Translated and Explained*. Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1864.
- Anonymous. *A Plain Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. Philadelphia: Henry Hooker and Co., 1857.
- Barnes, Albert. *Notes on the Book of Psalms*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishing, 1871.
- Bonar, Andrew. *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms*. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860.
- Calvin, John. *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. 3 Vols. Oxford: D. A. Talboys, 1840. (Originally published in Latin in 1557).
- Clarke, Adam. *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*. Vol. III. London: William Tegg & Co., 1854. (Originally published in 1831).
- Cowles, Henry. *The Psalms with Notes, Critical, Explanatory and Practical*. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1872.
- Darby, John Nelson. *Practical Reflections on the Psalms*. London: Robert L. Allan, 1870.
- Delitzsch, Franz. *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1892. (Originally published in 1860).
- Dickson, David. *An Explication of the Other Fifty Psalms, from Ps. 50 to Ps. 100*. Cornhill, U.K.: Ralph Smith, 1653.

- Exell, Joseph S. and Henry Donald Spence-Jones, eds. *The Pulpit Commentary*. Vols. 17, 18, & 19. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1884.
- Hengstenberg, F. W. *Commentary on the Psalms*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1864.
- Henry, Matthew. *An Exposition of All the Books of the Old and New Testament*. Vol. II. London: W. Baynes, 1806. (Originally published in 1710).
- Horne, George. *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854.
- Jamieson, Robert; Fausset, A. R.; Brown, David. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. Glasgow: William Collins, Queen's Printer, 1863.
- Kidner, Derek. *Psalms* (in 2 Vols.). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008 (first published in 1975).
- Kirkpatrick, A. F. *The Book of Psalms with Introduction and Notes – Books II and III* (from The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges). Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1895.
- Lange, John Peter, ed. and Philip Schaff, trans. *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*. New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1865.
- Maclaren, Alexander. *The Psalms* (in 3 Vols., from The Expositor's Bible, ed. by W. R. Nicoll). New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1901.
- Perowne, J. J. Stewart. *The Book of Psalms: A New Translation with Explanatory Notes*. London: George Bell & Sons, 1880.
- Plumer, William S. *Studies in the Book of Psalms*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1872.
- Scott, Thomas. *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, Vol. III. London: James Nisbet, 1866.
- Spurgeon, Charles. *The Treasury of David*. 6 Vols. London: Marshall Brothers, Ltd., 1885.
- Tholuck, Augustus. *A Translation and Commentary of the Book of Psalms*. Philadelphia: Martien, 1858.
- Trapp, John. *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*. Vol. II (Ezra to Psalms). Edmonton, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books ([www.PuritanDownloads.com](http://www.PuritanDownloads.com)). (Originally published c. 1660).
- VanGemeren, Willem A., (Gaebelein, Frank E., ed). *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5 – Psalms to Song of Songs. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.

Most of these books, those in the Public Domain, can be downloaded free of charge from:

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

# *A Sermon: The Victory of Faith*



A Sermon by the Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon

The Victory of Faith –  
I John 5:4

(Preached at Exeter Hall,  
London, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1855)

**“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (I John 5:4, KJV)**

The epistles of John are perfumed with love. The word is continually occurring, while the Spirit enters into every sentence. Each letter is thoroughly soaked and impregnated with this heavenly honey. If he speaks of God, his name must be love; are the brethren mentioned, he loves them; and even of the world itself, he writes, **“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”** From the opening to the conclusion, love is the manner, love the matter, love the motive, and love the aim. We stand, therefore, not a little astonished, to find such martial words in so peaceful a writing; for I hear a sound of war. It is not the voice of love, surely, that says, **“He that is born of God overcometh the world.”** Lo, here are strife and battle. The word **“overcometh”** seems to have in it something of the sword and warfare; of strife and contention; of agony and wrestling; so unlike the love which is smooth and gentle, which hath no harsh words within its lips; whose mouth is lined with velvet; whose words are softer than butter; whose utterances are more easily flowing than oil. Here we have war—war to the knife; for I read **“Whatsoever**

**is born of God overcometh the world;”** strife until death; battle throughout life; fighting with a certainty of victory. How is it that the same gospel which always speaks of peace, here proclaims a warfare? How can it be? Simply because there is something in the world which is antagonistic to love; there are principles abroad which cannot bear light, and, therefore, before light can come, it must chase the darkness. Ere summer reigns, you know, it has to do battle with old winter, and to send it howling away in the winds of March, and shedding its tears in April showers. So also, before any great or good thing can have the mastery of this world, it must do battle for it. Satan has seated himself on his blood-stained throne, and who shall get him down, except by main force, and fight and war? Darkness broods o’er the nations; nor can the sun establish his empire of light until he has pierced night with the arrowy sunbeams, and made it flee away. Hence we read in the Bible that Christ did not come to send peace on earth, but a sword; he came to set **“the father against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;”** not intentionally, but as a means to an end; because there must always be a struggle ere truth and righteousness can reign. Alas! for that earth is the battle-field where good must combat with evil Angels look on and hold their breath, burning to mingle in the conflict, but the troops of the Captain of Salvation may be none but the soldiers of the cross; and that slender band must fight alone, and yet shall triumph gloriously. Enough shall they be for conquest, and the motto of their standard is *enough*. Enough by the arm of the helping Trinity.

As God shall help me, I shall speak to you of three things to be found in the text. First, the text speaks of a great victory: it says, **“This is the victory.”** Secondly, it mentions a great birth: **“Whatsoever is born of God.”** And, thirdly, it extols



a great grace, whereby we overcome the world, “**even our faith.**”

I. First, the text speaks of a **GREAT VICTORY**—the victory of victories—the greatest of all. We know there have been great battles where nations have met in strife, and one has overcome the other; but who has read of a victory that overcame the world? Some will say that Alexander was its conqueror; but I answer, nay. He was himself the vanquished man, even when all things were in his possession. He fought for the world, and won it; and then mark how it mastered its master, conquered its conqueror, and lashed the monarch who had been its scourge. See the royal youth weeping, and stretching out his hands with idiotic cries, for another world which he might ravage. He seemed, in outward show, to have overcome old earth; but, in reality, within his inmost soul, the earth had conquered him, had overwhelmed him, had wrapped him in the dream of ambition, girdled him with the chains of covetousness, so that when he had all, he was still dissatisfied; and, like a poor slave, was dragged on at the chariot wheels of the world, crying, moaning, lamenting, because he could not win another. Who is the man that ever overcame the world? Let him stand forward: he is a Triton among the minnows; he shall outshine Cæsar; he shall outmatch even our own lately departed Wellington, if he can say he has overcome the world. It is so rare a thing, a victory so prodigious, a conquest so tremendous, that he who can claim to have won it may walk among his fellows, like Saul, with head and shoulders far above them. He shall command our respect; his very presence shall awe us into reverence; his speech shall persuade us to obedience; and, yielding honour to whom honour is due, we'll say when we listen to his voice, “’Tis even as if an angel shook his wings.”

I shall now attempt to expand the idea I have suggested, showing you in what varied senses the Christian overcomes the world. A tough battle, sirs, I warrant you: not one which carpet knights might win: no easy skirmish that he might win,

who dashed to battle on some sunshiny day, looked at the host, then turned his courser's rein, and daintily dismounted at the door of his silken tent—not one which he shall gain, who, hut a raw recruit to-day, puts on his regimentals, and foolishly imagines that one week of service will ensure a crown of glory. Nay, sirs, it is a life-long war—a fight needing the power of all these muscles, and this strong heart; a contest which shall want all our strength, if we are to be triumphant; and if we do come off more than conquerors, it shall be said of us, as Hart said of Jesus Christ: "He had strength enough and none to spare;" a battle at which the stoutest heart might quail; a fight at which the braves might shake, if he did not remember that the Lord is on his side, and therefore, whom shall he fear? He is the strength of his life; of whom shall he be afraid? This fight with the world is not one of main force, or physical might; if it were, we might soon win it; but it is all the more dangerous from the fact that it is a strife of mind, a contest of heart, a struggle of the spirit, a strife of the soul. When we overcome the world in one fashion, we have not half done our work; for the world is a Proteus, changing its shape continually; like the chameleon, it hath all the colours of the rainbow; and when you have worsted the world in one shape, it will attack you in another. Until you die, you will always have fresh appearances of the world to wrestle with. Let me just mention some of the forms in which the Christian overcomes the world.

1. He overcomes the world when it sets up itself as a legislator, wishing to teach him customs. You know the world has its old massive law book of customs, and he who does not choose to go according to the fashion of the world, is under the ban of society. Most of you do just as everybody else does, and that is enough for you. If you see so-and-so do a dishonest thing in business, it is sufficient for you that everybody does it. If ye see that the majority of mankind have certain habits, ye succumb, ye yield. Ye think, I suppose, that to march to hell in crowds, will help to diminish the fierce

heat of the burning of the bottomless pit, instead of remembering that the more faggots the fiercer will be the flame. Men usually swim with the stream like a dead fish; it is only the living fish that goes against it. It is only the Christian who despises customs, who does not care for conventionalisms, who only asks himself the question, "Is it right or is it wrong? If it is right, I will be singular. If there is not another man in this world who will do it, I will do it; should a universal hiss go up to heaven, I will do it still; should the very stories of earth fly up, arid stone me to death, I will do it still; though they bind me to the stake, yet I must do it; I will be singularly right; if the multitude will not follow me, I will go without them, I will be glad if they will all go and do right as well, but if not, I will despise their customs; I care not what others do; I shall not be weighed by other men; to my own Master I stand or fall. Thus I conquer and overcome the customs of the world." Fair world! she dresseth herself in ermine, she putteth on the robes of a judge, and she solemnly telleth you, "Man, you are wrong. Look at your fellows; see how they do. Behold my laws. For hundreds of years have not men done so? Who are you, to set yourself up against me?" And she pulls out her worm-eaten law-book, and turning over the musty pages, says, "See, here is an act passed in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and here is another law enacted in the days of Pharaoh. These must be right, because antiquity has enrolled them among her standard authorities. Do you mean to set yourself up and stand against the opinions of the multitude?" Yes, we do; we take the law-book of the world, and we burn it, as the Ephesians did their magic rolls; we take her deeds, and make them into waste paper; we rend her proclamation from the walls; we care not what others do; custom to us is a cobweb; we count it folly to be singular; but when to be singular is to be right, we count it the proudest wisdom; we overcome the world; we trample on her customs; we walk as a distinct people, a separate race, a chosen generation, a peculiar people. The Christian behaves in his

dealings not as the laughing infidel insinuates, when he sneeringly describes Mawworm, as saying, "Boy, have you sanded the sugar?" "Yes, sir." "Have you put the sloe-leaves in the tea?" "Yes, sir." "Have you put red lead in the pepper?" "Yes, sir." "Then come to prayers." Christians do not do so; they say, "We know better; we cannot conform to the customs of the world. If we pray, we will also act, or else we are hypocrites, confounded hypocrites. If we go to the house of God, and profess to love him, we love him every where; we take our religion with us into the shop, behind the counter; into our offices; we must have it everywhere, or else God knows it is not religion at all." Ye must stand up, then, against the customs of mankind. Albeit, this may be a three-million peopled city, ye are to come out and be separate, if ye would overcome the world.

2. We rebel against the world's customs. And if we do so, what is the conduct of our enemy? She changes her aspect. "That man is a heretic; that man is a fanatic; he is a cant, he is a hypocrite," says the world directly. She grasps her sword, she putteth frowns upon her brow, she scowleth like a demon, she girdeth tempests round about her, and she saith, "The man dares defy my government; he will not do as others do. Now I will persecute him. Slander! come from the depths of hell and hiss at him. Envy! sharpen up thy tooth and bite him." She fetches up all false things, and she persecutes the man. If she can, she does it with the hand; if not, by the tongue. She afflicts him wherever he is. She tries to ruin him in business; or, if he standeth forth as the champion of the truth why then she laugheth, and mocketh, and scorneth. She lets no stone be unturned whereby she may injure him. What is then the behaviour of the Lord's warrior, when he sees the world take up arms against him, and when he sees all earth, like an army, coming to chase him, and utterly destroy him? Does he yield? Does he yield? Does he bend? Does he cringe? Oh, no! Like Luther, he writes "*Cedo nulli*?" on his banner—"I yield to none;" and he goes to war against the world, if the

world goes to war against him.

“Let earth be all in arms abroad,  
He dwells in perfect peace.”

Ah! some of you, if you had a word spoken against you, would at once give up what religion you have; but the true-born child of God cares little for man’s opinion. “Ah,” says he, “let my bread fail me, let me be doomed to wander penniless the wide world o’er; yea, let me die: each drop of blood within these veins belongs to Christ, and I am ready to shed it for his name’s sake.” He counts all things but loss, that he may win Christ—that he may be found in him; and when the world’s thunders roars, he smiles at the uproar, while he hums his pleasant tune:—

“Jerusalem my happy home,  
Name ever dear to me;  
When shall my labours have an end,  
In joy, and peace, and thee?”

When her sword comes out, he looketh at it. “Ah,” saith he, “just as the lightning leapeth from its thunder lair, splitteth the clouds, and affrighteth the stars, but is powerless against the rock-covered mountaineer, who smiles at its grandeur, so now the world cannot hurt me, for in the time of trouble my Father hides me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle doth he hide me, and set me up upon a rock.” Thus, again, we conquer the world, by not caring for its frowns.

3. “Well,” saith the world, “I will try another style,” and this believe me, is the most dangerous of all. A smiling world is worse than a frowning one. She saith, “I cannot smite the man low with my repeated blows, I will take off my mailed glove, and showing him a fair white hand, I’ll bid him kiss it. I will tell him I love him: I will flatter him, I will speak good words to him.” John Bunyan well describes this Madam

Bubble: she has a winning way with her; she drops a smile at the end of each of her sentences; she talks much of fair things, and tries to win and woo. Oh, believe me, Christians are not so much in danger when they are persecuted as when they are admired. When we stand upon the pinnacle of popularity, we may well tremble and fear. It is not when we are hissed at, and hooted, that we have any cause to be alarmed; it is when we are dandled on the lap of fortune, and nursed upon the knees of the people; it is when all men speak well of us, that woe is unto us. It is not in the cold wintry wind that I take off my coat of righteousness, and throw it away; it is when the sun comes, when the weather is warm, and the air balmy, that I unguardedly strip off my robes, and become naked. Good God! how many a man has been made naked by the love of this world! The world has flattered and applauded him; he has drunk the flattery; it was an intoxicating draught; he has staggered, he has reeled, he has sinned, he has lost his reputation; and as a comet that erst flashed across the sky, doth wander far into space, and is lost in darkness, so doth he; great as he was, he falls; mighty as he was, he wanders, and is lost. But the true child of God is never so; he is as safe when the world smiles, as when it frowns; he cares as little for her praise as for her dispraise. If he is praised, and it is true, he says, "My deeds deserve praise, but I refer all honor to my God." Great souls know what they merit from their critic; to them it is nothing more than the giving of their daily income. Some men cannot live without a large amount of praise; and if they have no more than they deserve, let them have it. If they are children of God, they will be kept steady; they will not be ruined or spoiled; but they will stand with feet like hinds' feet upon high places.—**"This is the victory that overcometh the world."**

4. Sometimes, again, the world turns jailer to a Christian. God sends affliction and sorrow, until life is a prison-house, the world its jailer—and a wretched jailer too. Have you ever been in trials and troubles, my friends? and has the world

never come to you and said, "Poor prisoner, I have a key that will let you out. You are in pecuniary difficulties; I will tell you how you may get free. Put that Mr. Conscience away. He asks you whether it is a dishonest act. Never mind about him; let him sleep; think about the honesty after you have got the money, and repent at your leisure." So saith the world; but you say, "I cannot do the thing." "Well," says the world, "then groan and grumble: a good man like you locked up in this prison!" "No," says the Christian, "my Father sent me into want, and in his own time he will fetch me out; but if I die here I will not use wrong means to escape. My Father put me here for my good, I will not grumble; if my bones must lie here—if my coffin is to be under these stones—if my tombstone shall be in the wall of my dungeon—here will I die, rather than so much as lift a finger to get out by unfair means." "Ah," says the world, "then thou art a fool." The scorner laughs and passes on, saying, "The man has no brain, he will not do a bold thing; he hath no courage; he will not launch upon the sea; he wants to go in the old beaten track of morality." Ay, so he does; for thus he overcomes the world.

Oh! I might tell you of some battles that have been fought. There has been many a poor maiden, who has worked, worked, worked, until her fingers were worn to the bone, to earn a scanty living out of the things which we wear upon us, knowing not that oftentimes we wear the blood, and bones, and sinews of poor girls. That poor girl has been tempted a thousand times, the evil one has tried to seduce her, but she has fought a valiant battle; stern in her integrity, in the midst of poverty she still stands upright, "Clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners," a heroine unconquered by the temptations and enticements of vice. In other cases: many a man has had the chance of being rich in an hour, affluent in a moment, if he would but clutch something which he dare not look at, because God within him said, "No." The world said, "Be rich, be rich;" but the Holy Spirit said, "No! be honest; serve thy God." Oh, the stern

contest. and the manly combat carried on within the heart! But he said, "No; could I have the stars transmuted into worlds of gold, I would not for those globes of wealth belie my principles, and damage my soul"; thus he walks a conqueror. **"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."**

II. But my text speaks of a **GREAT BIRTH**. A very kind friend has told me that while I was preaching in Exeter Hall I ought to pay deference to the varied opinions of my hearers; that albeit I may be a Calvinist and a Baptist, I should recollect that there are a variety of creeds here. Now, if I were to preach nothing but what would please the whole lot of you, what on earth should I do? I preach what I believe to be true; and if the omission of a single truth that I believe, would make me king of England throughout eternity, I would not leave it out. Those who do not like what I say have the option of leaving it. They come here, I suppose, to please themselves; and if the truth does not please them, they can leave it. I will never be afraid that an honest British audience will turn away from the man who does not stick, and stutter, and stammer in speaking the truth. Well, now, about this great birth. I am going to say perhaps a harsh thing, but I heard it said by Mr. Jay first of all. Some say a new birth takes place in an infant baptism, but I remember that venerable patriarch saying, "Popery is a lie, Puseyism is a lie, baptismal regeneration is a lie." So it is. It is a lie so palpable that I can scarcely imagine the preachers of it have any brains in their heads at all. It is so absurd upon the very face of it, that a man who believes it put himself below the range of a common-sense man. Believe that every child by a drop of water is born again! Then that man that you see in the ring as a prize-fighter is born again, because those sanctified drops once fell upon his infant forehead! Another man swears—behold him drunk and reeling about the streets. He is born again! A pretty born again that is! I think he wants to be born again another time. Such a regeneration as that only fits him for the devil; and by its deluding effect, may even



make him sevenfold more the child of hell. But the men who curse, and swear, and rob and steal, and those poor wretches who are hanged, have all been born again, according to the fiction of this beautiful Puseyite church. Out upon it! out upon it! Ah, God sends something better than that into men's hearts, when he sends them a new birth.

However, the text speaks of a great birth. **“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.”** This new birth is the mysterious point in all religion. If you preach anything else except the new birth you will always get on well with your hearers; but if you insist that in order to enter heaven there must be a radical change, though this is the doctrine of the Scripture, it is so unpalatable to mankind in general that you will scarcely get them to listen. Ah! now ye turn away if I begin to tell you, that **“except ye be born of water and of the Spirit, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.”** If I tell you that there must be a regenerating influence exerted upon your minds by the power of the Holy Ghost then I know ye will say “it is enthusiasm.” Ah! but it is the enthusiasm of the Bible. There I stand; by this I will be judged. If the Bible does not say we must be born again, then I give it up; but if it does then, sirs, do not distrust that truth on which your salvation hangs.

What is it to be born again, then? Very briefly, to be born again is to undergo a change so mysterious, that human words cannot speak of it. As we cannot describe our first birth, so it is impossible for us to describe the second. **“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”** But while it is so mysterious, it is a change which is known and felt. People are not born again when they are in bed and asleep, so that they do not know it. They feel it; they experience it. Galvanism, or the power of electricity, may be mysterious; but they produce a feeling—a sensation. So does the new birth. At the time of the new birth the soul is in great agony—often

drowned in seas of tears. Sometimes it drinks bitters, now and then mingled with sweet drops of hope. Whilst we are passing from death unto life, there is an experience which none but the child of God can really understand. It is a mysterious change; but, at the same time, it is a positive one. It is as much a change as if this heart were taken out of me, and the black drops of blood wrung from it, then washed and cleansed and put into my soul again. It is “a new heart and a right spirit:” a mysterious but yet an actual and real change!

Let me tell you, moreover, that this change is a supernatural one. It is not one that a man performs upon himself. It is not leaving off drinking and becoming sober; it is not turning from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant; it is not veering round from a Dissenter to a Churchman, or a Churchman to a Dissenter. It is a vast deal more than that. It is a new principle infused which works in the heart, enters the very soul, and moves the entire man. Not a change of my name, but a renewal of my nature, so that I am not the man I used to be, but a new man in Christ Jesus. It is a supernatural change—something which man cannot do, and which only God can effect; which the Bible itself cannot accomplish without the attendant Spirit of God; which no minister’s eloquence can bring about—something so mighty and wondrous, that it must be confessed to be the work of God, and God alone. Here is the place to observe that this new birth is an enduring change. Arminians tell us that people are born again, then fall into sin, pick themselves up again, and become Christians again—fall into sin, lose the grace of God, then come back again—fall into sin a hundred times in their lives, and so keep on losing grace and recovering it. Well, I suppose it is a new version of the Scripture where you read of that. But I read in my Bible that if true Christians could fall away, it would be impossible to renew them again unto repentance. I read, moreover, that wherever God has begun a good work he will carry it on even to the end; and that whom he once loves, he loves to the end. If I have simply been

reformed, I may be a drunkard yet, or you may see me acting on the stage. But if I am really born again, with that real supernatural change, I shall never fall away, I may fall into a sin, but I shall not fall finally; I shall stand while life shall last, constantly secure; and when I die it shall be said—

“Servant of God, well done!  
Rest from thy blest employ;  
The battle’s fought, the victory’s won;  
Enter thy rest of joy.”

Do not deceive yourselves, my beloved. If you imagine that you have been regenerated, and having gone away from God, will be once more born again, you do not know anything about the matter; for “he that is born of God sinneth not.” That is, he does not sin so much as to fall away from grace; **“for he keepeth himself, that the evil one toucheth him not.”** Happy is the man who is really and actually regenerate, and passed from death unto life!

III. To conclude. There **IS A GREAT GRACE**. Persons who are born again really do overcome the world. How is this brought about? The text says, **“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”** Christians do not triumph over the world by reason. Not at all. Reason is a very good thing, and nobody should find fault with it. Reason is a candle: but faith is a sun. Well, I prefer the sun, though I do not put out the candle. I use my reason as a Christian man; I exercise it constantly: but when I come to real warfare, reason is a wooden sword; it breaks, it snaps; while faith, that sword of true Jerusalem metal, cuts to the dividing of soul and body. My text says, **“This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.”** Who are the men that do anything in the world? Are they not always men of faith? Take it even as natural faith. Who wins the battle? Why, the man who knows he will win it, and vows that he will be victor. Who never gets on in the world? The man who is always afraid to

do a thing, for fear he cannot accomplish it. Who climbs the top of the Alps? The man who says, "I will do it, or I will die." Let such a man make up his mind that he can do a thing, and he will do it, if it is within the range of possibility. Who have been the men who have lifted the standard, and grasping it with firm hand, have upheld it in the midst of stormy strife and battle? Why, men of faith. Who have done great things? Not men of fear and trembling, men who are afraid; but men of faith, who had bold fronts, and foreheads made of brass-men who never shook, and never trembled, but believing in God, lifted their eyes to the hills, whence cometh their strength.

"Never was a marvel done upon the earth, but it had sprung of faith; nothing noble, generous, or great, but faith was the root of the achievement; nothing comely, nothing famous, but its praise is faith. Leonidas fought in human faith as Joshua in divine. Xenophon trusted to his skill, and the sons of Matthias to their cause." Faith is mightiest of the mighty. It is the monarch of the realms of the mind; there is no being superior to its strength, no creature which will not bow to its divine prowess. The want of faith makes a man despicable, it shrivels him up so small that he might live in a nutshell. Give him faith, and he is a leviathan that can dive into the depths of the sea; he is a war horse, that cries, aha! aha! in the battle; he is a giant who takes nations and crumbles them in his hand, who encounters hosts, and at a sword they vanish; he binds up sheaves of sceptres, and gathers up all the crowns at his own. There is nothing like faith, sirs. Faith makes you almost as omnipotent as God, by the borrowed might of its divinity. Give us faith and we can do all things.

I want to tell you how it is that faith helps Christians to overcome the world. It always does it homeopathically. You say, "That is a singular idea." So it may be. The principle is that, "Like cures like." So does faith overcome the world by curing like with like. How does faith trample upon the fear of the world? By the fear of God. "Now," says the world, "if you

do not do this I will take away your life. If you do not bow down before my false god, you shall be put in yon burning fiery furnace.” “But,” says the man of faith, “I fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. True, I may dread you, but I have a greater fear than that, I fear lest I should displease God; I tremble lest I should offend my Sovereign.” So the one fear counterbalances the other. How does faith overthrow the world’s hopes? “There,” says the world, “I will give thee this, I will give thee that, if thou wilt be my disciple. There is a hope for you; you shall be rich, you shall be great.” But, faith says, “I have a hope laid up in heaven; a hope which fadeth not away, eternal, incorrupt, amaranthine hope, a golden hope, a crown of life;” and the hope of glory overcomes all the hopes of the world, “Ah!” says the world, “Why not follow the example of your fellows?” “Because,” says faith, “I will follow the example of Christ.” If the world puts one example before us, faith puts another. “Oh, follow the example of such an one; he is wise, and great, and good,” says the world. Says faith, “I will follow Christ; he is the wisest, the greatest, and the best.” It overcomes example by example, “Well,” says the world, “since thou wilt not be conquered by all this, come, I will love thee; thou shalt be my friend.” Faith says, “He that is the friend of this world, cannot be the friend of God. God loves me.” So he puts love against love; fear against fear; hope against hope; dread against dread; and so faith overcomes the world by like curing like.

In closing my discourse, men and brethren, I am but a child; I have spoken to you as I could this morning. Another time, perhaps I might be able to launch more thunders, and to proclaim better the word of God; but this I am sure of—I tell you all I know, and speak right on. I am no orator; but just tell you what springs up from my heart. But before I have done, O that I may have a word with your souls. How many are there here who are born again? Some turn a deaf ear, and say, “It is all nonsense; we go to our place of worship regularly; put our hymn books and Bibles under our arm! and

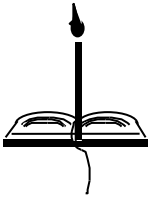
we are very religious sort of people.” Ah, soul! if I meet you at the bar of judgment, recollect I said—and said God’s word—**“Except ye be born again ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”** Others of you say, “We cannot believe that being born again is such a change as you speak of, I am a great deal better than I used to be; I do not swear now, and I am very much reformed.” Sirs, I tell you it is no little change. It is not mending the pitcher, but it is breaking it up and having a new one; it is not patching the heart, it is having a new heart and a right spirit. There is nothing but death unto sin, and life unto righteousness, that will save your souls.

I am preaching no new doctrine. Turn to the articles of the Church of England, and read it there. Church people come to me sometimes to unite with our church; I show them our doctrines in their prayer book, and they have said they never knew they were there. My dear hearers, why cannot you read your own articles of faith? Why do you not know what is in your own prayer book? Men, now-a-days, do not read their Bibles, and they have for the most part no religion. They have a religion, which is all outside show, but they do not think of searching to see what its meaning really is. Sirs, it is not the cloak of religion that will do for you; it is a vital godliness you need; it is not a religious Sunday, it is a religious Monday; it is not a pious church, it is a pious closet; it is not a sacred place to kneel in, it is a holy place to stand in all day long. There must be a change of heart, real, radical, vital, entire. And now, what say you? Has your faith overcome the world? Can you live above it? or do you love the world and the things thereof? If so, sirs, ye must go on your way and perish, each one of you, unless ye turn from that, and give your hearts to Christ. Oh! what say you, is Jesus worthy of your love? Are the things of eternity and heaven worth the things of time? Is it so sweet to be a worldling, that for that you can lie down in torment? Is it so good to be a sinner, that for this you can risk your soul’s eternal welfare? O, my friends, is it worth your while to run the risk of an eternity of woe for a hour of pleasure? Is a

dance worth dancing in hell with howling fiends for ever? Is one dream, with a horrid waking, worth enjoying, when there are the glories of heaven for those who follow God? Oh! if my lips would let me speak to you, my heart would run over at my eyes, and I would weep myself away, until ye had pity on your own poor souls. I know I am, in a measure, accountable for your souls, If the watchmen warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood shall be required at the watchman's hands, **"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?"** thus saith the Lord. Besotted, filled with your evil wills, inclined to evil; still the Holy Ghost speaks by me this morning, "If ye turn unto the Lord, with full purpose of heart, he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, he will abundantly pardon." I cannot bring you; I cannot fetch you. My words are powerless, my thoughts are weak! Old Adam is too strong for this young child to draw or drag; but God speak to you, dear hearts; God send the truth home, and then we shall rejoice together, both he that soweth and he that reapeth, because God has given us the increase. God bless you! may you all be born again, and have that faith that overcometh the world!

"Have I that faith which looks to Christ,  
O'ercomes the world and sin—  
Receives him Prophet, Priest, and King,  
And makes the conscience clean?"

"If I this precious grace possess,  
All praise is due to thee;  
If not, I seek it from thy hands;  
Now grant it, Lord, to me."



## *A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist*

### A Meditation Upon the Bible, by William Spurstowe (1666)

Quintilian, who makes it a question, why unlearned men in discourse seem oft times more free and copious than the learned, gives this as the answer: That the one without either *care*, or *choice*, express whatsoever their present thoughts suggest to them. When the other are both careful what to say, and to dispose also their conceptions in due manner and order. If anything makes this subject difficult to my meditation, it is not *want* but *plenty*, which is so great, as that I must, like Bezaleel and Aholiab, be forced to lay aside much of that costly stuff which presents itself to me. And what to refuse, or what to take in, is no easy matter to resolve.

It will, I am sensible, require and deserve also more exactness in choosing what to say, and what not to say, concerning its worth and excellency, and how to digest what is spoken, than what is meet for any to assume unto himself. I shall therefore account that I have attained my end, if I can but so employ my thoughts as to increase my veneration to this Book of God, which none can ever too much study, or too highly prize; and with which to be well acquainted, is not only the chief of *duties*, but the best of *delights*, and pleasures. What would be our condition in this world if we had not this blessed Book among us, would it not be like Adam's, when driven out of Paradise, and debarred from the Tree of Life? Would it not be darker than the Earth without the Sun? If the world were fuller of books than the heaven is of stars, and this



only wanting, there would be no certain way and rule to salvation. But if this alone were extant, it would enlighten the eyes, make wise the simple, and guide their feet in the paths of life.

True it is, that for many years, God made known himself by *visions, dreams, oracles*, to persons of *noted holiness*, that they might teach and instruct others. But it was while the church of God was of small growth and extent, and the persons to whom God's messages were credited with unquestioned authority with the present age. But afterward the Lord spoke to his church both by *word* and *writing*, the one useful for further *revealing* divine truths, and the other for the *recording* of them, that when the *canon* was once completed, all might appeal to it, and none take the liberty of coining divine *oracles* to himself, or of obtruding his *fancies* upon others.

And were there no other use of this *Book of God* than this, that it should be the standard for the trial of all doctrines, it were to be highly prized for its worth; without which the minds of men would be in a continual distraction, through the multitude of *enthusiasts*, that would be pretending *commissions* from heaven, none knowing what to believe in point of faith, or what to do in point of obedience, or whereby to difference the *good and evil spirit* from each other. But this single benefit (though it can never enough be thankfully acknowledged to God by us) is but as a cluster to the vintage, or as an ear of cord to the harvest, in respect to those many blessings that may be reaped from it.

Doth not Paul ascribe unto it a universal influence into the welfare of believers, when he enumerates so many noble ends for which all Scripture is profitable? What is it that makes any man wise to salvation? Is it not the Scripture? Is not this the only book by which we come to understand the heart of God to us, and learn also the knowledge of our own hearts? Both which as they are the breasts of mysteries; so they are of all knowledge the best, and fill the soul with more satisfaction than the most exact discovery of all created beings

whatsoever.

What if a man could, like Solomon, speak of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows upon the wall, and of beasts, fowls, and fish, and yet were wholly ignorant of his own heart, would not the light that is in him be darkness? Or what if a man could resolve all those posing questions in which the schoolmen have busied themselves concerning angels, and yet know nothing of the God of angels, would he not become as a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal? Is the knowledge of these things the great end for which our understanding was given unto us? Or is it any further desirable or profitable than as it conduces to the knowledge of God? Does the *rectitude* of our actions, and the *holiness* of them, flow from the knowledge we have of any creature, or from the knowledge of God? Is not his will the rule, and his glory the end of all that we do? And how should we ever come to know what the good and acceptable will of God is, but by his revealing it to us? This is what he has done most clearly and fully in this blessed book of his, *the Scripture of truth*.

That then which commends this book, and renders it worthy of all acceptance, is the rich discoveries that it makes to us concerning so *excellent a being* as God is, whom it acquaints us with in his *nature, perfections, counsels, and designs*, in relation to the eternal salvation of man. It contains not anything that is mean or trivial; the matters in it are all of no less glory for any to behold, than of weighty *importance* for all to know.

Do we not read in it, with what *majesty* God gave forth his Sacred Law, when thunders, lightnings, dark clouds and burnings were used as heralds in the promulgation of it? And yet may we not again see the hidings of his power, in the wonderful condescensions of his *goodness*? How does he *entreat, woo, and importune* those whom he could with a frown, or breath easily destroy, and pursue with bowels of mercy, such whom he might in justice leave, and cast off forever? Are

there not in it *precepts* of exact purity, that are as diamonds without flaws, and as fine gold without dross? In all other books, they are as the most current *coins*, that must have their *alloys* of baser metals. But in this they resemble the author, who is *light* in which there is no *darkness*, and a *sun* in which are no *spots*. Are there not in it *promises* of infinite value as well as goodness, in which rewards are given not of *debt*, but of *grace*, and to such who have cause to be ashamed of their *duties*, as well as their *sins*? Are there not in it *premonitions* of great faithfulness, in which God fully declares to men what the issues of sin will be? And does it not proclaim a judgment to come in which the judge will be impartial, and the sentence most severe, against the least offences, as well as against the greatest? What is it that may teach us to serve God with *cheerfulness*, to *trust* him with *confidence*, to *adhere* to him with *resolution* in difficulties, to submit to his will with patience in the greatest extremities, that we may not be abundantly furnished with from this Book? It alone is a perfect *library*, in which are presented those deep mysteries of the Gospel, that angels study, and look into both with delight and wonder, being more desirous to pry into them, than of perfect ability to understand them. They are such, that had they not been revealed could not have been known, and being revealed, can yet never be fully comprehended by any.

Was it ever heard, that he who was the maker of all things, was made of a woman? That the ancient of days was not an hour old? That eternal life began to live? That he, to whose nature incomprehensibility belongs, should be enclosed in the narrow limits of the womb? Where can we read but in this book, that he who perfectly hates sin, should condescend to take upon him the similitude of sinful flesh? That he, who was the person injured by sin, should willingly be the sacrifice to expiate the guilt of it, and to die instead of the sinners? Are not these such mysteries as are utter impossibilities to reason? And at which, like Sarah, it laughs, rather than, with Abraham, entertain them with an holy reverence and joy when made

known? *Reason* is busy in looking after demonstrations, and inquires how this can be, and then scorns what it cannot fathom. But *faith* rests itself in the revelations of God, and adores as a mystery what he discovers. Yea, it makes these mysteries no only *objects* of its highest adoration but the grounds of its sure *comfort* and *confidence*.

From whence is it, that faith searches its security against sin, Satan, death, and hell? Is it not from this, that he who is the savior of believers is God-man manifested in the flesh? That he who is their *sacrifice* through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, to purge their conscience from dead works to serve the living God? That he who is their *advocate* did raise himself from the dead, and ascend into the highest heavens to make everlasting intercessions for them? Can then any depreciate this book, or abate the least *iota* of that awful esteem which upon all accounts is due to it, and be guiltless? Or can any neglect this book as unworthy of their reading, which God has thought worthy of his writing, without putting an affront upon God himself, whose image it bears, as well as declares his commands?

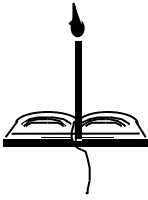
And yet I tremble to think how many *anti-scripturists* there be, who have let fall both from their lips and pens such bold scorns, as if Satan stood at their right hand to inspire them. More I could readily name of the same stamp, that have presumed impiously to scoff at the *revelations* of God, as others at his *providence*, but who can take pleasure to rake in a *dunghill* that may enjoy the fragrancy of a *paradise*. I shall therefore turn my thoughts from them, and, as having nothing to cast over their wickedness, shall call my blood into my face, and spread it as a vail in blushing for them, that should have blushed and been ashamed for themselves.

But though the Word of God ceases not to be a reproach to them, yet I shall bind it as a crown to me. Though they reject the counsel of God against themselves, yet I shall make his testimonies my delight, and the men of my counsel, and shall make the prayer of the *Psalmist* to be my daily prayer, that

God would open my eyes, that I may behold the hidden wonders that are contained in his law.

---

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



# Postscript

## New Life: Necessary

“The doctrines of Christianity, however important and essential, are not mere theories, but great practical realities, which can only have a saving efficacy by being received into the soul. A mere speculative belief in them, if unaccompanied by a spiritual influence upon us, is of no consequence. We cannot be Christians without a new life.”

-- *Paton Gloag (1823-1906)*

### Related Bible Verse:

“We were therefore buried with Christ through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:4)

Note: The work from which the above quote was taken, *Practical Christianity*, by Paton Gloag, is available as a PDF eBook at the [Classic Christian Library](http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com), free of charge at:

[http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com/library/gloag\\_paton/Gloag-Practical\\_Christianity.pdf](http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com/library/gloag_paton/Gloag-Practical_Christianity.pdf)

