

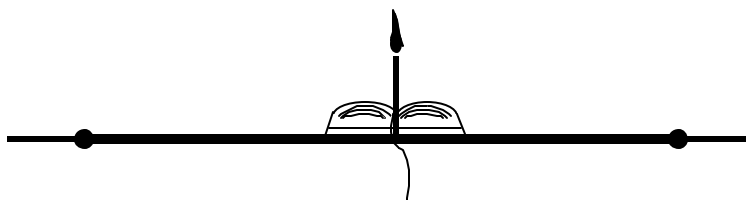
Scripture Studies

VOL. XI, No. 4

MAY
2004

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

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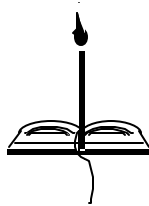
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May God bless you as you study His Word.



Old Testament Study: Exodus 7:6-13

A Hardened Heart (cont.), by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

⁶And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they. ⁷And Moses [was] fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

⁸And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, ⁹“When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, ‘Shew a miracle for you’: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, ‘Take thy rod, and cast [it] before Pharaoh,’ [and] it shall become a serpent.” ¹⁰And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. ¹¹Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. ¹²For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods. ¹³And He hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. (Exodus 7:1-13, AV)

“**And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they**” (v. 6). Why are we told this here? We believe the answer is, To point a contrast from what we find at the beginning of Exodus 5. In the opening verse of that chapter we learn that Moses “**went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go**” (Ex. 5:1, AV). This was the Lord’s peremptory *demand*. Then we read of Pharaoh’s scornful refusal. Now note what follows: “**And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God**” (Ex. 5:3, AV). It is plain that Moses and Aaron *changed* the Lord’s words. They *toned down* the offensive message. Instead of occupying the high ground of God’s ambassadors and *commanding* Pharaoh, they descended to the servile level of *pleading* with him and making a *request* of him. It is for this reason, we believe, that in 7:1 we find Jehovah saying to Moses, “**See**” (that is,

mark it well) **“I have made thee a god to Pharaoh”**: it is not for you to go and *beg* from him, it is for you to demand and command. And then the Lord added, **“Thou shalt speak all that I command thee”**. This time the Lord’s servants obeyed to the letter, hence we are now told that they **“did as the Lord commanded them, so did they”**.

“And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh” (v. 7). This reference to the ages of Moses and Aaron seems to be brought in here in order to magnify the power and grace of Jehovah. He was pleased to employ two *aged* men as His instruments. No doubt the Holy Spirit would also impress us with the *lengthiness* of Israel’s afflictions, and the *longsufferance* of Jehovah before He dealt in judgment. For over eighty years the Hebrews had been sorely oppressed.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods” (vv. 8-12).

The reason why Pharaoh asked Moses and Aaron to perform a miracle was to test them and prove whether or not the God of the Hebrews had really sent them. The selected miracle’s meaning and message in the present connection is not easy to determine. From an evidential viewpoint it demonstrated that Moses and Aaron were supernaturally endowed. Probably, too, the rod becoming a serpent was designed to speak to the conscience of Pharaoh, intimating that he and his people were under the dominion of Satan. This seems to be borne out by the fact that nothing was here said — either by the Lord when instructing Moses (v. 9), or in the description of the miracle (vv. 10-12) — about the serpent being turned into a rod again. It is also very significant that the second sign given to Moses (see Ex. 4:6) — the restoring of the leprous hand — which accredited Moses before the Israelites, was not performed before Pharaoh. The reason for this is obvious: the people of God, not the men of the world, are the only ones who have *revealed* to them the secret of deliverance from the defilement of sin.

The response of Pharaoh to this miracle wrought by Moses and Aaron was remarkable. The king summoned his wise men and the sorcerers — those who were in league with the powers of evil — and they duplicated the miracle. It is indeed sad to find almost all of the commentators *denying* that a real miracle was performed by the Egyptian magicians. Whatever

philosophical or doctrinal difficulties may be involved, it ill becomes us to yield to the rationalism of our day. The scriptural account is very explicit and leaves no room for uncertainty. First, the Holy Spirit has told us that the magicians of Egypt **“also did in like manner (as what Moses and Aaron had done) with their enchantments.”** These words are not to be explained away, but are to be received by simple faith. Second, it is added, **“for they cast down every man his rod,”** (not something else which they had substituted by sleight of hand) **“and they (the rods) became serpents”**. If language has any meaning then these words bar out the idea that the magicians threw down serpents. They cast down their rods, and these *became* serpents. Finally, we are told, **“but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods”**, i.e., Aaron’s rod, now turned into a serpent, swallowed up their rods, now become serpents. That the Holy Spirit has worded it in this way is evidently for the express purpose of forbidding us to conclude that anything other than **“rods”** were cast to the ground.

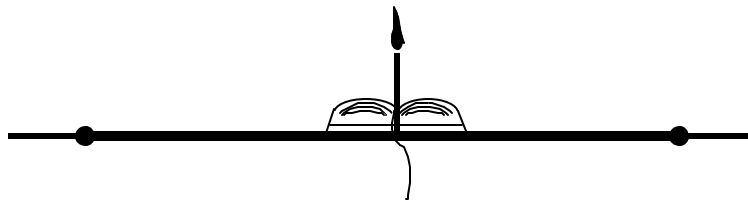
If it should be asked, “How was it possible for these Egyptian sorcerers to perform this miracle?”, the answer must be, “By the power of the Devil.” This subject is admittedly mysterious, and much too large a one for us to enter into now at length. What is before us here in these earlier chapters of Exodus adumbrates the great conflict between good and evil. Pharaoh acts throughout as the representative of Satan, and the fact that he was able to summon magicians who could work such prodigies only serves to illustrate and exemplify the mighty powers which the Devil has at his disposal. It is both foolish and mischievous to underestimate the strength of our great Enemy. The one that was permitted to transport our Savior from the wilderness to the temple at Jerusalem, and the one who was able to show Him **“all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time”** (Luke 4:5), would have no difficulty in empowering his emissaries to transform their rods into serpents.

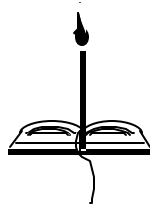
“They cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods” (v. 12). This is very striking. The magicians appeared in the name of their **“gods”** (cf. Exodus 12:12 and 18:11), but this miracle made it apparent that the power of Moses was *superior* to their sorceries, and *opposed* to them too. This **“sign”** foreshadowed the end of the great conflict then beginning, as of every other wherein powers terrestrial and infernal contend with the Almighty. “The symbols of their authority have disappeared, and that of Jehovah’s servants alone remained” (Urquhart).

“And He hardened Pharaoh’s heart (literally, Pharaoh’s heart was hardened) that he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said” (v. 13). Here again the commentators offend grievously. They insist, almost one and all, that this verse signifies that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and that it was not until later, and *because* of Pharaoh’s obduracy, that the Lord **“hardened”** his heart. But this very verse unequivocally

repudiates their carnal reasonings. This verse emphatically declares that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, **"that he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said"**. Now let the previous chapters be read through carefully and note *what* the Lord *had* said. He had said *nothing whatever* about Pharaoh hardening his own heart! But He *had* said, **"I will harden his heart"** (4:21), and again, **"I will harden his heart"** (7:3). This settles the matter. God had expressly declared that He *would* harden the king's heart, and now we read in 7:13 that **"Pharaoh's heart was hardened"** (not, "was hard"), **"that he hearkened not unto them, AS the Lord had said"**. Man ever reverses the order of God. The carnal mind says, Do good in order to be saved: God says, You must be saved before you can do any good thing. The carnal mind reasons that a man must believe in order to be born again; the Scriptures teach that a man must first have spiritual life before he can manifest the activities of that life. Those who follow the theologians will conclude that God hardened Pharaoh's heart because the king had *first* hardened his heart; but those who bow to the authority of Holy Writ (and there are *very few* who *really* do so), will acknowledge that Pharaoh hardened his heart *because* God had first hardened it.

What is said here of Pharaoh affords a most solemn illustration of what we read of in Proverbs 21:1: **"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will"**. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is not one whit more appalling than what we read of it Revelation 17:17: **"For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the Beast"**. Here we find ten kings in league with the Antichrist, the Man of Sin, and that it is God Himself who puts it into their hearts to give their kingdom unto him. Again we say that such things are not to be philosophized about. Nor are we to call into question the righteousness and holiness of God's ways. Scripture plainly tells us that *His* ways are **"past finding out"** (Romans 11:33). Let us then tremble before Him, and if in marvelous grace He has softened *our* hearts let us magnify His sovereign mercy unceasingly.





A Classic Study: Patience in Affliction

A Classic Study by Richard Baxter (1615–1691)

[In each article, Mr. Baxter gives advice on how to be patient through a specific type of affliction.]—*Ed.*

Heavy Judgments on the Land

Another trial of our patience is, public, and common, and heavy chastisements of God, upon whole cities, countries, and kingdoms; especially by plagues, famine, fire, and war.

1. In 1665, during the plague, how doleful was the case of London! When a hundred thousand died in a short time; when men were cast by heaps into pits for burial, and when good and bad were swept away, and the living were hard put to it to bury the dead, and husbands and wives, and parents and children, who were burying their friends, expected to be presently dead themselves; and when the houses that were not used to prayer, had praying doors, “God be merciful to us” being written on them to notify their case; and when we were glad to fly into remote and solitary places, and were afraid to meet a man, lest he should infect us.

2. And how doleful was the very next year’s case, where the rich and famous city of London was burnt! Oh what a sight were those dreadful, raging, mounting flames! How many thousand houses were consumed in three days, which pride had adorned with costly furniture, and where luxury had wasted the creatures of God! What treasures that had been long in heaping up, were there consumed! To see the streets crowded with men astonished, that looked on all their wealth consumed, and could do nothing to save it from the flames; and others carrying out their goods, and some laying them in vaults for safety, and some in churches, and altogether there consumed! The booksellers hoped that the famous structure and vaults of St. Paul’s church might have saved their great treasure of excellent books, which yet did but increase the church’s ruin. Yea, the houses of the most just and godly men no more escaped than the rest, even where God was daily called on and worshipped! No, nor the churches, where many holy, excellent men had been famous, fruitful preachers, and where the bodies of thousands of true saints had been buried. About seventy churches burnt down; when it was but about four years before that most or many of their faithful pastors had been cast out and forbidden to preach the gospel; and now those that were set up in their steads are

driven out by the flames, as they lately fled away from the plague; and most of them to this day, or very many, lie unbuilt, and God's worship is performed in such poor wooden tabernacles, as before would have been made a scorn. And how many thousand families had no habitation, and were reduced to poverty, and to this day live in the distress which those flames did bring upon them! And since then, how many dreadful fires have consumed many corporations in this land! Near us, how calamitous was that in Southwark! And but a fortnight past, that more dreadful fire at Wapping, where about a thousand houses, that had above three thousand families, were burnt!

3. And though God hath not yet tried us with any common destructive famine, poverty causeth thousands to die of sicknesses taken by want; even by drinking water, and wanting fire and clothes, and eating unwholesome food. And we have oft had notice of the case of Germany, after the wars, about 1627, when they were fain to watch the graves, lest the dead bodies should be digged up and eaten.

4. But alas! Bloody wars have been more common, and men to men more terrible than mad dogs, or wolves, or tigers. We had sad experience of it in England, Scotland, and Ireland; but other countries have felt much more. They that have not tried it, know not what it is to live under the power of savage soldiers, who domineer over all, and make all slaves to them in their own houses, and keep them under daily fear of death, and take away all they have, and make no more to kill men, than to kill dogs or flies; and if they can but call them enemies, think him the most honourable who killeth most. Oh what dismal sights were our fields, covered with the dead, and garrisons stormed, and all countries filled with men-hunters, who took their neighbours' estates and lives for their lawful prey. Besides that one party of them grew to that inhumanity and blasphemy, as to make scorn of death and hell, and so to defy God. And others that professed piety, fell into pride and presumption, and contentious sects, for which they usually raged and were confident. Is it not hard to think of such things with patience, much more to see and feel much of them? But God hath not left us without remedy:

1. As to plagues, 1. The great number that die together, make us think otherwise of it than is meet: it is but death, and all must die. Not one more dieth of the plague, than would ere long if there were no plague; and it is usually a shorter pain than other fevers bring; and the pain is small in comparison of the stone in the bladder, and many other diseases.

2. And the terror of men's danger and dying multitudes usually doth more to awaken men to repentance and serious preparation, than other diseases use to do. Though fear alone make not a sound repentance, fear is a great and necessary preparatory. I have reason to hope, that the great plague in London was a help to the conversion of many hundred souls; not only as it called men to review their lives, and bethink them of their state; but as it made them far more impartial hearers of public preaching

and private counsel. There was then in London no scorning at holy seriousness and diligence for salvation, in comparison of what is now. The houses that now roar out drunken songs and scorns at godliness, and revile, threaten, and curse the religious sort, had other language then, when 'Lord, have mercy on us' was written on the doors. When the public ministers fled, God stirred up the charity of many silenced ministers, who till then had forborne public preaching, and they ventured among them, and begged money out of the country for the poor; visited them, and preached to them in the deserted pulpits. And the sense of approaching death so awakened both preachers and hearers, that multitudes of young men and others were converted to true repentance.

And this was the chief occasion of the public preaching of the silenced ministers ever since. They had so great experience of God's blessing, and their young converts were so sensible of the benefit, that both preachers and hearers then resolved to hold on as long as they could.

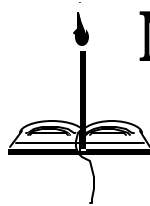
And was not London now a gainer by this plague? Did it not make men better? Compare it and other places then. At Oxford the parliament of lords, bishops, and commons, who fled thither from the plague, even then in the heat of it were making that swearing act, which ruineth and imprisoneth nonconformists that come within five miles of any city, or burgess corporation, and take not their oath and declaration (yea, and some lawyers say, conformists too, that have but once preached in that which they call a conventicler, and take not the oath). But in London there is no such work; they were not then sending the preachers to jail, or hunting them as rogues or rebels, but gladly hearing them, and begging for their prayers.

II. And as to famine or common poverty, I have spoken of it before. The great distress that the fires and other means have brought on many thousand families, hath but drawn out the charity of others, and exercised the repentance, humility, and mortification of the poor, and so hath prepared both sorts, rich and poor, for a greater reward: it hath done much to try men's charity, and to show the difference between man and man. I that have had the opportunity to try both sorts, have found by long experience, that whereas malignant, worldly men were wont to say, that these religious persons were but hypocrites; though they read the Scripture and prayed much, they were as covetous and uncharitable as others: it is so much contrary, that they excel others in charity as much as in piety; and I can sooner get ten pounds, or twenty, for the poor, from religious persons, than ten shillings from those that speak against them, that are of greater wealth than they.

III. And though the foresaid flames of London, Southwark, Wapping, Northampton, etc, were great corrections, let us not make them greater than they are. As to the loss of estate by them, it is but what the richest merchant is liable to by piracy or shipwreck, and not so much as death will shortly bring on all, when all the world must be forsaken. 2. And it was a

great mercy of God, that men's lives were preserved when their wealth was gone; so that they had time to improve the correction. 3. And a great help it was to men of any sense and consideration, to see the vanity of all worldly wealth and treasure, and to prepare for the time when it must be finally left. And the flames of London and its after-ruins, were a notable fore-signification of the great flames and ruins of the final judgment day; and it loudly called on men to examine what the corporation common sin of England is, which laid so many corporations in ashes; and to repent in time. And we need not make it an aggravation that it was done by malice; for it is easier to our consciences, that it be done by others than ourselves; and it helpeth those men to see the evil of those destructive principles which engage men to do such mischief on pretence of the service of the church. 4. Yea, and it is a presignification of the new heaven and earth, when all things shall be restored, to see such a city so soon rebuilt, in far greater splendour than before.

IV. But cruel wars and soldiers are a more sharp calamity; but yet leave us alleviating considerations, and matter enough to exercise and help our patience. For, 1. It doth lively tell us what man is in his corrupted state, and what sin is, and what we had been if grace had forsaken us. 2. It tells us what our state on earth is, a militant life; and calls us to remember our spiritual enemies and warfare, and to live as armed in constant watchfulness. 3. It helps our faith to believe that there are devils, and a hell, when we see the works and instruments of devils upon earth, and see earth made so like to hell. 4. It teacheth us to set light by earthly treasure, which thieves and plunderers can so quickly take away; and to live in constant preparation for death, when men are so ready to take away our lives. 5. And it tells us how much we are beholden to God for our preservation, and for our peace, that all men be not thus continually as incarnate devils to one another. 6. And it calls us to long for the world of perfect love and peace, where there are no such men, and no such doings. How sweet will everlasting peace and joy be when we come newly out of such a world of savage cruelty! 7. And God often by wars, prepareth people for a better peace than they had before; the sweetness of which doth make the miseries of war forgotten. Wicked men are mad with sin, and will not give peace to themselves or others: while they run with rage to murder others, they are killed themselves, and God is known by the judgment which He executeth, while the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands, and dashed in pieces by their own rage; **“for the wicked are like the raging sea, which casts out dirt. There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord”** (Isa. 57:20-21, AV). And while men bite and devour one another, they are devoured one of another; and **“they that lead into captivity, shall be led into captivity; and they that kill with the sword, shall be killed by the sword”** (Rev. 13:10). So that it should seem no strange thing to a soldier of Christ, that the world which He is passing through is malignant.



New Testament Study: Matthew 17:22-27

The Temple Tax

²²When they came together in Galilee, He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. ²³They will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised to life.” And the disciples were filled with grief.

²⁴After Jesus and His disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?”

²⁵“Yes, He does,” he replied.

When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. “What do you think, Simon?” He asked. “From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own sons or from others?”

²⁶“From others,” Peter answered.

“Then the sons are exempt,” Jesus said to him.

²⁷“But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.”

Jesus once again spoke to His disciples concerning His death and resurrection: **“When they came together in Galilee, He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised to life.’ And the disciples were filled with grief”** (vss. 22–23). We cannot help but notice how Jesus repeatedly spoke of His death and resurrection to the disciples. It was, of course, necessary to prepare them for this painful trial that they were to experience, and to speak of it ahead of time, so that the disciples would know that it was not unexpected: that the death and resurrection of Jesus was all part of God’s plan. “Christ now was chiefly devoting His time and attention to His disciples, revealing, as they became spiritually ready, deep truths about Himself, His Church, and the fu-

ture” [Griffith Thomas, 262]. “Their minds were far too receptive of other notions in reference to His kingdom, and therefore He set before them the truth again and again, almost in the same words. He would banish all dreams of a worldly monarchy from their souls. His death would be a grievous trial to them, and He would prepare them for it” [Spurgeon, 241].

“After Jesus and His disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, ‘Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?’ ‘Yes, He does,’ he replied” (vs. 25). The temple tax of those times fulfilled for the people the requirement that they pay to the temple atonement money, as commanded in Exodus 30:11–16. Jesus, being sinless, would be exempt from such a payment, for He needs no atonement. Peter, though, answered in the affirmative that, yes, Jesus did pay the temple tax. It seems that this was a bit of a fib, for it seems to be implied in the next few verses that Jesus had not been paying the tax..

“When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. ‘What do you think, Simon?’ He asked. ‘From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own sons or from others?’ ‘From others,’ Peter answered. ‘Then the sons are exempt,’ Jesus said to him” (vss. 25–26). Here we have a case of Jesus **“knowing our needs before we ask”** (see Matt. 6:8). Peter was most likely trying to think of a way to broach the subject of paying the temple tax. Jesus brought up the subject Himself. In addition to not needing to make payment for atonement, there is another reason Jesus did not need to pay the temple tax: Jesus is the Son of God. Peter himself well knew and believed this (see Matt. 16:16).

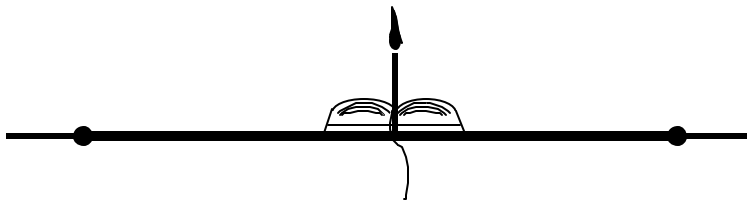
Jesus chose not to seek a confrontation with the temple official concerning this matter: **“But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours”** (vs. 27). Jesus did not want to put unnecessary stumbling blocks to prevent anyone from believing in Him, so He paid the tax, even though He had every right, as the Son of God, to be exempt from it. “Some would have said that He did not keep the law, did not perform a recognized duty of every Israelite, and so He certainly could not be the Messiah ... Matthew probably recorded this incident to show his Jewish readers on the one hand that Jesus felt Himself entitled to the respect due to the Messiah, and on the other, that He was very careful to keep the law in all respects, so that no Jew had a right to stumble at Him” [Broadus, 380].

This should be a lesson to us, that we should seek to obey the laws and customs of the land in which we live (assuming, of course, that there

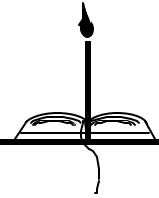
be nothing unlawful in the eyes of God in them), in order not to put any stumbling blocks in the way of nonbelievers. "Our Lord's example in this case deserves the attention of all who profess and call themselves Christians. There is deep wisdom in those five words, **'lest we should offend them.'** They teach us plainly that there are matters in which Christ's people ought to sink their own opinions, and submit to requirements which they may not thoroughly approve, rather than give offense and 'hinder the Gospel of Christ'" [Ryle, 217].

Jesus certainly chose an unusual way to pay the tax. "This was the only miracle worked in any sense for His own benefit (cf. Matt. 4:4), and even this was primarily for the sake of others" [Griffith Thomas, 264]. Ironically, the way He chose to pay the tax, strengthened His case for not paying it, for He demonstrated His almighty rule over Creation. "He makes a dumb creature bring the tribute-money to meet the collector's demand" [Ryle, 216].

Note, it is significant that Jesus also paid Peter's atonement money, not just His own. He was soon to pay for the atonement of all of us, at much greater cost. "Far greater and deeper truths lie slumbering down below. They are such as these: the glorious freedom of the Son, His coming under tribute for our sakes, and the clearance of Himself and us by the one payment which He Himself provided" [Spurgeon, 244].



A Topical Study: Self-Examination



The Necessity of Self-Examination, pt. 8 **by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)**

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps. 139:23-24, AV).

Section 8

Self-examination respecting the families to which we belong.

Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin in the families to which you belong. There are many persons who appear well among their neighbours, and seem to be of an honest, civil behaviour in their dealings and conversation abroad; yet if you follow them to their own houses, and to the families to which they belong there you will find them very perverse in their ways there they live in ways which are very displeasing to the pure all-searching eyes of God. You have already been directed to examine your conversation abroad, you have been directed to search the house of God, and to see if you have brought no defilement into it; you have been directed to search your closets, to see if there be no pollution or provocation there; be advised now to search your houses, examine your behaviour in the families to which you belong, and see what your ways and manners are there.

The houses to which we belong are the places where the generality of us spend the greater part of our time. If we respect the world as a man's sphere of action, a man's own house is the greater part of the world to him, *i.e.* the greater part of his actions and behaviour in the world is limited within this sphere. We should therefore be very critical in examining our behaviour, not only abroad, but at home. A great proportion of the wickedness of which men are guilty, and that will be brought out at the day of judgment, will be the sin which they shall have committed in the families to which they belong.

Therefore inquire how you behave yourselves in the family relations in which you stand. As those relative duties which we owe towards the members of the same family belong to the second table of the law, so love is the general duty which comprises them all. Therefore,

(1.) Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way which is contrary to that love which is due to those who belong to the same family. Love, implying a hearty good will, and a behaviour agreeable to it, is a duty which we owe to all mankind. We owe it to our neighbours, to whom we are no otherwise related than as they are our neighbours; yea, we owe it to those who stand in no relation to us, except that they are of mankind, are reasonable creatures, the sons and daughter of Adam. It is a duty that we owe to our enemies, how much more then do we owe it to those who stand in so near a relation to us as a husband or wife, parents or children, brethren or sisters!

There are the same obligations on us to love such relatives as to love the rest of mankind. We are to love them as men; we are to love them as our neighbours, we are to love them as belonging to the same Christian church, and not only so, but here is an additional obligation, arising from that near relation in which they stand to us. This is over and above the other. The nearer the relation, the greater is the obligation to love. To live in hatred, or in a way that is contrary to love, towards any man, is very displeasing to God; but how much more towards one of the same family! Love is the uniting band of all societies, **“and above all these things, put on charity which is the bond of perfectness.”** (Colossians 3:14.)

The union in love in our own family should be so much the stronger, as that society is more peculiarly our own, and is more appropriated to ourselves, or is a society in which we are more especially interested. Christ saith, **“I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire”** (Matt. 7:22). If this be true concerning those who are our brethren only as men, or professing Christians, how much more concerning those who are of the same family! If contention be so evil a thing in a town among neighbours, how much more hateful is it between members of the same family! If hatred, envy, or revenge, be so displeasing to God, towards those who are only our fellow-creatures, how much more provoking must it be between those that are our natural brothers and sisters, and are one bone and flesh! If only being angry with a neighbour without a cause be so evil, how much sin must needs be committed in those broils and quarrels between the nearest relations on earth!

Let every one inquire how it is with himself. Do you not in this respect allow yourselves in some way of sin? Are you not often jarring and contending with those who dwell under the same roof? Is not your spirit

often ruffled with anger towards some of the same family? Do you not often go so far as to wish evil to them in your hearts, wish that some calamity would befall them? Are you not guilty of reproachful language towards them, if not of revengeful acts? Do you not neglect and refuse those offices of kindness and mutual helpfulness which become those who are of one family? Yea, are there not some who really go so far, as in some degree to entertain a settled hatred or malice against some of their nearest relation? — But here I would particularly apply myself,

[1.] To husbands and wives. Inquire whether you do not live in some way of sin in this relation. Do you make conscience of performing all those duties which God in His word requires of persons in this relation? or do you allow yourselves in some ways which are directly opposite thereto? Do you not live in ways that are contrary to the obligation into which you entered in your marriage-covenant? The promises which you then made are not only binding as promises which are ordinarily made between man and man, but they have the nature of vows or promissory oaths; they are made in the presence of God, because they respect him as a witness to them; and therefore the marriage-covenant is called the covenant of God; Proverbs 2:17: “**which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.**” When you have vowed that you will behave towards those to whom you are thus united, as the word of God directs in such a relation, are you careless about it, no more thinking what you have promised and vowed, regardless how you perform those vows? Particularly, are you not commonly guilty of bitterness of spirit towards one another, and of unkindness in your language and behaviour? If wrath, and contention, and unkind and reproachful language, be provoking to God, when only between neighbours, what is it then between those whom God hath joined together to be one flesh, and between whom He hath commanded so great and dear a friendship to be maintained? See Ephesians 5:28, 29: “**So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.**” And Ephesians 5:25: “**Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.**”

It is no excuse at all for either party to indulge bitterness and contention in this relation, that the other party is to blame, for when was there ever one of fallen mankind to be found who had no faults? When God commanded such an entire friendship between man and wife, He knew that the greater part of mankind would have faults; yet He made no exception. And if you think your yoke fellows have faults, you should consider whether you yourselves have not some too. There never will be any such thing as persons living in peace one with another, in this relation, if this be esteemed a sufficient and justifiable cause of the contrary. It becomes

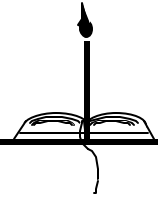
good friends to cover one another's faults: Love covers a multitude of faults: **"Hatred stirreth up strife; but love covereth all sins."** (Proverbs 10:1). But are not you rather quick to spy faults, and ready to make the most of them. Are not very little things often the occasion of contention between you? Will not a little thing often ruffle your spirits towards your companions? And when any misunderstanding is begun, are you not guilty of exasperating one another's spirits by unkind language, until you blow up a spark into a flame?

Do you endeavour to accommodate yourselves to each other's tempers? Do you study to suit each other? or do you set up your own wills, to have your own ways, in opposition to each other, in the management of your family concerns? Do you make it your study to render each others lives comfortable? Or is there not, on the contrary, very often subsisting between you a spirit of ill will, a disposition to vex and cross one another? Husbands do sometimes greatly sin against God, in being of an unkind imperious behaviour towards their wives, treating them as if they were servants; and (to mention one instance of such treatment in particular) laying them under unjust and unreasonable restraints in the use and disposal of their common property; forbidding them so much as to dispose of any thing in charity, as of their own judgment and prudence. This is directly contrary to the word of God, where it is said of the virtuous wife, (in Proverbs 31:20) that **"she stretcheth out her hand to the poor, yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."** If God hath made this her duty, then He hath given her this right and power because the duty supposes the right. It cannot be the duty of her who hath no right to dispose of any thing, to stretch forth her hand to the poor, and to reach forth her hands to the needy.

On the other hand, are not the commands of God, the rules of His word, and the solemn vows of the marriage covenant, with respect to the subordination which there ought to be in this relation, made light of by many? Ephesians 5:22. **"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord."** (Also Colossians 3:18). What is commanded by God, and what hath been solemnly vowed and sworn in His presence, certainly ought not to be made a jest of; and the person who lightly violates these obligations, will doubtless be treated as one who slights the authority of God, and takes His name in vain.

(This study will continue in the next issue.)

A Study in Psalms: Psalm 65



Psalm 65 - Reasons to Praise God

For the director of music.
A psalm of David. A song.

- ¹Praise awaits You, O God, in Zion;
to You our vows will be fulfilled.
- ²O You who hear prayer,
to You all men will come.
- ³When we were overwhelmed by sins,
You forgave our transgressions.
- ⁴Blessed are those You choose
and bring near to live in Your courts!
We are filled with the good things of Your house,
of Your holy temple.
- ⁵You answer us
with awesome deeds of righteousness,
O God our Savior,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas,
- ⁶Who formed the mountains by Your power,
having armed Yourself with strength,
- ⁷Who stilled the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
and the turmoil of the nations.
- ⁸Those living far away fear Your wonders;
where morning dawns and evening fades
You call forth songs of joy.
- ⁹You care for the land and water it;
You enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so You have ordained it.
- ¹⁰You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
You soften it with showers and bless its crops.
- ¹¹You crown the year with Your bounty,
and Your carts overflow with abundance.
- ¹²The grasslands of the desert overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.
- ¹³The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing.

This psalm is the first of three-in-a-row concerning the praise of God. This particular psalm, written by David, enumerates a series of reasons to praise God. David introduces the psalm: **“Praise awaits You, O God, in Zion; to You our vows will be fulfilled”** (vs. 1). Because there are so many reasons to praise God (some of which will be enumerated in this psalm), so **“praise awaits”** God. “Like a company of musicians gathered to welcome and honor a prince, who wait till he makes his appearance, so do we reserve our best praises till the Lord reveals Himself in the assembly of His saints” [Spurgeon].

David enumerates some reasons to praise God:

1. **“O You who hear prayer, to You all men will come”** (vs. 2) – That God, the Almighty Lord of the Universe, answers prayer is a great reason to praise Him. And what a great name it is for God: **“You who hear prayer.”** “The hearing and granting of prayer are the Lord’s property and His usual practice, and His pleasure, and His nature, and His glory” [Dickson, 379]. It could have been otherwise. The Creator could have chosen to wind up the Universe, and then take no part in it. However, our God chooses to interact with His creatures. May the Lord be praised! “Dark and dismal would this world be if God did not hear prayer; gloomy, inexpressibly gloomy, would be the prospects of man, if he had not the assurance that God is a prayer-hearing God—if he might not come to God at all times with the assurance that it is His very nature to hear prayer, and that His ear is ever open to the cries of the guilty, the suffering, the sad, the troubled, the dying” [Barnes]. All men instinctively know that, in times of great trouble, there is only one place to turn, and that is to God. As David points out: **“To You all men will come.”** The saying is true, “There are no atheists in foxholes.”

2. **“When we were overwhelmed by sins, You forgave our transgressions”** (vs. 3) – The forgiveness God offers freely is a great reason to praise Him. If David, who had a limited revelation and understanding of God’s forgiveness, could praise Him for this, certainly we, who have the knowledge of God’s forgiveness through Jesus Christ, must praise Him for this. “Our sins should be looked upon, not to chase us from God, but to humble us, and drive us to seek pardon and purgation from the Lord, whose free grace only can take sins away” [Dickson, 380].

3. **“Blessed are those You choose and bring near to live in Your courts! We are filled with the good things of Your house, of Your holy temple”** (vs. 4) – The fellowship, and close relationship God allows us to have with Him, is a great reason to praise Him. It is quite astounding that God chooses to treat His people, not as subjects, but as children. As John tells us: **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”** (I John 3:1). And as children, we **“live in His courts”**, and we experience all the **“good things of His house”**. All the promises that God has given to His children, we can benefit from. May the Lord be praised!

4. **“You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness...”** (vs. 5) – Answered prayer is a great reason to praise God. At times, the answer is **“awesome”**, even **“terrifying”** (as the original meaning of this word suggests). “God’s memorial is that He hears prayer, and His glory is that He answers it in a manner fitted to inspire awe in the hearts of His people... We do not always know what we are asking for when we pray; when the answer comes, the veritable answer, it is possible that we may be terrified by it. We seek sanctification, and trial will be the reply; we ask for more faith, and more affliction is the result; we pray for the spread of the gospel, and persecution scatters us. Nevertheless, it is good to ask on, for nothing which the Lord grants in His love can do us any harm. Terrible things will turn out to be blessed things after all, where they come in answer to prayer” [Spurgeon].

5. **“...O God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas,...”** (vs. 5) – That God is never beyond our reach is a great reason to praise Him. He is always at our side, always available to us through prayer. “Remoteness from any supposed centre of the religious, or political world does not place a man beyond the pale of God’s providential care and blessing” [Plumer, 647].

6. **“...Who formed the mountains by Your power, having armed Yourself with strength,...”** (vs. 6) – His power, as displayed through His Creation, is a great reason to praise Him. “The poetry is such as would naturally suggest itself to one familiar with mountain scenery; power everywhere meets you, sublimity, massive grandeur, and stupendous force are all around you; and God is there, the author and source of all” [Spurgeon]. “The power of God manifested in the work of creation, is a prop to the faith of His people to believe the promises, and a pledge of the performance thereof unto them” [Dickson, 382].

7. **“...Who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations”** (vs. 7) – God’s continued demonstration of His power is a great reason to praise Him. God’s power is not only seen in the original work of Creation, but also in His continued work within His Creation. “God not only formed the material universe at first, but still controls it” [Alexander, 284]. God controls **“the roaring of the seas”** and the **“roaring of the waves”**. He also has a hand in the affairs of men, as He stills **“the turmoil of the nations.”**

8. **“Those living far away fear Your wonders; where morning dawns and evening fades You call forth songs of joy”** (vs. 8) – God’s universal revelation of Himself is a great reason to praise Him. “Signs of God’s presence are not few, nor confined to any one region. Zembla sees them as well as Zion, and Terra del Fuego as surely as the Terra Sacra. These tokens are sometimes terrible phenomena in nature—such as earthquakes, pestilence, tornado, or storm; and when these are seen, even the most barbarous people tremble before God. At other times they are dread works of providence—such as the overthrow of Sodom, and the destruc-

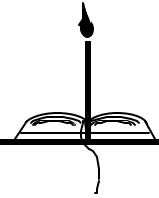
tion of Pharaoh. The rumor of these judgments travels to earth's utmost verge, and impresses all people with a fear and trembling at such a just and holy God. We bless God that we are not afraid but rejoice at His tokens; with solemn awe we are glad when we behold His mighty acts. We fear, but not with slavish fear" [Spurgeon].

9. **"You care for the land and water it; You enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so You have ordained it. You drench its furrows and level its ridges; You soften it with showers and bless its crops. You crown the year with Your bounty, and Your carts overflow with abundance. The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness. The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing"** (vs. 9-13) – God's providence in supplying the billions of people in the world means of sustenance is a great reason to praise Him. After Adam sinned, God punished man by cursing the ground man farms: **"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return"** (Gen. 3:17-19). But God, in His great mercy, though He cursed the ground, has consistently brought forth rains to **"drench its furrows and level its ridges"**, and **"soften it with showers and bless its crops."**

10. In addition to the physical meaning of verses 9 through 13, one can also see a spiritual meaning there. "In Scripture water is an emblem of the Holy Ghost in His abundant, refreshing and purifying influences, and so verse 9 has been by many understood to point to the effusion of the blessed Spirit" [Plumer, 648]. "I know not but this imagery may have been introduced by the Spirit of God for the purpose of picturing to our minds the wonderful character of the moral transformation, which takes place in the hearts of men, when showers of divine influence are poured down from heaven, when the wilderness and solitary place are made to rejoice and blossom as the rose" [Morison, in Plumer, 648]. The pouring out of God's Spirit upon us, like rain from the heavens, is certainly a great reason to praise Him. "The rising of 'the Sun of Righteousness' and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, that 'River of God', full of the waters of life and salvation, render the hearts of sinners, which before were hard, barren and worthless, fruitful in every good work; and change the face of nations far more than the sun and rain do the face of nature" [Scott, in Plumer, 648].

Indeed, we have so many reasons to praise God, enough for a lifetime of praise to Him. Oh Lord, by Your Spirit, help us to enter into Your praise, fervently and constantly. And may we appreciate from the depths of our souls all You have done for us.

A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist



A Meditation Upon Two Lights in a Room by William Spurstowe (ca. 1666)

What an amicable, as well as amiable, thing is Light? For, these two tapers which enlighten the same room, do not shine with a divided, or with a confounded, but with a united Light, as the optics do clearly demonstrate by the distinct shadows which they cast: and yet the eye which is benefited by both of them, to a more full and perfect discerning of its objects, cannot difference the rays and strictures that flow from them, or assign, which is the Light that comes from the one, or from the other. Such I have sometimes thought is the harmony between the natural light of Gifts, and the supernatural state of Grace, meeting in the same person; though they be both differing in the original, yet in the subject in which they are seated, they shine not with a divided, or a confounded, but with a united Light: and, in their efflux and emanation so conspire, as that they greatly better him in whom they are conjoined, and cast a mutual luster also upon each other: One being as the Gold which adorns the Temple, and the other as the Temple which sanctifies the Gold. Let no man therefore despise the light of Gifts as needless to the perfection of a Christian; nor yet so magnify it as to be injurious to the light of Grace, no more than he would put out one of his eyes as useless because when he winks with the one, he can see as well with the other: there may be a reason sometimes to shut one eye, but there can be none at any time for to extinguish it.

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Happiness Depends on Knowledge of God

"The happiness of man depends on a knowledge of the principles on which God bestows His favors; for all people are, in all things, dependent on Him. The success of a farmer depends on his understanding, and complying with, the laws and principles on which God bestows a harvest; the preservation of health, the restoration of health when we are sick, depends on a knowledge of the great laws which God has ordained for the continuance of the healthy functions of our bodies, and on the use of the means which He has provided for restoring health when those functions are disordered; and, in like manner, the salvation of the soul depends on the right understanding of the method which God has appointed to secure His favor. In neither of these cases—in no case—is it the business of people to originate laws of their own; laws for the cultivation of the earth, or for the preservation of health, or for the saving of the soul. The business of man is to find out the rules in accordance with which God bestows His favors, and then to act in obedience to them."

-- Albert Barnes (1798-1870)

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