

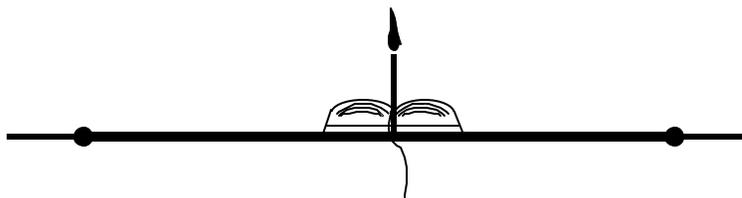
Scripture Studies

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

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May God bless you as you study His Word.



Old Testament Study: Exodus 12

The Passover, pt. 2 by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

¹And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ²“This month [shall be] unto you the beginning of months: it [shall be] the first month of the year to you. ³Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘In the tenth [day] of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of [their] fathers, a lamb for an house: ⁴And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take [it] according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take [it] out from the sheep, or from the goats: ⁶And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. ⁷And they shall take of the blood, and strike [it] on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. ⁸And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; [and] with bitter [herbs] they shall eat it. ⁹Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast [with] fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. ¹⁰And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. ¹¹And thus shall ye eat it; [with] your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it [is] the LORD’S passover.

¹²“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I [am] the LORD. ¹³And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye [are]: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy [you], when I smite the land of Egypt.”

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment; I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye

are; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:12-13). When the executioner of God's judgment saw the blood upon the houses of the Israelites, he entered not, and why? Because death had already done its work there! The innocent *had died* in the place of the guilty. And thus justice was satisfied. To punish twice for the same crime would be unjust. To exact payment twice for the same debt is unlawful: Even so those within the blood-sprinkled house were secure. Blessed, blessed truth is this. It is not merely God's mercy but His *righteousness* which is now on the side of His people. Justice itself *demand*s the acquittal of every believer in Christ. Herein lies the glory of the Gospel. Said the apostle Paul, **"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"** (Romans 1:16). And *why* was he not **"ashamed"** of the Gospel? Hear his next words, **"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith"**.

"And when I see the blood I will pass over you". God's eye was not upon the house, but on the blood. It might have been a lofty house, a strong house, a beautiful house; this made no difference; if there was no blood there, judgment entered and did its deadly work. Its height, its strength, its magnificence availed nothing, if the blood was lacking. On the other hand, the house might be a miserable hovel, falling to pieces with age and decay; but no matter; if *blood* was upon its door, those within were perfectly safe. Nor was God's eye upon those within the house. They might be lineal descendants of Abraham, they might have been circumcised on the eighth day, and in their outward life they might be walking blamelessly so far as the Law was concerned. But it was neither their genealogy, nor their ceremonial observances, nor their works, which secured deliverance from God's judgments. It was their personal application of the shed blood, and of that alone.

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (v. 13). To the mind of the natural man this was consummate folly. What difference will it make, proud reason might ask, if *blood* be smeared upon the door? Ah! **"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him"** (1 Corinthians 2:14). Supremely true is this in connection with God's way of salvation — **"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God... But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness"** (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23).

It is faith, not reasoning, which God requires; and it was faith which rendered the Passover-sacrifice effective; **"Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them"** (Hebrews 11:28). "To realize what this faith

must have been, we have to go back to 'that night', and note the special circumstances, which can alone explain the meaning of the words '**by faith**'. God's judgments had been poured out on Egypt and its king, and its people. A crisis had arrived; for, after nine plagues had been sent, Pharaoh and the Egyptians still remained obdurate. Indeed, Moses had been threatened with death if he ever came again into Pharaoh's presence (Exodus 10:28,29). On the other hand, the Hebrews were in more evil case than ever and Moses, who was to have delivered them, had not made good his promises.

"It was at such a moment that Moses heard from God what he was to do. To sense and sight it must have seemed most inadequate, and quite unlikely to accomplish the desired result. Why should this last plague be expected to accomplish what the nine had failed to do with all their accumulating terrors? Why should the mere sprinkling of the blood have such a marvelous effect? And if they were indeed to leave Egypt 'that same night' why should the people be burdened with all those minute ceremonial observances at the moment when they ought to be making preparation for their departure? Nothing but 'faith' could be of any avail here. Everything was opposed to human understanding and human reasoning.

"With all the consciousness of ill-success upon him, nothing but unfeigned faith in the living God and what he had heard from Him, could have enabled Moses to go to the people and rehearse all the intricacies of the Paschal observances, and tell them to exercise the greatest care in the selection of a lamb on the tenth day of the month, to be slain on the fourteenth day, and eaten with (to them) an unmeaning ceremony. It called for no ordinary confidence in what Moses had *heard* from God to enable him to go to his brethren who, in their deep distress, must have been ill-disposed to listen; for, hitherto, his efforts had only increased the hatred of their oppressors, and their own miseries as bondmen. It would to human sight be a difficult if not impossible task to persuade the people, and convince them of the absolute necessity of complying with all the minute details of the observance of the Passover ordinance.

"But this is just where *faith* came in. This was just the field on which it could obtain its greatest victory. Hence we read that, '**through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood**' (Hebrews 11:28), and thus every difficulty was overcome, and the Exodus accomplished. All was based on 'the hearing of faith'. The words of Jehovah *produced* the faith, and were at once the cause and effect of all the blessing" (Dr. Bullinger).

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy, when I smite the land of Egypt" (v. 13). In connection with this, it is deeply important that we should distinguish between two things: the *foundation of security* and the *proof basis of peace*. That which provided a safe refuge from judgment was the *death* of the lamb and *sprinkling* of the blood. That which offered a stay

to the heart was the *promise* of Him who cannot lie. So many err on this second point. They want to make their experience, their feelings, something within themselves, the basis of their assurance. This is a favorite device of Satan, to turn the eye downwards upon ourselves. The Holy Spirit ever directs the eye away *from ourselves* to God and His Word.

Let us suppose a case. Here are two households on that Passover night. At the head of the one is an unbelieving father who has refused to heed the Divine warning and avail himself of the Divine provision. Early that evening his firstborn says, "Father I am very uneasy. Moses has declared that at midnight an Angel is to visit this land and slay all the firstborn, except in those houses which are protected by the blood of a lamb". To still the fears of his son, the father lies, and assures him that there is no cause for alarm seeing that he *has* killed the lamb and applied its blood to the door. Hearing this, the son is at rest, all fear is gone, and in its place he is filled with peace. *But it is a false peace!*

In the second home the situation is reversed. At the head of this house is a God-fearing man. He has heard Jehovah's warning message through Moses, and hearing, has believed and acted accordingly; the lamb has been slain, its blood placed upon the lintel and posts of the door. That evening the firstborn says, "Father, I feel very uneasy. An Angel is to smite all the firstborn to-night and how shall I escape?" His father answers, "Son, your alarm is groundless; yea, it is dishonoring to God. The Lord has said, 'when I see the blood, *I will* pass over you". "But", continues the son, "while I know that you have killed the lamb and applied its blood, I cannot be but terrified. Even now I hear the cries of terror and anguish going up from the houses of the Egyptians. O that morning would come! I shall not feel safe until then". *But his fears were groundless.*

Now observe. In the first case supposed above we have a man full of happy feelings, yet he perished. In the second case, we have one full of fears yet was he preserved. Examine the *ground* of each. The oldest son in the first house was happy because he made *the word of man* the ground of his peace. The oldest son in the second house was miserable because he *failed* to rest on the sure Word *of God*. Here, then, are two distinct things. *Security* is found by the applied blood of the Lamb. *Assurance and peace* are to be found by resting on the Word of God. The *ground* of both is *outside* of ourselves. Feelings have nothing to do with either. Deliverance from judgment is by the Finished Work of Christ, *and by that alone*. Nothing else will avail. Religious experiences, ordinances, self-sacrifice, Church membership, works of mercy, cultivation of character, avail *nothing*. The first thing for me, as a poor lost sinner, to make sure of is, Am I *relying* upon what Christ did *for* sinners? Am I *personally* trusting in His shed blood? If I am not, if instead, under the eloquence and moving appeals of some evangelist, I have decided to turn over a new leaf, and endeavor to live a better life, and I have "gone forward" and taken the preacher's hand, and if *he* has told me that I am now saved and ready to "join the church,"

and doing so I feel happy and contented — my *peace is a false one*, and I shall end in the Lake of Fire, unless God in His grace disillusion me.

On the other hand, if the Holy Spirit has shown me my lost condition, my deep need of the Savior, and if I have cast myself upon Christ as a drowning man clutches at a floating spar; if I have really *believed* on the Lord Jesus Christ (see Acts 16:31), and *received* Him as my own personal Savior (see John 1:12), and yet, nevertheless, I am still lacking in assurance of my *acceptance* by God, and have no *settled peace* of heart; it is because I am failing to rest in simple faith on the *written Word*. GOD SAYS, **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”**. That is enough. That is the Word of Him who cannot lie. Nothing more is needed. **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life”** (John 5:24). Never mind about your feelings; do not stop to examine your repentance to see if it be deep enough. It is CHRIST that saves; not your tears, or prayers, or resolutions. If you *have* received Christ, then you *are saved*. Saved now, saved forever. — **“For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are set apart”** (Hebrews 10:14). How may you *know* that you are saved? In the same way that the firstborn Israelite could know that *he* was secure from the avenging Angel — by *the Word* of God. **“When I see the blood I will pass over you”**. God is saying the same today. If you are under the blood, then you are eternally secure. Neither the Law, nor the Devil, can harm you. **“It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?”** (Romans 8:33,34). Receive Christ for salvation. Rest on God’s Word for assurance and peace!

Nor are we to be occupied with our *faith*, any more than with our feelings. It is not the *act* of faith which (instrumentally) saves us, but *the TRUTH itself*, which faith lays hold of. If no blood had been placed on the door, no believing it *was* there would have delivered from the avenger. On the other hand, if the blood *had been* placed on the door, and those within doubted its efficacy, peace would have been destroyed but not their security. It is faith in God’s promise which brings assurance. For *salvation*, faith is simply the hand that receives the gift. For *assurance*, faith is **“setting to our seal that God is true”** (John 3:33). And this is simply receiving **“His testimony”**.

In this paper we have only sought to develop that which is central and vital in connection with our salvation and peace. In our next we shall, God willing, take up some of the many interesting details of Exodus 12. May the Lord be pleased to use what we have written to establish His own.

A Classic Study: Early Piety



A Classic Study by George Whitefield (1714–1770)

[Here we continue a study by the preacher George Whitefield, on turning to God during youth.]—*Ed.*

The Benefits of an Early Piety, pt. 2

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.
(Eccl. 12:1, AV).

[*Mr. Whitefield is covering the following three points in this study:*

FIRST, Endeavor to make good the wise man's proposition, implied in the words of the text, and to show that youth is the fittest season for religion.

SECONDLY, By way of motive, I shall consider the many unspeakable advantages that will arise from, "**Remembering our Creator in the days of our youth.**" And,

THIRDLY, I shall conclude with a word or two of exhortation to the younger part of this audience.

The first point was covered in the previous issue. We pick up the study here with the second point...

The **SECOND** general thing proposed, To show the advantages that will arise from remembering our Creator in the days of our youth; which may serve as so many motives to excite and quicken all persons immediately to set about it.

And the **FIRST** benefit resulting from thence is, that it will bring most honor and glory to God. This, I suppose, every serious person will grant, ought to be the point in which our actions should center; for to this end were we born, and to this end were we redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, that we should promote God's eternal glory. And as the glory of God is most advanced by paying obedience to His precepts, they that begin soonest to walk in His ways, act most to His glory. The common objection against the divine laws in general, and the doctrines of the gospel in particular is, they are not practicable: that they are contrary to flesh and blood; and that all those precepts concerning self-denial, renunciation of and deadness to the world, are but so many arbitrary restraints imposed upon human nature. But when we see mere striplings not only practicing, but delighting in such religious duties, and in the days of their youth (when, if ever, they have a relish for sensual pleasures), subdu-

ing and despising the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life; this, this is pleasing to God. This vindicates His injured honor; this shows that His service is perfect freedom, **“that His yoke is easy, and His burden light”** (Matt. 11:30).

But, **SECONDLY**, as an early piety redounds most to the honor of God, so it will bring most honor to ourselves: for those that honor God, God will honor. We find it, therefore, remarked to the praise of Obadiah, that he served the Lord from his youth; of Samuel, that he stood, when young, before God in a linen ephod; of Timothy, that from a child he had known the holy scriptures; of St. John, that he was the youngest and most beloved disciple; and of our blessed Lord himself, that at twelve years old He went up to the temple, and sat among the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions.

Nor, **THIRDLY**, will an early piety afford us less comfort than honor, not only because it renders religion habitual to us, but also because it gives us a well-grounded assurance of the sincerity of our profession. If there was no other argument against a death-bed repentance but the unsatisfactoriness and anxiety of such a state, that should be sufficient to deter all thinking persons from deferring the most important business of their life to such a dreadful period of it. For supposing a man to be sincere in his profession of repentance on a death-bed (which, in most cases, is very much to be doubted), yet, he is often afraid lest his convictions and remorse proceed not from a true sorrow for sin, but a servile fear of punishment. But one, who is a young saint, need fear no such perplexity; he knows that he loves God for his own sake, and is not driven to him by a dread of impending evil. He is not declining the gratifications of sense because he can no longer “hear the voice of singing men and singing women;” but willingly takes up his cross, and follows his blessed Master in his youth, and therefore has reason to expect greater confidence of his sincerity towards God. But further, as an early piety assures the heart of its sincerity, so, likewise, it brings its present reward with it, as it renders religion and its duties habitual and easy. A young saint, were you to ask him, would joyfully tell you the unspeakable comfort of beginning to be religious betimes: as for his part, he knows not what men mean by talking of mortification, self-denial, and retirement, as hard and rigorous duties; for he has so accustomed himself to them, that, by the grace of God, they are now become even natural, and he takes infinitely more pleasure in practicing the severest precepts of the gospel, than a luxurious Dives in a bed of state, or an ambitious Haman at a royal banquet. And O how happy must that youth be, whose duty is become a second nature, and to whom those things, which seem terrible to others, are grown both easy and delightful!

But the greatest advantage of an early piety is still ahead: **FOURTHLY**, It lays in the best provision of comfort and support against such time as we shall stand most in need thereof, viz. All times of our tribulation, and in particular, against the time of old age, the hour of death, and the day of judgment.

This is the argument the wise man makes use of in the words immediately following the text: **“Remember now your Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, wherein thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”** Observe, the time of old age, is an evil time, years wherein there is no pleasure: and ask those that are

grown old, and they will inform you so. Cordials surely, then, must be exceeding proper to support our drooping spirits: and O what cordial comparable to the recollection of early piety, depending wholly on the righteousness of Christ? When the eyes, like Isaac's, are grown dim with age; when "**the keepers of the house, the hands, shall tremble**", as the wise man goes on to describe the infirmities of old age (see Eccl. 12:3ff); when "**the strong men bow themselves,**" or the legs grow feeble; and the "**grinders,**" the teeth, shall cease to do their proper office, because they are few; for a person then to hear the precepts of the gospel read over to him, and to be able to lay his hand on his heart, and to say sincerely, notwithstanding a consciousness of numberless short-comings, "All these have I endeavored, through grace, to keep from my youth:" this must give him, through Christ who worketh all, comfort that I lack words to express and thoughts to conceive.

But, supposing it was possible for us to escape the inconveniences of old age, yet still death is a debt, since the fall, we all must pay; and, what is worse, it generally comes attended with such dreadful circumstances, that it will make even a Felix to tremble. But as for the godly, that have been enabled to serve the Lord from their youth, it is not usually so with them; no, they have faith given them to look upon death, not as a king of terrors, but as a welcome messenger, that is come to conduct them to their wished-for home. All the days of their appointed time have they waited, and it has been the business of their whole lives to study to prepare themselves for the coming of their great change; and, therefore, they rejoice to hear they are called to meet the heavenly Bridegroom. Thus dies the early pious, whose "**path has been as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day**" (Prov. 4:18). But follow him beyond the grave, and see with what an holy triumph he enters into his Master's joy; with what an humble boldness he stands at the dreadful tribunal of Jesus Christ; and can you then forbear to cry out, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end, and future state, be like his."

Need I then, after having shown so many advantages to arise from an early piety, use any more arguments to persuade the younger part of this audience, to whom, in the **THIRD** and last place, I address myself, to "**remember their Creator in the days of their youth?**" What! Will not all the arguments I have mentioned, prevail with them to leave their husks, and return home to eat of the fatted calf? What! Will they thus requite our Savior's love? That be far from them! Did He come down and shed His precious blood to deliver them from the power of sin; and will they spend their youthful strength and vigor in the service of it, and then think to serve Christ, when they can follow their lusts no longer? Is it fit, that many, who are endowed with excellent gifts, and are thereby qualified to be supports and ornaments of our sinking church, should, notwithstanding, forget the God who gave them, and employ them in things that will not profit? O why will they not arise, and, like so many Phineas's, be zealous for the Lord of Hosts? Doubtless, when death overtakes them, they will wish they had: and what hinders them, but that they begin now? Think you that anyone yet ever repented that he began to be religious too soon? But how many, on the contrary, have repented that they began when almost too late? May we not well imagine, that young Samuel now rejoices that he waited so soon at the tabernacle of the Lord? Or young Timothy, that from a child he knew the holy scriptures? And if you wish

to be partakers of their joy, let me persuade you to be partakers of their piety.

I could still go on to fill my mouth with arguments, but the circumstances and piety of those amongst whom I am now preaching the kingdom of God; remind me to change my style; and, instead of urging any more dissuasives from sin, to fill up what is behind of this discourse with encouragements to persevere in holiness. Blessed, forever blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am not speaking to persons inflamed with youthful lusts, but to a multitude of young professors, who by frequently assembling together, and forming themselves into religious societies, are, I hope on good ground, in a ready way to be of the number of those **“young men, who have overcome the wicked-one”** (I John 2:13).

Believe me, it gladdens my very soul, to see so many of your faces set heaven-wards, and the visible happy effects of your uniting together, cannot but rejoice the hearts of all sincere Christians, and oblige them to wish you good luck in the name of the Lord. The many souls who are nourished weekly with the spiritual body and blood of Jesus Christ, by your means; the weekly and monthly lectures that are preached by your contributions; the daily incense of thanksgiving and prayer which is publicly sent up to the throne of grace by your subscriptions; the many children which are trained up **“in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”** (Eph. 6:4), by your charities; and, lastly, the commendable and pious zeal you exert in promoting and encouraging divine psalmody, are such plain and apparent proofs of the benefit of your religious societies, that they call for a public acknowledgment of praise and thanksgiving to our blessed Master, who has not only put into your hearts such good designs, but enabled you also to bring the same to good effect.

It is true it has been objected, that young men forming themselves into religious societies, has a tendency to make them spiritually proud, and to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. And, perhaps, the imprudent, imperious behavior of some novices in religion, who, **“though they went out from you, were not of you”** (I John 2:19), may have given too much occasion for such as aspersion.

But you, brethren, have not so learned Christ. Far, far be it from you to look upon yourselves, as righteous, and despise others, because you often assemble yourselves together. No; this, instead of creating pride, ought to beget an holy fear in your hearts, lest your practice should not correspond with your profession, and that, after you have benefited and edified others, you yourselves should become castaways.

Worldly-mindedness, my brethren, is another rock against which we are in danger of splitting. For, if other sins have slain their thousands of professing Christians, this has slain its ten thousands. I need not appeal to past ages; your own experience, no doubt, has furnished you with many unhappy instances of young men, who, after they had escaped the pollutions which are in the world through lust, and had tasted the good word of life, and endured for a season, whilst under the tuition and inspection of others; yet, when they have come to be their own masters, through a want of faith, and through too great an earnestness in **“laboring for the meat which perisheth”** (see John 6:27) have cast off their first love, been again entangled with the world, and **“returned like the dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire”** (II Pet.

2:22). You would, therefore, do well, my brethren, frequently to remind each other of this dangerous snare, and to exhort one another to begin, pursue, and end your Christian warfare, in a thorough renunciation of the world, and worldly tempers; so that, when you are obliged by Providence to provide for yourselves, and those of your respective households, you may continue to walk by faith, and still **“seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness”** (Matt. 6:33); not doubting, but all other things, upon your honest industry and endeavors, shall be added unto you.

And now, what shall I say more? To speak unto you, fathers, who have been in Christ so many years before me, and know the malignity of worldly-mindedness, and pride in the spiritual life, would be altogether needless. To you, therefore, O young men, (for whom I am distressed, for whom I fear as well as for myself) do I once more address myself, in the words of the beloved disciple, **“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but receive a full reward”** (II John 1:8). Be ever mindful, then, of the words that have been spoken to us by the apostles of the Lord and Savior, **“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure”** (II Pet. 1:10). **“Beware, lest ye also being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness”** (II Pet. 3:17). **“Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall”** (I Cor. 10:12). **“Be not high-minded, but fear”** (Rom. 11:20). **“But we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak For God is not unrighteous, to forget your works and labor of love. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”** (Heb. 6:8-12). It is true, we have many difficulties to encounter, many powerful enemies to overcome, ere we can get possession of the promised land. We have an artful devil, and ensnaring world, and above all, the treachery of our own hearts, to withstand and strive against. **“For strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto eternal life”** (Matt. 7:14). But wherefore should we fear, since He that is with us is far more powerful, than all who are against us? Have we not already experienced His almighty power, in enabling us to conquer some difficulties which seemed as insurmountable then, as those we struggle with now? And cannot He, who delivered us out of the paws of those bears and lions, preserve us also from being hurt by the strongest Goliath?

“Be steadfast therefore, my brethren, be immovable” (I Cor. 15:58). Be not **“ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation”** (Rom. 1:16). Fear not man; fear not the contempt and revilings which you must meet with in the way of duty; for one of you shall chase a thousand; and two of you put ten thousand of your enemies to flight. And if you will be contented, through grace, to suffer for a short time here (I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not), then may ye hope, according to the blessed word of promise, that ye shall be exalted to sit down with the Son of Man, when He shall come in the glory of His Father, with His holy angels, to judgment hereafter. May Almighty God give every one of us such a measure of His grace, that we may not be of the number of those that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe and endure unto the end, to the saving of our souls, through our Lord Jesus Christ.



New Testament Study: Matthew 21:1-17

Palm Sunday

¹As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵"Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest!"

¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

¹¹The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

¹²Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³"It is written," He said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"

¹⁴The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant.

¹⁶"Do You hear what these children are saying?" they asked Him.

"Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?'"

¹⁷And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where He spent the night.

Earlier, Jesus had told His disciples: **“We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will turn Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day He will be raised to life!”** (Matt. 20:18–19). So, one wonders, as here **“they approached Jerusalem”**, if the disciples were filled with a sense of dread. Or were they paying attention to their Lord? We tend only to hear what we want to hear from our Lord’s Word. We must endeavor to heed it all.

As they approached Jerusalem, Jesus had instructions for the disciples: **“Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away”** (vs. 2). This was unusual, and must have been somewhat surprising to the disciples, that Jesus, who (from all we know) went on foot everywhere, desired a donkey to ride into Jerusalem. But Jesus had a purpose, and His purpose was to be declared, as He entered Jerusalem, the King that He is. This ride into Jerusalem would fulfill prophecy: **“This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ‘Say to the Daughter of Zion, “See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey”’”** (vs. 4). “Therefore when His journey to heaven was near, He wished to inaugurate His Kingdom openly on earth” [Calvin, 291]. “Our Lord Jesus traveled much, and His custom was to travel on foot from Galilee to Jerusalem, some scores of miles, which was both humbling and toilsome. Yet once in His life, He rode in triumph; and it was now when He went into Jerusalem, to suffer and die, as if that were the pleasure and preferment He courted” [Henry].

Yet, though Jesus did not walk into Jerusalem, He also “did not come on a chariot or on a war horse, but riding as rulers did in time of peace” [Broadus, 425]. “He was, as a King, all gentleness and mercy” [Spurgeon, 289]. “Therefore for those with eyes to see, Jesus was not only proclaiming His messiahship and His fulfillment of Scripture but showing the kind of peace-loving approach He was now making to the city” [Carson, 437].

“The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed shouted, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’, ‘Blessed is He who

comes in the name of the Lord!', 'Hosanna in the highest!'" (vss. 6–9). Previous to this, Jesus discouraged public declaration of His being the Messiah or any type of King (see Matt. 16:20; et. al.). Presumably, He did this to avoid confrontation with various political factions, Jewish and Roman. But the time had now come for Jesus to declare Himself as the King that He is. Given that the Passover was soon, there was a large crowd in Jerusalem. Many of them saw Jesus' work and heard His teachings, and believed in Him as their Messiah and King. They did what they could—spreading their cloaks and branches on the road before Him—to give Him a King's welcome, as they yelled shouts of praise to Him. Their shouts of praise were foreordained, prophesied in the Psalms (see Ps. 118:25–26). "Matthew deliberately recites the Hebrew words, so that we may know that the praises and prayers which the disciples were crying out were not given thoughtlessly to Christ, nor poured out without deliberation, but reverently followed a set form of prayer which the Holy Spirit had dictated to the whole Church by the mouth of the prophet" [Calvin, 293].

The praises of the crowd stirred up the whole city of Jerusalem. There were some in the city, though, who did not know Jesus: **"When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee'"** (vss. 10–11). The question they asked, **"Who is Jesus?"**, is the most important question anyone could ask. "Who is this? is a proper, profitable, personal, pressing question. Let our reader make this inquiry concerning Jesus, and never rest till he knows the answer" [Spurgeon, 291].

In Jerusalem, Jesus visited the temple: **"Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves"** (vs. 12). "When Christ came into Jerusalem, He did not go up to the court or the palace, though He came in as a King, but into the temple; for His kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world; it is in holy things that He rules, in the temple of God that He exercises authority" [Henry].

Jesus gave a reason for His actions: **"It is written, 'He said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers'"** (vs. 13). In the temple, to accommodate the large crowd of visitors, there were **"money changers"** (who exchanged foreign money that would be used to pay the temple tax), and **"benches of those selling doves"** (who would sell to the visitors animals for sacrifice). Apparently, these tradesmen were corrupt (Jesus called them **"a den of robbers"**), taking advantage of the travelers who desired to worship God in the proper way. "The traders had put profit above

worship. And when Jesus speaks of 'a robbers' den', He indicates not only that they were trading in the wrong place, but that they were trading dishonestly" [Morris, 528]. Also, the clamor caused by the buying and selling made it impossible for the temple to be **"a house of prayer."**

This is the second time that Jesus had cleared the temple of merchants. He had done so before at the beginning of His ministry (see John 2:14-15), but sadly, He had to do so again. "Note, buyers and sellers driven out of the temple, will return and nestle there again, if there be not a continual care and oversight to prevent it, and if the blow be not followed, and often repeated" [Henry]. And even today, those whose primary interest is in making money find their way into the house of God. They should not be supported; their actions must not be condoned. Oh, Lord Jesus, drive them out of Your house!

Jesus took time to serve the people who were in need at the temple: **"The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them"** (vs. 14). Ironically, these miracles and good works of Jesus, rather than causing the religious authorities to honor Jesus, caused them to want to criticize Jesus, presumably to bring Him down in the eyes of the crowd: **"But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple area, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they were indignant. 'Do You hear what these children are saying?' they asked Him"** (vss. 15-16). The religious authorities could not, in good conscience, criticize Jesus for clearing the temple (for they knew that the commerce carried on there was wrong); nor could they criticize Jesus for healing the blind and the lame. So they chose to criticize Jesus for accepting the praise of children. "It is not without its interest that they picked on the easiest target they could find—little children. They had no criticism of the unholy traders who defiled the sacred places, but they objected to the praises of children." [Morris, 529].

It is interesting and instructive that the children were shouting, **"Hosanna to the Son of David!"**. The children had picked up on the chant that they heard the adults shouting to Jesus upon His entry into the city. This teaches us adults of the importance of a good example in what we do in front of children. "Children will learn of those that are with them, either to curse and swear, or to pray and praise" [Henry].

Note well Jesus' response to the criticism: **"'Yes,' replied Jesus, 'have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants You have ordained praise'?"**" (vs. 16). Jesus cites Psalm 8:2, in which David refers to the praises of God coming from the lips of children. Jesus here, by accepting the praise of children, is declaring Himself to be God, for only God is worthy of such praise. "Jesus is therefore not only acknowledging His messiahship but justifying the praise of the children by applying to Himself a passage of Scripture applicable only to God" [Carson, 443].



A Topical Study: On Prayer

[Here we continue a series on Prayer. This study is self-described as, "A declaration what true prayer is, how we should pray, and for what we should pray, set forth by John Knox, Preacher of God's Holy Word."—*Ed.*]

The True Nature of Prayer, pt. 4 by John Knox (1505-1572)

Above all precedents is to be observed, that what we ask of God ought to be profitable to ourselves and to others, and hurtful or dangerous to no man. Secondly, we must consider whether our petitions extend to Spiritual or Corporal things. Spiritual things, such as are deliverance from impiety, remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of Life Everlasting, should we desire absolutely, without any condition, by Jesus Christ, in whom alone all these are promised. And in asking hereof, we should not pray this: O Father! Forgive our sins if Thou wilt, for His will He has expressed, saying, "**As I live, I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he convert, and live**" (Ezek. 33:11). The one who prays this way makes God a liar, and so far as in him lies, would spoil God of His Godhead, for He cannot be God except by eternal and infallible verity. And John says, "**This is the testimony which God has testified of His Son, that whosoever believes in the Son has eternal life**" (I John 5:13); and the verity whereof, we should steadfastly cleave; although worldly dolor apprehend us. As David, exiled from his kingdom, and deprived of all his glory, secluded not from God, but steadfastly believed reconciliation by the promise made, notwithstanding that all creatures in earth had refused, abjected, and rebelled against him: "**Happy is the man whom You shall inspire, O Lord.**"

In asking Corporal things, first let us inquire if we be at peace with God in our conscience by Jesus Christ, firmly believing our sins to be remitted in His blood. Secondly, let us inquire of our own hearts, if we know temporal riches or substance come not to man by accident, fortune, or chance, neither yet be the industry and diligence of man's labor; but to be the liberal gift of God only, whereof we ought to laud and praise His goodness, wisdom, and providence alone.

What should be Prayed For. – And if this we do truly acknowledge and confess, let us boldly ask of Him whatsoever is necessary for us, such as sustenance of this body; health thereof; defense from misery; deliverance from trouble; tranquility and peace to our common will; prosperous success in our vocations, labours, and affairs, whatsoever they be, which God will. We ask all of Him to certify us that all things stand in His regiment and disposition. And also by asking and reserving these corporal commodities, we have taste of His sweetness, and be inflamed with His love, that thereby our faith of reconciliation and remission of our sins may be exercised and take increase.

Why God Differs or prolongs to grant our petitions. – But in asking for temporal things, we must observe, first, that if God differs or prolongs to grant our petitions, even so long that He seems apparently to reject us, yet let us not cease to call, prescribing Him neither time, neither manner of deliverance; as it is written, **“If He prolong time, abide patiently upon Him,”** and also, **“Let not the faithful be too hasty, for God sometimes differs, and will not hastily grant to the probation of our continuance,”** as the words of Jesus Christ testify; and also, that we may reserve with greater gladness that which, with ardent desire, we long have looked for: as Anna, Sara, and Elizabeth, after great ignominy of their barrenness and sterility, received fruit of their bosoms with joy. Secondly, because we know the Church at all times to be under the Cross, in asking temporal commodities, and especially deliverance from trouble, let us offer unto God obedience, if it shall please His goodness we longer be exercised that we may patiently abide it; as David, desiring to be restored to his kingdom (in the time he was exiled by his own son) offered to God obedience, saying, **“If I have found favor in the presence of the Lord, He shall bring me home again; but if He shall say, ‘Thou please me not longer to be authority,’ I am obedient: let Him do what seems good unto Him.”**

Better it is to obey God than man. – And the Three Children to Nebuchadnezzar did say, **“We know that our God whom we worship may deliver us; but if it shall not please Him so to do, let it be known to thee, O King, that your gods we will not worship”** (Dan. 3:17). Here gave they a true confession of their perfect faith, knowing nothing to be impossible to the Omnipotence of God. They also chose to stand in His mercy, for otherwise the nature of man could not willingly give thyself to so horrible a torment. But they offer to God most humble obedience, to be delivered at His good pleasure and will, as we should do in all afflictions.

Certainly, we desire and abide for deliverance, yet we should not repine against the goodwill of God, but incessantly ask that we may abide

with patience. How hard this battle is, no man knows but he which in himself has suffered trial.

The Petition of the Spirit. – It is to be noted, that God sometimes does grant the petition of the Spirit, while He yet differs the desire of the flesh. As who doubts but God did mitigate the heaviness of Joseph, although He sent not hasty deliverance in his long imprisonment; and that as he gave him favor in the sight of his jailer, so inwardly also gave him consolation in Spirit. And moreover God sometimes grants the petition of the spirit, where utterly He repels the desire of the flesh; for the petition always of the Spirit is that we may attain to the true felicity whereto we must needs enter by tribulation, and the final death, which both the nature of man does ever abhor, and therefore the flesh, under the cross, and at the sight of death, calls and thirsts for hasty deliverance. But God, who alone knows what is expedient for us, sometimes prolongs the deliverance of His chosen, and sometimes permits them to drink before the maturity of age, the bitter cup of corporal death, that thereby they may receive medicine and cure from all infirmity. For who doubts that John the Baptist desired to have seen more the days of Jesus Christ, and to have been longer with Him in conversation? Or that Stephen would not have labored more days in preaching the Gospel of Christ, whom, nevertheless, he suffered hastily to taste of this general sentence? And, albeit we see therefore no apparent help to ourselves, nor yet to others afflicted, let us not cease to call, thinking our prayers to be vain. For whatever comes of our bodies, God shall give unspeakable comfort to the spirit, and shall turn all to our commodities beyond our own expectation.

Impediment comes of the weaknesses of the flesh. – The reason that I am so long and tedious in this matter is, that I know how hard the battle is between the Spirit and the flesh under the heavy cross of affliction, where no worldly defense but present death does appear. I know the grudging and murmuring complaints of the flesh; I know the anger, wrath, and indignation which it inspires against God, calling all His promises in doubt, and being ready every hour utterly to fall from God. Against these impediments to prayer rests only faith, provoking us to call earnestly and pray for the assistance of God's Spirit; wherein if we continue, our most desperate calamities shall be turned to gladness, and to a prosperous end. To Thee, O Lord, alone be praised, for with experience I write this and speak.

A Study in Psalms: Psalm 70



Psalm 70 - A Prayer for Deliverance

For the director of music.
Of David. A petition.

¹Hasten, O God, to save me;
O LORD, come quickly to help me.
²May those who seek my life
be put to shame and confusion;
may all who desire my ruin
be turned back in disgrace.
³May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!"
turn back because of their shame.
⁴But may all who seek You rejoice
and be glad in You;
may those who love Your salvation always say,
"Let God be exalted!"
⁵Yet I am poor and needy;
come quickly to me, O God.
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay.

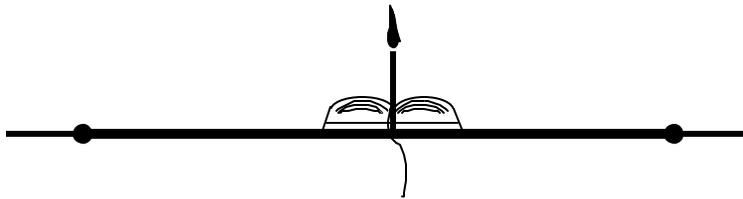
To the careful reader, these verses may seem familiar. They are virtually identical to Psalm 40:13–17. Here, David has split these verses out into their own psalm, and they stand alone quite well as a prayer for deliverance. Certainly, it is not a bad thing for David to express the same sentiments in prayer that he had expressed at an earlier time. "What hard condition we have been in before, we may fall into the like again; and the gracious means we have used before, in seeking our relief of God, we should use again; and what words of prayer we have used before, we may use again, without any either needless affectations of other words, or superstitious tying of ourselves to the same words" [Dickson, 426].

David begins by praying for a quick delivery from trouble: "**Hasten, O God, to save me; O LORD, come quickly to help me**" (vs. 1). There

is no quicker way to deliverance than a prayer to the Lord of the Universe. "Prayer is a swift messenger, which in the twinkling of an eye can go and return with an answer from heaven" [Dickson, 426]. God is a constant companion, never far away. He hears our prayers immediately, and acts on them at the best possible time, according to His will.

In the next few verses, David prays for contrasting results for the ungodly and godly. Concerning the ungodly, David prays: **"May those who seek my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace. May those who say to me, 'Aha! Aha!' turn back because of their shame"** (vss. 2-3). David is essentially praying here that the consciences of his persecutors would make them regret what they had been doing. He prays that they feel **"shame"**, and that they **"turn back in disgrace"**. The conscience is a powerful ally in helping us to do right, if we would listen to it. The conscience is the Spirit of God speaking to our hearts concerning what is right and wrong. We can choose to listen to our conscience, or choose to harden our hearts, and ignore our conscience. Dear friend, listen and heed your conscience. Let the shame you feel guide you into the path of righteousness.

Concerning the godly, David prays: **"But may all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; may those who love Your salvation always say, 'Let God be exalted!'"** (vs. 4). Here David is praying that those who **"seek"** God, and those who **"love His salvation"** may be wrapped up in worship and praise for Him. Now it may seem like this would happen naturally, without the need to pray for it. It would seem that those who **"love His salvation"** would naturally be bursting with worship and praise for Him. However, this sadly is not the case. We become complacent in His salvation. We get used to love and blessings from God. And so, our praise for Him becomes lifeless, barren of fervency. We need this prayer. Oh Lord, may we **"rejoice and be glad in You"**; may we always say, even shout, **"Let God be exalted."** Enliven us by Your Spirit with the fervent praise of God.



A Meditation The Spiritual Chemist



A Meditation Upon Building After Fires by William Spurstowe (ca. 1666)

It is the saying of Florus the historian, concerning that fatal fire of Corinth in which all its edifices were consumed into ashes, and its statues of brass, silver and gold melted into one common mass, that the devastation of that wealthy city was an occasion to make the mettle of it to be highly esteemed in after ages. The like may be said concerning many buildings, that the flames which have turned them into desolate ruins, have occasioned a following beauty and stateliness in the second fabrics, far above what the first ever had. How oft have we seen by such accidents the dimensions of buildings enlarged, the forms and models of them much bettered, the whole with much more art and cost enriched, so as to fill the beholders with delight and wonder? Can man thus improve disadvantages, and make burnings and indigested heaps to serve as a foil to his art and skill? Can he effect a kind of resurrection, and new birth to what was once destroyed? What then can God do, whose power is perfected in weakness, and like the sun shines brightest when environed with the blackest clouds of difficulties? Surely He can, yea, and undoubtedly will give a being to the bodies of His martyrs, which the fire hath consumed into ashes, and the wind hath scattered into distances. He will awake His saints, who have made their beds in the grave, and have filled their mouths with the gravel and slime of the pit: He will call for His redeemed ones from out of the deep sea, and from the mouths of fishes that have devoured them, and give to every one of them, not only the same *specific*, but the same *numerical* body, changed in its properties, but not in its essence, clarified with angelical perfections, but not transubstantiated from a corporeal to a spiritual substance: Is not all this done already in Christ? Our nature in His body is spiritualized, to tell us, that for possibility it may be, and for certainty it shall be so in us. He is our brother, therefore we may be like Him; and He is our head, therefore we must be like Him in a conformity to His glorious body. Why therefore should I fear the greatest enemies of life, the fire, the grave, or the sea? Is there anything too hard for God? Is not His power and His promise engaged to do that for me which He hath done for my Savior? Hath He not said that those that sleep in Jesus He will bring with Him? Lord help me to make it my only care to have my life holy, that my resurrection may be happy; to live to Christ, that I may live with Christ, and from a Netherlander in the dust below, may be made a citizen of the New Jerusalem which is above, and rejoice in the joy of Thy people, and glory with Thine inheritance.

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Our Need for God's Salvation

"There is something in the history of that apple which might be brought specially to bear on the case of those small sinners who practice in secret at the work of their petty depredations. But it also carries in it a great and a universal moral. It tells us that no sin is small. It serves a general purpose of conviction. It holds out a most alarming disclosure of the charge that is against us; and makes it manifest to the conscience of him who is awakened thereby, that, unless God Himself point out a way of escape, we are indeed most hopelessly sunk in condemnation. And, seeing that such wrath went out from the sanctuary of this unchangeable God, on the one offence of our first parents, it irresistibly follows, that if we, manifold in guilt, take not ourselves to His appointed way of reconciliation--if we refuse the overtures of Him, who then so visited the one offence through which all are dead, but is now laying before us all that free gift, which is of many offences unto justification--in other words, if we will not enter into peace through the offered Mediator, how much greater must be the wrath that abideth on us?"

-- Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847)

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