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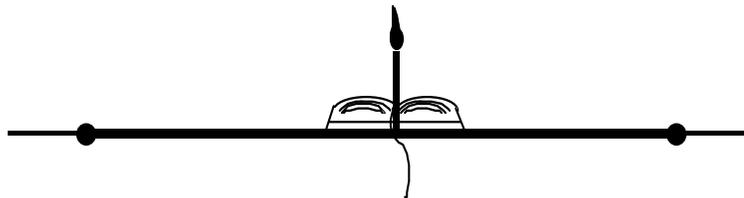
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May God bless you as you study His Word.



Old Testament Study: Exodus 12

The Passover, pt. 4
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.”

[We continue here from last month’s study.

Mr. Pink is making various observations on the Passover episode.]

10. “And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning.” (v. 10). The lamb must be eaten the same night as it was slain. Communion must not be separated from the sacrifice on which that communion was founded. Communion is based upon redemption accomplished. We find the same truth brought before us again at the close of Christ’s parable of the prodigal son. As soon as the lost son enters the Father’s house and is

suitably attired, the word goes forth **“Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill; and let us eat and be merry”** (Luke 15:23).

Another thought is also suggested here by the words **“ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning”**. “The sacrifice in all its ceremonial was to be completed within a single night. The rising sun was thus to see no trace of the slain lamb. In like manner the atoning work of Christ is not a progressive but a completed thing. It is not in process of being accomplished; it has been accomplished definitely and eternally. As a fragrant and hallowed *memory*, Calvary’s costly sacrifice abides with God and the redeemed forever; but the sacrifice *itself* is past and completed. For God’s suffering Lamb, the dark night of judgment is no more, and He lives on high in the eternal sunshine of Divine favor and love” (Mr. W. W. Fereday).

11. **“And 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”** (v. 11). The little word **“thus”** is very emphatic. It defines for us the accessories, what should accompany feeding upon Christ; four things are mentioned. First, their dress; **“loins girded”**. **“Having your loins girt about with truth”** (see Eph. 6:14), says the apostle. “The garments are spiritually what we may designate by the old word for them — ‘habits’. They are the moral guise in which we appear before men — what they identify with us at least, if they are not, after all, *ourselves*. And if not just ‘ourselves’ we may be in many ways *read in them*; pride or lowliness, boldness or unobtrusiveness, sloth or diligence, and many another thing.

“The long robes of the East, as we are all aware, required the girdle in order that there might be no hindrance in the way of a march such as Israel now had before them. If they were allowed to flow loose, they would get entangled with the feet and overthrow the wearers; and the dust of the road would get upon them and defile them. The *truth* it is which is to be our girdle, keeping us from the loose and negligent contact with ever-ready defilement in a world which the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life characterizes, and from the entanglement to our feet which lax habits prove.

“Garments ungirded are thus practically near akin to the **‘weights’** (see Hebrews 12:2) which the apostle bids us **‘lay aside’**, and which are not things in themselves sinful, and yet nevertheless betray us into sin. Have you noticed *the connection* in that exhortation of his **‘lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us’**? If you had a pack of wolves following you, you would understand very quickly why, if carrying a weight, you would be indeed **‘easily beset’**. And herein, many a soul may discern, if he will, why he has so great and so little successful conflict. The **‘weight’** shows, like the flowing garment that whatever else we may be, we are not *racers*....Fit companions then with unleavened bread and bitter herbs are these girt loins. We must arise and depart for this is not our rest” (Mr. Grant).

“Your shoes on your feet”. This, again, was in view of the journey which lay before them. It tells of preparation for their walk. There is a most interesting reference to these **“shoes”** in Deuteronomy 29:5, where at the close of his life, Moses said, **“I have led your forty years in the**

wilderness; your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot". And again he reminded them, "Neither did thy foot swell these forty years" (Deuteronomy 8:4). Remarkable was this. For forty years Israel had wandered up and down the wilderness, yet their shoes were neither torn to pieces nor did their feet suffer. How this tells of the *sufficiency* of that provision which God has graciously provided for the walk of His saints! When the prodigal son came to His Father, there was not only the best robe for his body, and the ring for his hand, but there were also "shoes for his feet" (Luke 15:22)! The significance of these "shoes" is explained for us in Ephesians 6:15 — "Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace".

"Your staff in your hand". The staff is the sign of *pilgrimage*. As they journeyed to the Promised Land, Israel were to pass through a wilderness in which they would be strangers and pilgrims. So it is with Christians as they pass through this world. Their *home* is not here: "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). Therefore does God say, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11). Staff in hand signifies that as Israel journeyed they were to *lean* on something *outside* of themselves. Clearly this is the written Word, given us for a stay and support. The dependent soul who leans hard upon it can say with the Psalmist, "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (23:4).

"And ye shall eat it in haste". "They were to eat it in haste because they expected that any moment the Lord might come and pass over them; any moment they might be called to arise and go out of the land of bondage. They expected the imminent Coming of the Lord. That is to say, because the Coming of the Lord *was* imminent they expected it". (Dr. Haldeman).

12. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (v. 13). Upon this Mr. Urquhart has made some illuminating remarks. "The term rendered Passover '*pesach*' does not seem to have that meaning. It is entirely different from the Hebrew verb, *a-bbar*, or *ga-bbar*, so frequently used in the sense of 'to pass over'. *Pasach* (the verb) and *pesach* (the noun) have no connection with any other Hebrew word. They closely resemble, however, the Egyptian word *pesb*, which means 'to spread the wings over,' 'to protect'. The word is used — we may say explained — in this sense in Isaiah 31:5: 'As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also He will deliver it; and passing over' (*pasoch*, participle of *pasach*) 'He will preserve it'. The word has, consequently, the very meaning of the Egyptian term for 'spreading the wings over', and 'protecting'; and *pesach*, the Lord's Passover, means such sheltering and protection as is found under the outstretched wings of the Almighty. Does not this give a new fullness to those words of our Savior, 'O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!.... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not' (Luke 13:34.): Jesus of Nazareth was her *pesach*, her *shelter* from the coming judgment; and she knew it not! Quite in keeping with this sense of protecting with outstretched wings is the fact that this term *pesach* is applied (1) to the ceremony, 'It is the Lord's Passover' (Exodus 12:11), and (2) to the lamb (v. 21); 'draw out and take you a lamb according to your families and kill the Passover'. The slain lamb, the

sheltering behind its blood and the eating of its flesh, constituted the *pesach*, the protection of God's chosen people beneath the sheltering wings of the Almighty". This interpretation is clearly established by what we read in verse 23: **"For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel and upon the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the Destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you"**. It was not merely that the Lord passed by the houses of the Israelites, but that He stood on guard *protecting* each blood-sprinkled door!

13. **"And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever"** (v. 14). It is interesting to trace Israel's subsequent response to this command. Scripture records just *seven* times when this Feast was kept. The first in Egypt, here in Exodus 12. The second in the Wilderness (Numbers 9). The third when they entered Canaan (Joshua 5). The fourth in the days of Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 30). The fifth under Josiah (2 Chronicles 35). The sixth after the return from the Captivity (Ezra 6). Just six in the O. T. The *seventh* was celebrated by the Lord Jesus and His apostles immediately before the institution of the Lord's Supper, (Luke 22:15, etc.). In that last Passover the true Lamb of God is seen, who had been prefigured by the preceding paschal lambs. "It should also be observed, that Jesus Christ, who celebrated the last Passover, had been Himself in Egypt, where the first had been observed. As the passover came from Egypt, so Jesus Christ, who is the true Passover was called out of Egypt (see Matthew 2:15)" (Robert Haldane: Evidence and Authority of Divine Revelation).

14. **"And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin"** (v. 22). This gives us a marvelous typical picture of the sufferings of our blessed Lord upon the Cross, though the picture is marred by translating here the original word, "**basin**". Once more we avail ourselves of the scholarly help of Dr. Urquhart: "The word rendered '**basin**' is *sap*, which is an old Egyptian word for the step before a door, or the threshold of a house. The word *is* translated '**threshold**' in Judges 19:27 and '**door**' in 2 Kings 12:9 — apparently for the sole reason that the sense 'basin', favored by lexicographers and translators could not possibly be given to the word in these passages... No direction was given about putting the blood upon the threshold, for the reason that the blood *was already there*. The lamb was evidently slain at the door of the house which was protected by its blood". We may add that the Septuagint gives "para ten thuran", which means along the door-way! While the Vulgate reads, "in sanguine qui est limine" — in the blood which is on the threshold. This point is not simply one of academic interest, but concerns the accuracy of the type. The door of the house wherein the Israelite was protected had blood on the lintel (the cross piece), on the side posts and on the step. (The objection that blood on the step would cause the Israelite to walk upon it, is obviated by Jehovah's instructions. **"And none of you shall go out at the door until the morning"** (v. 22)!). How marvelously this pictured Christ on the Cross; blood above, where the thorns pierced His brow; blood at the sides, from His nail-pierced hands; blood below, from

His nail-pierced feet!

15. The blood was to be applied with “**a bunch of hyssop**” (v. 22). Nothing in the Word is meaningless: the smallest detail has its due significance. Nor are we ever left to guess at anything; Scripture is ever its own interpreter. The “**hyssop**” was not connected with the “lamb”, but with the application of its blood. It speaks, then, not of Christ but of the sinner’s appropriation of His sacrifice. The “**hyssop**” is never found in connection with any of the offerings which foreshadowed the Lord Jesus Himself. It is beheld, uniformly, in the hands of the sinner. Thus in connection with the cleansing of the leper (Leviticus 14); and the restoration of the unclean (Numbers 19). From Psalm 51:7 we may learn that “**hyssop**” speaks of *humiliation of soul*, contrition, repentance. Note that in 1 Kings 4:33 “**hyssop**” is contrasted with “**the cedars**”, showing that “**hyssop**” speaks of *lowliness*.

Perhaps a word should be added concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread which followed the Passover: “**And ye shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt; therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses; for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread**” (vv. 17-20). The interpretation of this for us is supplied in 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8: “**Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth**”.

Upon the above we cannot do better than quote from Mr. C. H. McIntosh: “The Feast spoken of in this passage is that which, in the life and conduct of the Church, corresponds with the Feast of unleavened bread. This lasted seven days [*a complete circle of time—A.W.P.*]; and the Church collectively, and the believer individually, are called to walk in *practical holiness*, during their days, or the entire period of their course here below; and this, moreover, as the direct *result* of being washed in the blood, and having communion with the sufferings of Christ.

“The Israelite did not put away leaven in order to be saved, but because he was saved; and if he failed to put away leaven it did not raise the question of security through the blood, but simply of fellowship with the assembly. The cutting off of an Israelite from the Congregation answers precisely to the suspension of Christian fellowship, and if he be indulging in that which is contrary to the holiness of the Divine presence. God cannot tolerate evil. A single unholy thought [entertained] will interrupt the soul’s communion; and until the soil contracted by any such thought is got rid of by confession, founded on the advocacy of Christ, the communion cannot possibly be restored (see 1 John 1:5-10)”.

May the Lord stir us up to a more diligent and prayerful study of His

A Classic Study: The Danger of Prosperity



A Classic Study by William Bates (1635–1699)

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

The Danger of Prosperity, pt. 2

The point I shall insist on, is this; *Prosperity abused, is fatal and destructive to foolish sinners.*

In the treating on this argument, I will, 1. Show how prosperity is destructive to the wicked. 2. That 'tis folly and madness above all wonder, when sinners abuse the blessings of God to their destruction. 3. How just, and certain, and heavy their destruction will be.

I. I will show how prosperity is destructive to the wicked. In order to the explicating of this head, some things are to be promised:

1. This great world, with all the parts and creatures of which 'tis composed, has an inherent goodness and perfection convenient to the end for which 'twas formed by the Creator, and that was to be useful and comfortable to man in the service of God. There is no pestilence and contagion in the nature of things that are pleasing to our faculties: They are dangerous, not as made by God, but as managed by Satan. They do not pervert the minds of men from any noxious inherent qualities, but as they are corrupted by concupiscence. Upon this account, St. John dehorting Christians from the love of the world as inconsistent with the love of God, gives this reason of it, "**For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the eyes, and the pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World**" (I John 2:16). He signifies the objects, riches, honors, and pleasures, by the vicious affections, that make them deadly to men. The poison is not in the Flower but in the Spider. And the Apostle speaking of the purifying Virtue of the Gospel says, "**That exceeding great and precious promises are given to us, that by these we may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust**" (II Pet. 2:4). This is evident by visible experience: for many holy men have enjoyed temporal blessings without the offence of God; and have been more holy and heavenly in themselves, more beneficial and good to others by mercies: while the sensual, like the ocean that changes the sweet showers of heaven into salt quality, turn the divine blessings into provisions for their brutish lusts. It appears therefore that this contrariety of effects is not to be attributed to the quality of worldly things that is always uniform and alike, but to the different dispositions of the persons that use them. As the same good is healthful or hurtful, as the stomach is clear or foul that receives it: in some it renews the blood and spirits, strengthens and preserves life; in others it increases the sickly matter, feeds the disease,

and brings death more painfully and specially.

2. The primary design of God in His most free and rich benefits, is to endear Himself to us, and bind us to His service: for they are the most proper and convincing expressions of His Love and Goodness, and powerful motives and pervasives to a grateful correspondence of love and obedience. **“I drew them”** says God, **“with the cords of a man and with Bands of Love”** (Hos. 11:4). Goodness duly considered, engages to please the Benefactor. 'Tis therefore said by St. Paul, that the goodness of God leads sinners to repentance (see Rom. 2). 'Tis the most natural unconstrained consequence that the mind can regularly infer from His clemency and bounty. The hearts of men should be melted in tender resentments of their unworthy conversation towards Him, and encouraged to return to their duty, since He will graciously receive those who unfeignedly repent of their sins: But the event does not usually answer God's aim. Men are hardened in sin by His mercies.

3. When the wicked abuse God's blessings, defeat His kindness, and frustrate the excellent ends of it, He most righteously and severely continues their prosperity. That ferments their lusts, and renders them more willful and incorrigible, and the more guilty of their own damnation. What was said by Simeon, concerning the most glorious Gift of God, our Savior, is applicable in this case; **“Behold, this Child is set for the fall of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against.”** (Luke 2:34). When the riches of grace, offered in the Gospel, are despised and neglected, the blessed Savior of souls is most justly ordained to be the occasion of the sorer punishment. So when the common benefits and mercies of God are ungratefully perverted by men, to the dishonor of the Giver, they are by Divine determination ordered, for the aggravating of their sins and sentence. Prosperity is a fatal ambush for their surprisal and ruin, according to that heavy imprecation of the Psalmist, **“Let their table become a snare to them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap, an occasion of their falling”** (Ps. 69:22). This judgment proceeds from the most terrible and inexorable displeasures: 'tis better and more eligible to encounter all the storms of a raging world, than to enjoy the claim and security of a prosperous sinner. For the more afflicted we are by men, the more earnest are our addresses to God's prosperous throne, to incline His mercy to regard and relieve us. But for a sinner, the more full fruition he has of the world, the more he forsakes and provokes God, and the more he is abandoned to his worst enemies, his lusts, and Satan. This will be amplified more in the following parts of the discourse.

This being premised, we come to show how prosperity abused is destructive to sinners, both meritoriously as it induces a deadly guilt, and makes them obnoxious to the revenging wrath of God; and effectively as 'tis opposite to felicity and perfection of man, that consists in the renovation of the image of God in the soul, and in joyful communion with Him forever. This will appear by the following considerations.

1. Prosperity is the continual incentive of the vicious affections, **“the fleshly lusts that war against the soul”** (I Pet. 2:11), which deprive it of its beauty, order, freedom, and felicity. Man consists of flesh and spirit: by the one he communicates in nature with beasts; by the other he confines with the angels. By the original law of union, the body was subject to the soul; and though taken from the earth, did not oppress it, and hinder its

heavenly flight: The flesh did not lust against the spirit, nor the spirit against the flesh. But as the motion of the two eyes in the head is always uniform, and directed the same way, so reason and sense accorded. The appetites were regular and concentric with the mind. Upon this established order, the internal peace and holiness of man depends. But by the rebellious sin of Adam, the soul lost its regal power and freedom: and as in the first temptation the soul infected the body, so now the body infects the soul. The carnal appetite, the spring of lust and anger (that infernal pair that reigns so universally) over-rules the rational will, and gives law to men.

The love of sensual pleasures is natural to men; and as temptations are more charming and increased, 'tis more predominant. The sense, the fancy and the passions are in a conspiracy against the soul; and there is a continual circulation in their working, they excite one another. By the senses, pleasing things obtain an easy entrance into the fancy; and fancy has a strange power to charm or terrify by false representations; it amplifies the evil, and heightens the seeming good of things; and by the inspiration of fancy, the passions are moved, and the passions being altered, bribe and seduce the mind, and draw the consent of the will by the actual pleasure that is mixed in the gratifying of them. And as Adam lost his innocence and paradise by his compliance with the blandishments of his wife; so the soul loses its purity and happiness by yielding to the desires of the flesh that is in conjunction with it. For this reason, man in his fallen state is called flesh, as if there were no other principle in his nature, and of his operations. The spiritual and more noble faculties, that were made for delightful communion with God, are sunk into carnality. The description of men in their natural state, by the apostle, is a full proof of this: "**We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the Flesh, and of the Mind**" (Eph. 2:3). 'Tis observable that the lusts of the flesh, that spring from the sensual part, are drawn forth into act by the concurrent wills of the flesh, and of the mind. The nobler faculties, the understanding and will are depraved, and freely indulge the carnal appetites in their pursuit of pleasures. Prodigious degeneracy of the reasonable creature! Of this we have a resemblance in the marvelous transforming power of nature. If a branch be grafted into a tree of another kind, the fruit that grows on it will not be according to the nature of the stock, but of the graft that overrules the sap, and turns it to its own quality. Thus the beast is grafted into the man, and the intellectual powers are corrupted and carnal. The mind is employed to disguise the ignominy and guilt that attend the lusts of the flesh; and the will consents to a submission to those ignorable and unruly appetites. Man has only this privilege, that he is a more ingenious brute to make provision for his sensual desires, and to accomplish them.

Now in prosperity, when the senses are entertained with a variety of alluring objects, the fancy is more predominant and contagious: it has more force, vivacity, and extent, the more 'tis conversant about sensible things: and a polluted imagination is the most active and general principle of corrupting the heart: for the mind transcribes a copy of what is written in the fancy, and presents it with a false gloss to the will, that is ready to choose what brings actual pleasure. And the sensitive affections are excited by the fancy, so that the presence of a suitable object, foment the warmth into heat, and turns the heat into fire, and the fire into flame. And the

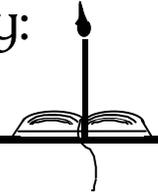
more carnal affections are indulged, the more they are enlarged, the more importunate and head-strong they become; and the soul is utterly disabled from recovering itself from the besotted vile prostitution, to the ignoble and unruly appetites. Millions would have been less guilty and defiled, and less miserable forever, if they had not been surrounded by pleasant temptations and entanglements of iniquity

2. Prosperity occasionally incenses the irascible appetite: for the usual incentives of anger are the crossing of desires, and contempt; and the stronger the desires, the more impatient they are to be controlled; and in proportion to the height of mind, is the indignation for any contempt that is offered. Now prosperity makes the carnal desires more exorbitant, and consequently raging when frustrated. Violent burning desires, when controlled, provoke violent burning anger: and anger inflamed, extinguishes the calm light of reason, becomes blind and furious in revenging apprehended injuries. 'Tis the inquiry joined with conviction, according to St. James, **"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not from your lusts what war in your members?"** (James 4:1). The voluptuous, ambitious, covetous passions when disappointed, are the common and natural causes of all the bloody disorders in the world.

The other cause of anger, is contempt, either real or supposed; and that is more provoking to those who, raised by prosperity, look with a distance of mind upon others below them. Prosperity in any kind, swells men with a vain opinion of their worth and dignity; and makes them insolent and intolerable. There is a strange distemper of the eyes in some persons, wherever they look, their own image visibly encounters them. The reason of it is assigned by an inquiring philosopher, that the visive faculty has not spirits and vigor to penetrate through the air to see other things, and the air as a glass makes the reflection of their own image. Thus one of a shallow and weak understanding, is continually representing to himself his own conceited excellencies. And prosperity increases their esteem of themselves unmeasurable above their just value. 'Tis like a concave glass that breaks the rays, and dilates the visive angle; and by a natural enchantment, makes an exorbitant figure, a dwarf to appear a giant.

Now as pride is the usual concomitant of prosperity, so there is no passion so inseparable from pride, and so proper to it, as anger. **"By pride comes contention"** (Prov. 13:10), 'tis the observation of the wisest man, confirmed by universal experience. Pride makes men impetuous and impatient, boisterous and stormy against all that offend them. Pride, anger and revenge, like serpents, twine and wreath about one another. Pride interprets an offence as a high contempt, and raises anger, and anger provoked, takes proportionable revenge, to the conceived injury. We have a tragic instance of this recorded in scripture (see II Kings 8:12-13). Hazeel when foretold by the mourning prophet, that he would stain himself with the innocent blood of the Israelites, **"slay their young men with the sword, and dash their children, and rip up their women with child"**. He startled at it as an execrable cruelty. And Hazeel said, **"But what, is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, 'The Lord has showed me, that you shall be kind over Syria'"**. When advanced to empire, he divested humanity. Pride armed with power is furious at opposition; and the flaming passion, like a frightful comet, presages and produces terrible effects. Thus 'tis evident how the lusts of the flesh are fomented by prosperity.

New Testament Study: Matthew 21:28-32



The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

²⁹“I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

³⁰“Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

³¹“Which of the two did what his father wanted?”

“The first,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”

The opposition to Jesus by the religious leaders of the day was reaching a crescendo. Matthew has reported two run-ins with them already in this Holy Week (see Matt. 21:15 and Matt. 21:23ff). In this section, Jesus continues His conversation with “**the chief priests and the elders of the people**” (see Matt. 21:23). Jesus uses parables to instruct and rebuke them. He begins by asking them to pay special attention (there will be a quiz at the end): “**What do you think?**” “As Christ instructed His disciples by parables, which made the instructions the more easy, so sometimes He convinced His adversaries by parables, which bring reproofs more close, and make men to reprove themselves. Thus Nathan convinced David by a parable (see II Sam. 22:1), and the woman of Tekoa surprised him in like manner (see II Sam. 14:2). Reproving parables are appeals to the offenders themselves, and judge them out of their own mouths. This Christ designs here, as appears by the first words, ‘**What do you think?**’” [Henry].

Jesus tells the parable: “**There was a man who had two sons. He**

went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go" (vss. 28–30). We learn, parenthetically here, that one and the same father can beget children of vastly differing characters. And indeed, we all have one Heavenly Father, and there are great differences in the characters of men.

The first son was initially, not only obstinate, but also somewhat rude. His answer to his father was "rough and curt" [Broadus, 438]. Simply, he said, "**I will not.**" Contrast this with the (apparent) respect shown by the second son: he said, "**I will, sir.**" The first son was truly and stubbornly adamant against doing his father's will. But at least he was honest to his father. He told him outright that he had no intention of working for him. The second son's words, in contrast, were pure hypocrisy, an attempt to, for the moment, make himself sound like a loyal son. The father must have remembered bitterly the word "**sir**", when he later learned of the result.

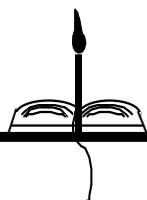
The first son repented: "**Later he changed his mind and went.**" "This was true repentance, for it led to practical obedience. He did not offer a verbal apology, or make a promise of future good behavior; he did far better, for he went about his father's business without more ado" [Spurgeon, 299]. The second son simply "**did not go.**" "His fine phrases and fair promises were deceit and falsehood" [Spurgeon, 299]. "He represents easy going, self-complacent people, who take their own virtue for granted; they make promises quickly, expressing warm feelings and good intentions" [Thomas, 310]. "Many with their mouth show much love, but their heart goes another way. They had a good mind to be religious, but they met with something to be done that was too hard, or something to be parted with that was too dear, and so their purposes are to no purpose. Buds and blossoms are not fruit" [Henry]. This, interestingly, ties into the recent episode with the fig tree (see Matt. 21:18-22). "The same fault had been illustrated that morning by the fig-tree, which made great show of leaves, but had no fruit" [Broadus, 438].

Jesus next asks the religious leaders, "**Which of the two did what his father wanted?**" (vs. 31). Here we see the great value of the parable, for the answer to Jesus' question is so obvious. Men are much more ready to point out the faults of others, before they see their own. "He compels them to realize and even to declare their own guilt" [Thomas, 309]. "**The first, they answered.**"

Jesus shows frankness and honesty in telling the interpretation of the parable: "**Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.**

For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him” (vss. 31b–32). Jesus begins His interpretation of the parable with a statement that He is to say something important and, of course, true: **“I tell you the truth.”** Jesus pulls no punches. He makes it quite clear that the religious leaders of the day are the rebellious second son in the parable. “Here for the first time our Lord makes an open, personal application of a parable to the Jewish authorities (also in vs. 43ff). The time has come for speaking out unreservedly to them, and also to the people concerning them, as He will do later in the day (see Matt 23)” [Broadus, 439]. Then also, much (I’m sure) to the chagrin of the chief priests and elders, he declares that the repentant **“tax collectors and prostitutes”** (proverbial for all evil of the time) are the obedient first son, who do the will of the Father.

So, this parable becomes a warning to all those who show lip-service to the Father—they may be regular churchgoers, they may even be pastors—but do not in the end obey His Word and serve Him. “We learn that faith does not consist merely in a person giving subscription to true doctrine, but also includes something greater and deeper: the hearer is to deny himself and commit his whole life to God” [Calvin, III-14]. Then also, this parable is a gift of hope to those who had sinned in the past—even grievous sinners—but who repent, and obey and serve the Father. “Let it be a settled principle in our Christianity that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely willing to receive penitent sinners. It matters nothing what a man has been in time past. Does he repent, and come to Christ? Then old things are passed away, and all things are become new (see II Cor. 5:17)” [Ryle, 274].





A Topical Study: On Prayer

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

Pray for Everything, pt. 1, by Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)

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

The apostle, having forbidden the Philippians to have extreme care, shows them what they should do instead thereof. He shows them a better way to obtain what they or others are apt to care too much about. Instead of troubling yourselves with cares for anything, apply yourselves to God by prayer in everything.

The people of God should have recourse to Him by prayer, in everything. For explication, let us inquire into the act, the extent, the manner of praying, i.e., what we must do, wherein it must be done, and how we must do it.

1. For the act: It is prayer, expressed here by four words, “**prayer**” (asking of God); “**supplication**”; “**thanksgiving**” (or, praise), and “**requests**” (or petitions). For the opening of which, you know there are two principal parts of prayer: petition and thanksgiving; the asking of what we would have, and the due acknowledgment of what we have received. When we take notice of what the Lord bestows, and are affected with the riches, and the freeness of His mercy therein; and out of a hearty sense thereof gratefully acknowledge this, this is to give him thanks, which is one chief part of prayer which should not be omitted. When we would pray, as He requires, our requests should be joined with thanksgiving. The sense of our wants, pressures, sufferings, should not drown the sense of His mercy and bounty expressed to us. Eagerness after more should not make us overlook what He has done for us already; but while we beg, we should also be thankful, having as much occasion for this as the other.

Then for petition, the other part of prayer that is here. He uses more words to express the same thing, as the Hebrews were wont to do (whose manner of speech he much uses) to signify frequency or vehemency, to

mind us that we should be very much and often in this duty, or that our hearts should be very much in it, when we are about it.

Now concerning **“prayer”** and **“supplication”**: We need not inquire how these two words may be distinguished; the apostle intended no more than I have expressed. But if we will be so curious: one of them, **“prayer”**, may denote the object of our prayers, a request directed towards God. To whom shall we address ourselves, if we would be relieved, or supplied, or delivered? Let your requests be made known to God. Others may be unable or unwilling to help; it may be a wickedness, or it may be to no purpose to seek to them: But God is able and willing to relieve. He has made it your duty to apply yourselves to Him, and to none else without Him.

The other word, rendered **“supplication”**, may denote the subject of our prayers, is from the word “to want”. That which we are to request of God, is what we want, be it something which we have not, or more of that which we have, if it be needful for us, that which we want indeed. We may seek it of God; it is both our duty and privilege to do it; He both encourages and commands it. It is a principal part of prayer to which there are so many promises, for which there are too many precepts: to spread our wants before God; to make them known to Him. Not that He knows not what we want before we declare it (see Matt. 6), but prayer is the proper way to go about getting what we want: for His honor and our advantage. **“He will be fought unto”** (Ezekiel 36:37). We must seek Him, and not as a formality, but as those who are sensible of what they want, and who go to Him only who can relieve us.

2. For the extent of prayer: Paul says, **“In everything”**. So we must both pray and praise Him; both make our requests, and give thanks, in **“everything”**. But here seems some difficulty as to both, which I will endeavor to remove:

A. How can it be our duty to give thanks in everything? There are many cases where there may be a question whether they require thankfulness. Several seem to call for humiliation, rather than thanksgiving. But this in general may be said: whatever our state, or the circumstances of it be, so far as there is any mercy to be discerned therein, that far we ought to be thankful. And now let us may resolve the particular cases, wherein it is questionable whether it is our duty to be thankful:

(1). When we are under afflictions, are we to give thanks for personal grievances? Yes, there is something in them for which we may and we ought to be thankful. But how? Not for the afflictions considered in themselves: for they are not joyous, but grievous. But if they be for righteousness sake, then are they blessed dispensations. Then they are occasions of joy, and so of praise; then they are gifts, special favors, and so oblige us to thankfulness. See Philippians 1:29, **“Unto you it is given in the behalf**

of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Yes, when they are chastisements, and occasioned by our miscarriages, yet then we may, and ought to be thankful, because they are no more than what we had deserved, and had reason to fear. When we lose something, it is a mercy (about which we should be thankful) that we did not lose all. When it is but a rod, it might have been a scorpion. When it lies on us but awhile, it might have oppressed us all our days, and made our whole life, a life of sorrow and afflictions. Moreover, we do not suffer so much as others suffer. What are our sufferings, when greatest, to those of Christ, though He was innocent, and not as we are, covered with guilt? What are our afflictions to the sufferings of others, who are as dear to Him, and have less provoked Him? What to theirs, who, by the Lords testimony, were such of whom the world was not worthy? You are in troubles, but you are not in hell: and why not there, but because His mercy towards you is infinite? The Lord has taken this or that from you. O but hath He taken His lovingkindness from you? Has He divorced you from Christ? Has He cut you off from hopes of glory? Has He extinguished His grace in you, or taken His Holy Spirit from you? Or shut you out from the covenant of grace? Or separated you from His love?

(2.) When public judgments are inflicted, that calls for mourning and lamentations; what place then for praise and thanksgiving? Why, so far even then we are to be thankful, as the Lord remembers mercy in the midst of judgment. We then have occasion of thanksgiving, because He inflicts no more judgments, pours out but one vial, when He might pour out all together; because He makes not those inflicted more grievous and intolerable, more spreading and universal, more destructive and ruining; because we are secured and preserved, we escape when others fall; because it does but scorch us, when it might consume us. They could see occasion of thankfulness, in the midst of those calamities, which had burnt their temple, destroyed Jerusalem, laid their country desolate and carried the inhabitants into captivity. They could discern mercy and compassions through all this; and so far as this can be discerned, there is cause of thanksgiving.

(3.) When we are under temptations: an hour of temptation is a time of fear and trembling; yet even then we have cause of thanksgiving. So far as the temptation prevails not; so far as we are strengthened to resist it; so far as it is not too violent to be borne or withstood; so far as we escape the danger; and if we do not quite escape, so far as we take warning by it, and are made more watchful, and stand more upon our guard and are more humbled in the sense of our own weakness, and led to more dependence on the Lord our strength, and fear and hate that more to which we were tempted, and are more resolute against it. See I Cor. 10:13, **“There is no temptation that has overtaken you but such as common to man; but**

God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you will be able to bear it.” So, for the Lord’s faithfulness, His mindfulness of His covenant, as it appears in any temptation, whether for good, or to evil: so much cause is there of thanksgiving.

(4.) When we fall into sin. That is the hardest case: yet here we ought to be thankful, not because we are left to sin, for that is a cause of sorrow and deep humiliation, but because He leaves us not to sin more, as we would do were it not for His gracious restraints; because the Lord does not leave us, does not cast us off when we sin; because He proceeds not more severely against us for sin; because we do not die in it; because He does not cast us off, and cause us to perish in the very act; because He gives time for repentance, and a heart for it. Here is a matter for thankfulness, since He is so highly provoked by sin, since He might do it with advantage to His glory, the glory of His justice, and might prevent further provocations, and more dishonor. Or because He overrules this desperate evil to occasion good or works a cure of this deadly poison, as He can do. And thus you see how we may give thanks in everything, even in those things wherein it is hard to see any occasion for thanksgiving.

B. As there is some difficulty in respect of thanksgiving, so in respect of petitioning prayer: whether we may apply ourselves to God in everything particularly; whether we may make our questions known to Him for temporal things, the concerns of this world. With some this seems questionable. Says Chrysostom, “Make not the address to God for small things.” But such sayings must be understood as intending a restraint only, not an absolute prohibition, since by warrant from Scripture we may pray for what is there promised, and godliness has the promise of this life (see I Timothy 4:8). And these are some of the things that the text directs us to pray for. We are not to have extreme care for the things of this life, but instead thereof, make our requests known in everything, as in other things, so in these. We have both rule and example for this in Scripture. Our Lord Jesus directs us to pray for our daily bread, so Jacob in Gen. 28:20: **“And Jacob vowed a vow, saying ‘If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on...’”** etc. And Agur, in Proverbs 30:8: **“Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with food convenient for me.”** They may be sought, but with limitation:

(1.) Not principally, for they are not the things in which we are principally concerned, see Mark 6:33. The kingdom of God and the righteousness of it, things eternal and spiritual, are to be sought principally: first and most, above all, more than all, as being of far greater value and consequence, and of greater necessity and importance. We may far better fall short of the things of this life, which may trouble us for a time; but to

miss the other will be our misery forever. The spiritual and the eternal things are of greater value. The others are but loss and dung in comparison, of no considerable value; and so we should be far from seeking them principally.

(2.) Not for themselves, but in order to lead us to better things; not to serve ourselves of them, but to be more serviceable by them, to do more good with them; not to please our senses, but to help us the better to please the Lord; not because they suit our inclinations, but to enable us to do the will of God, and that work which He has set us to do. As the apostle desired a prosperous journey (see Rom 10:10), not for the journey's sake, as though He loved or delighted in that, but that He might have thereby an opportunity to do more good. To seek these things for themselves, profit for profits sake or pleasures sake, is to seek them as God only should be sought, and to idolize them.

(3.) With submission. These things are not good for all, in every degree. We know not whether they will be good for us, nor what measure of them may be best. We must not seek them peremptorily, as those that have a mind to have them at a venture; but with a reserve, if they may be good for us; and these must be submitted to the will and wisdom of God, who only knows it. Refer it to Him, either to bestow them, if He see it good, or deny them, if He know they will not be good. The all-wise Physician knows better what is good or hurtful than the distempered patient.

We are not to seek outward things, as we may seek faith, repentance, pardon, holiness, growth in grace, power against sin. These are absolutely necessary to our happiness; it is His will His people shall have them; He has declared it in His Word, and promised them without reserve; and therefore so we may beg them. But outward things are not absolutely necessary to salvation; we may be happy without them, or such a measure of them: we know not but it may hinder instead of promoting our happiness. They are not promised absolutely, and therefore should not be so sought.

Those things which tend but to our well-being in spirituals—as comfort, assurance, and highest degrees of holiness—are not to be sought but with submission; much less these which tend but to our well-being in temporals. **“Not my will but yours be done,”** said our great Example. And David herein showed himself to be a man after God's own heart, **“And the King said unto Zadok, ‘Carry back the Ark of God into the City: If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation’”** (2 Sam. 15:25). He referred it wholly to the will of God, whether His outward condition should be prosperous or not.

So much for the act of prayer, and the extent of it.

A Study in Psalms: Psalm 71



Psalm 71:14-24 - Hope for Deliverance

- ¹⁴But as for me, I will always have hope;
I will praise You more and more.
- ¹⁵My mouth will tell of Your righteousness,
of Your salvation all day long,
though I know not its measure.
- ¹⁶I will come and proclaim Your mighty acts,
O Sovereign LORD;
I will proclaim Your righteousness, Yours alone.
- ¹⁷Since my youth, O God, You have taught me,
and to this day I declare Your marvelous deeds.
- ¹⁸Even when I am old and gray,
do not forsake me, O God,
Till I declare Your power to the next generation,
Your might to all who are to come.
- ¹⁹Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God,
You who have done great things.
Who, O God, is like You?
- ²⁰Though You have made me see troubles,
many and bitter,
You will restore my life again;
From the depths of the earth
You will again bring me up.
- ²¹You will increase my honor
and comfort me once again.
- ²²I will praise You with the harp
for Your faithfulness, O my God;
I will sing praise to You with the lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.
- ²³My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to You—
I, whom You have redeemed.

**²⁴My tongue will tell of Your righteous acts all day long,
for those who wanted to harm me
have been put to shame and confusion.**

As we saw in the previous issue, this psalm was written by a believer (quite possibly David) who, in his old age, was being persecuted by enemies. In the first half of the psalm, the Psalmist prayed for deliverance. Here, he begins to show confidence that he will be delivered: **“But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise You more and more”** (vs. 14). The Psalmist, in the **“hope”** that comes from faith in His loving God, looks forward to his deliverance, and predicts that he will praise God for it. In fact, God’s deliverance in this situation will cause the Psalmist (he predicts) to praise Him **“more and more”**.

The Psalmist redoubles his commitment to praise God and proclaim the greatness of God to others: **“My mouth will tell of Your righteousness, of Your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure. I will come and proclaim Your mighty acts, O Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim Your righteousness, Yours alone”** (vss. 15–16). The trials we experience, and the subsequent deliverances by God, provide us with testimony about God, that we should share with others. Everyone experiences affliction. So our testimony about how God brought us through our affliction will encourage others to call on the name of God in difficult times. “We are to bear testimony as experience enables us, and not withhold from others that which we have tasted and handled. The faithfulness of God in saving us, in delivering us out of the hand of our enemies, and in fulfilling His promises, is to be everywhere proclaimed by those who have proved it in their own history” [Spurgeon].

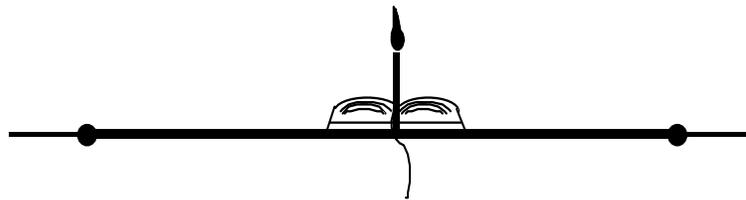
The Psalmist looks back on his whole life—a life he spent continuously walking with God: **“Since my youth, O God, You have taught me, and to this day I declare Your marvelous deeds”** (vs. 17). The Psalmist uses this as a reason God should take his part: **“Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare Your power to the next generation, Your might to all who are to come”** (vss. 18). “Consistent piety, exhibited through youth and manhood may be pleaded in the day of darkness and sorrow, as a reason why God should not forsake us; because it is most agreeable to His nature to remember old friendships” [Plumer, 699]. “Nothing shall make God forsake those who have not forsaken Him” [Spurgeon].

Note the reason the Psalmist wants God to take his part: **“...till I declare Your power to the next generation, Your might to all who are to come.”** The Psalmist, even in his old age, desires to declare the greatness of God, this time to the **“next generation”**. “Are there better

preachers of the works of God to be found than hoary parents in the circle of their children, or grand-parents in that of their grandchildren?" [Tholuck, in Plumer, 699].

The Psalmist remembers God's righteous character, and this gives him confidence that God will deliver him: "**Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God, You who have done great things. Who, O God, is like You? Though You have made me see troubles, many and bitter, You will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth You will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again**" (vss. 19-21). In his life, the Psalmist had experienced the chastening of God. The Psalmist understood that God Himself allowed him to face afflictions, even "**many and bitter**" afflictions. Yet, the Psalmist, through experience, had faith that God would "**restore his life again.**" "Here is faith's inference from the infinite greatness of the Lord. He has been strong to smite; He will also be strong to save. He has shown me many heavy and severe trials, and He will also show me many and precious mercies. He has almost killed me, He will speedily revive me; and though I have been almost dead and buried, He will give me a resurrection '**bring me up again from the depths of the earth.**' However low the Lord may permit us to sink, He will fix a limit to the descent, and in due time will bring us up again" [Spurgeon].

The Psalmist, in faith, sees the end. And for the Psalmist, the end consists of him fervently praising the Lord: "**I will praise You with the harp for Your faithfulness, O my God. I will sing praise to You with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to You—I, whom You have redeemed. My tongue will tell of Your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion**" (vss. 22-24). Oh that we would have the desire and faith to look forward to praising God, even before deliverance has come.



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The Diversity of the Bible

“The parts of Scripture were penned by diverse secretaries, published in diverse places, in diverse ages, on diverse occasions, for diverse ends: so the argument and subject matter, the method and manner of composing, the texture and the style of writing are likewise different. Some parts of Scripture were delivered in prose, others in verse or numbers: some parts of the Scripture are historical, showing what hath been done, some are prophetic, showing what shall be done; others are dogmatical or doctrinal, showing what we must do, what we must believe. Again, some parts of Scripture are clear and easy, some are obscure and very knotty: Some parts of Scripture show what God made us, others, how sin spoiled us: A third, how Christ restored us. Some parts of Scripture show forth acts of mercy to keep us from sinking; others record acts of judgment to keep us from presuming.”

-- Joseph Caryl (1602-1673)

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