

SCRIPTURE STUDIES

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

Old Testament Study:

Exodus 16..... 3
Manna, pt. 1, by A. W. Pink

A Classic Study:

The Danger of Prosperity, pt. 13, by William Bates..... 9

New Testament Study:

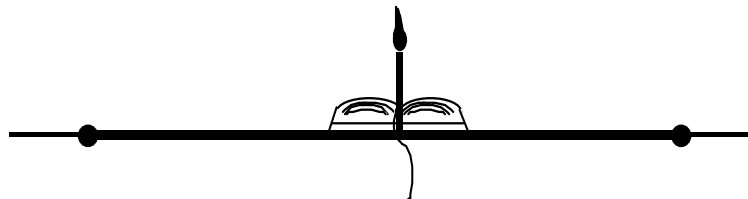
Matthew 24:23-31..... 12
Olivet Discourse - pt. 3, by Scott Sperling

A Topical Study:

Contentment, pt. 1..... 15
The Art of Divine Contentment, pt. 1, by Thomas Watson

A Study in Wisdom:

Job 1:4 (pt. 1) 20
Job's Children, by Joseph Caryl



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Old Testament Study: Exodus 16

Manna, pt. 1,
by Arthur W. Pink

¹And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. ²And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: ³And the children of Israel said unto them, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." ⁴Then said the LORD unto Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no." ⁵And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." (Ex 16:1-5 AV)

¹³And it came to pass, that at evening the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. ¹⁴And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. ¹⁵And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, "It is manna": for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, "This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. ¹⁶This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, 'Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.'" ¹⁷And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every

man according to his eating.

¹⁹And Moses said, "Let no man leave of it till the morning." ²⁰Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. ²¹And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. ²²And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. ²³And he said unto them, "This is that which the LORD hath said, 'Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.'" ²⁴And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. ²⁵And Moses said, "Eat that today; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: today ye shall not find it in the field. ²⁶Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none." ²⁷And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. ²⁸And the LORD said unto Moses, "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? ²⁹See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." ³⁰So the people rested on the seventh day. ³¹And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. (Ex. 13-31 AV)

Not for long was Israel permitted to enjoy the grateful refreshment and shade of the wells and palm trees of Elim (15:27). The first verses of our chapter tell us, "**And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin.**" If we compare Numbers 33, which records the various stages or stopping places in Israel's journeys, we find that "**they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red Sea**" (v. 10). Most probably this was some bay or creek of the Sea, where for a short time their camp was now pitched, perhaps with the design of them looking once more at those waters through which they had passed dry-shod, but which had overwhelmed their enemies. Evidently their stay there was a short one, and as nothing of importance happened, it is omitted in Exodus 16.

The leading of Israel into the Wilderness of Sin brings out the strength of Moses' *faith*. Here, for the first time, the full privation of de-

sert life stared the people fully in the face. Every step they took was now leading them farther away from the inhabited countries and conducting them deeper into the land of desolation and death. The isolation of the wilderness was complete, and the courage and faith of their leader in bringing a multitude of at least two million people into such a howling waste, demonstrates his firm confidence in the Lord God. Moses was not ignorant of the character of the desert. He had lived for forty years in its immediate vicinity (3:1), and, therefore, he knew full well that only a miracle, yea, a series of daily miracles, could meet the vast needs of such a multitude. In this his faith was superior to Abraham's (Gen. 12:10).

“And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt” (v. 1). Why, we may ask, such particularity in noting the *time-mark* here? As a matter of mere history it seems of little interest or importance. What difference does it make to us today *which* month and *what* day of the month it was when Israel entered the Wilderness of Sin? It was on **“the fifteenth day of the second month”** after their leaving Egypt that Israel came unto this wilderness. The very fact that the Holy Spirit *has* recorded this detail is sufficient proof it is not meaningless. There is nothing trivial in the Word of God. Even the numerals are there used with Divine purpose and significance. And herein we may discover the answer to our question. It was the **“second month,”** and in Scripture **“two”** speaks of *witness* or *testimony* (cf. Revelation 11:3, etc.). It was the **“fifteenth day”** of the month, and the factors of 15 are five and three. In Scripture **“five”** signifies *grace* or *favor* (Genesis 43:34, etc.), and **“three”** is the number of *manifestations* — hence the number of resurrection, when life is fully manifested. By combining these definitions we learn that God was now to give unto Israel a witness and manifestation of His grace. How fully the sequel bears this out is most apparent.

In order for grace to shine forth there must first be the dark background of sin. Grace is unmerited favor, and to enhance its glory the demerits of man must be exhibited. It is where *sin* abounded that *grace* did much more abound (see Romans 5:21). It was so here. The very next thing that we read of is, **“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the Wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, ‘Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger’”** (vv. 2, 3). A darker background could scarcely be imagined.

Here was the self-same people who had been divinely spared from the ten plagues on Egypt, who had been brought forth from the land of bond-

age, miraculously delivered at the Red Sea, Divinely guided by a Pillar of Cloud and Fire, day and night, — now **“murmuring,”** complaining, rebelling! And it was not a few of the people who did so; the **“whole congregation”** were guilty. It was not simply that they muttered among themselves, but they murmured *against* their Divinely-chosen leader. Their sin, too, was aggravated by an oath; they took the Divine name **“in vain”** — **“would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt.”** It is also evident that in their hot-headed insubordination they *lied*, for as slaves of the merciless Egyptians there is no ground whatever for us to suppose that they **“sat by the flesh-pots”** or **“ate bread to the full.”** Finally, their wicked unbelief comes out in the words, **“for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”** It was *Jehovah*. not simply Moses and Aaron, who had brought them forth; and He had promised they should worship Him at Sinai (see Exodus 3:12). It was not possible, then, for them to die with hunger in the wilderness.

What, then, was the Lord’s response to this awful outbreak of rebellious unbelief? Verse 4 tells us: **“Behold, I will rain”** — what: “fire and brimstone that ye may be consumed”? No; **“Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.”** Marvelous grace was this; sovereign, unmerited favor! The very first word here is designed to arrest our attention. In Scripture, **“behold”** is the Holy Spirit’s exclamation mark. **“Behold”** — mark with worshipful wonder. Here, then, is the blessed force of the *time-mark* in verse 1. The raining (which speaks of a *plentiful* supply) of bread from Heaven for these murmuring Israelites was indeed a *witness* to the *grace* of God *fully manifested!*

That which follows here in Exodus 16 is deeply important. Every detail in it speaks loudly *to us*, if only we have ears to hear. The manna which Jehovah provided for Israel is a beautiful type of *the food which God has provided for our souls*. This food is His own Word. This food is both His written Word and His incarnate Word. We propose to consider these separately. We first shall trace some of the many points of analogy between the manna and the Scriptures as the heavenly food for God’s people. In our next paper we shall view the manna as a type of the Lord Jesus, the Heavenly One come down to earth.

1. *The manna was a supernatural gift.* **“Then said the Lord unto Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you’”** (v. 4). This is the first great lesson which the manna is designed to teach us. The manna was not a product of the earth; it was not manufactured by man; it was not something which Israel brought with them out of Egypt — there was no manna there. Instead, it came down from heaven. It was a gift from God.

Various attempts have been made to explain away the supernatural in connection with the manna. Some have declared that it grew on a certain tree found in the wilderness; but they fail to explain how it grew in winter

as well as summer; how that it was obtainable in every part of the wilderness, no matter where Israel's camp was pitched; or, how that sufficient was to hand to feed upwards of two million souls for almost forty years! How foolish is man's infidelity. The only possible explanation of the manna is to see in its continued supply *a miracle*. It was furnished by God Himself. So it is with that which the manna prefigured — the written Word. The Scriptures are the spiritual manna for our souls, and at every point they manifest their supernatural origin. Many efforts have been made to account for the Bible, but on this point man's reasonings are as ridiculous as when he attempts to explain the manna on natural lines. The Bible is a miraculous production. It was given by Divine Inspiration. It has come from heaven. It is the gift of God.

It is striking to note how the supernatural is evidenced in connection with the giving of the manna. In Exodus 16:16 we read, **“This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded; gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man. according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.”** Now, a conservative estimate of the total number of Israelites who came out of Egypt would be two million, for they had six hundred thousand men able to go forth to war (See Numbers 1:45, 46). An **“omer”** was to be gathered for every one of these two million souls, and an **“omer”** is the equivalent of six pints. There would be twelve million pints, or nine million pounds gathered daily, which was four thousand five hundred tons. Hence, ten trains, each having thirty cars, and each car having in it fifteen tons, would be needed for a *single* day's supply. Over a *million tons* of manna were gathered annually by Israel. And let it be remembered this continued for forty years! Equally wonderful, equally miraculous, equally Divine is the Bible.

2. *The manna came right to where the people were.* **“And in the morning the dew lay round about the host; and when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing”** (vv. 13, 14). No long journey had to be taken in order to secure the manna. The Israelites did not have to cross the wilderness before they could secure their needed food. It was right to hand; before their eyes. There, just outside their tent door, lay the manna on the ground. So it is with the Word of God. It is blessedly accessible to all of us. I often think that if it were harder to procure a Bible than it is some of us would prize it more than we do. If we had to cross the ocean and journey to the other side of the world to obtain a copy of the Holy Scriptures we would value them far more than we do now!

But the very accessibility of the manna only added to the responsibility of Israel. Its very nearness measured their obligation. By virtue of the fact that it lay on the ground just outside their tents they *had to* do something with it. They *must* either gather it or trample it beneath their feet! And my


reader, this is equally true of God's Word. The very fact that it is right here to your hand determines your responsibility. You are *obliged* to do one of two things with it: show your appreciation by gathering it unto your soul, or despise and trample it beneath your feet by a criminal neglect.

3. *The manna was small in size.* **“And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a *small round thing*, as *small as the hoar frost on the ground*”** (v. 14). Who would have imagined that a complete and perfect revelation *from* God and of God could be comprised within the compass of a comparatively small volume? Think of it — the sum total of God's revealed Truth in a book which can be carried in your pocket! All that is needed to make us wise unto salvation; all that is needed to sustain our souls throughout our earthly pilgrimage; all that is needed to make the man of God **“perfect”** (complete), within the compass of the Bible!

Observe that not only is the size but also the shape of the manna is given. It was **“a *small round thing*.”** It had no angles and no rough edges. Continuing to regard the manna as a symbol and a type of the Word of God, what does this teach us? Why, surely, it prefigured the beautiful symmetry of Scripture. It tells us that the Bible is a perfect whole, complete and entire.

4. *The manna was white in color.* **“And the house of Israel called the name thereof manna; and it was like coriander seed, *white*”** (v. 31). Everything here has a spiritual significance. The Holy Spirit had a good reason for telling us the particular color of the manna. There is nothing meaningless in Scripture anywhere. Everything in God's Word has a value and message for us.

Now **“white”** is the emblem of *purity*. Thus we have emphasized the absolute purity of the Word of God. Let us link together three Scriptures. **“The words of the Lord are *pure words*; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times”** (Psalm 12:6): they are pure morally and they are pure spiritually. They are like the **“pure river of the water of life”** which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb — they are **“clear as crystal”** (Revelation 22:1). Again, we read in Psalm 119:140, **“Thy Word is *very pure*: therefore Thy servant loveth it.”** The Scriptures are termed the **“Holy Scriptures”** because they are separated off from all other writings by virtue of their exalted spirituality and Divine purity. Once more, in Proverbs 30:5 we read, **“*Every word of God is pure.*”** There is no admixture of error in God's Word. In it there are no mistakes, no contradictions, no blemishes.



A Classic Study: The Danger of Prosperity

A Classic Study by William Bates (1635–1699)

[Here, we conclude a study by the eminent English Puritan William Bates, concerning the danger of prosperity. In this issue, Mr. Bates is continuing to enumerate some rules on how to properly manage prosperity.]—*Ed.*

The Danger of Prosperity, pt. 13

7. When riches and power are employed for the glory of God and the good of others, they are a happy advantage to those that possess them. All benefits are virtual obligations; and the greater our receipts are, the greater our accounts will be. God has a sovereign right in all things we have, and they are not to be employed merely for our pleasure or profit, but according to His will, and for His honor. It is true, He enjoys His own eternity, His own glory and blessedness, to which there is no possibility of accession: His essential glory cannot be increased, but His declarative glory may be more manifested in the eyes of men; and He strictly requires that we should use His gifts, so as to show forth His glory to declare how highly we value His glory, and how ardently we desire and endeavor that others should bless and praise Him. Thus men in high dignity should govern their greatness so as to make it subservient to this blessed end, that the wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and mercy of God, may be manifested in their administration. And those who enjoy a present abundance should, according to their capacity, relieve the wants of others. The wise God has ordered several degrees in the society of men, the rich and poor; that the inequality may be an occasion of the exercise of charity. And it is a spiritual favor, that He is pleased to make some His treasurers to dispense His benefits to His family. While others can only be charitable in their compassionate desires, He gives to some an ability of diffusive goodness: and it is injustice mixed with foul ingratitude, not to pay that tribute of which He has appointed the poor to be His receivers, not to abound in good works, when from His most free and special favor, He enables men to imitate and honor Him who is rich in mercy. **“It is more blessed to give than to receive”** (Acts 20:35). The present reward is excellent: it is our Savior’s encouragement; give alms of such things as you have, according to your capacity, and behold all things are clean unto you.

As under the law, by offering the first fruits in the temple, the whole harvest was consecrated and blessed; so by a charitable distribution, the rich have a pure and comfortable enjoyment of their estates. And the reward hereafter will be glorious by infinite degrees, exceeding the most costly and liberal charity. It is the encouragement used by the apostle, **“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life”** (I Tim. 6:17). Some by corrupt prodigality waste their estates, are profuse as the sea; some heap up riches as the sand, and both must be responsible to the righteous Lord, who will severely call them to an account for the abuse of His blessings. But those who, according to their utmost ability, honor Him with their substance, and by their charity and beneficence open the hearts and lips of many in thanksgiving to God, shall be accepted and rewarded from the divine mercy.

Especially doing good to those whom God loves, who bear His image, who are peculiarly related to Him, shall have an excellent reward. The apostle tells us, that some by entertaining strangers, received angels: The honor is incomparably greater, that in relieving the godly, Jesus Christ, the Lord of angels, is fed and clothed in His members. And at the last day He will publicly own those acts of mercy as done to Himself: Then He will give to the contented poor the crown of patience, and to the charitable rich, the crown of liberality. In short, riches and honor, power and prosperity are temptations to the carnal that draw forth their lusts, and increase their guilt and misery; but to wise and faithful Christians, they are talents improved for their Master’s honor, and their own everlasting good.

8. A firm resolution to part with all possessions and dignities, when God’s honor, and the testimony of His truth requires it, is an excellent antidote against the evil of prosperity. God does sometimes call forth His servants to hard trials, to declare with more stretch and evidence their love to His name, their zeal for advancing His glory: Satan is an irreconcilable enemy to God and His saints; and inspires the perverted world with His own malice against them. Rage has no reason: The Jews would excommunicate the blind man, because he saw, and ascribed the glory of the miracle to our Savior: and Lazarus must die, because he was to be raised from the grave. Now when a Christian is prepared for this noble act of self-denial, to forsake all things when his duty to Christ requires it; this preserves him from the ensnaring temptations of prosperity.

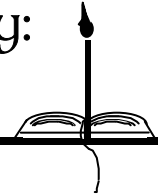
It is observable, the same divine disposition of soul makes us temperate in the use of present abundance, and patient in the loss of it. The low esteem of earthly things, joined with the lively hope of heaven, renders the enjoyment of the world less delightful, and the loss of it more tolerable. The philosopher and courtier says of himself, that he always in his

prosperity kept a great distance between his affections and riches with honors; and in the change of his state, that were rather taken easily away, than rent from him. According to the temper of the mind, the difference is as sensible in the parting with outward things, as between clipping the hair, and tearing it off with violence. Nay, the glory of heaven does so eclipse the faint and fading luster of this world, that a believer not only patiently but cheerfully makes the exchange of the one for the other. Moses preferred affliction with the people of God before the crown of Egypt, because of the reward above that was in his view (see Hebrews 11:25ff). And the Christian Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. The blessed hope will preserve us from being foiled by prosperity when it surrounds us, and from sinking in adversity. Like Mertyllus his shield, that secured him in the field, and saved him being shipwrecked at sea, by wafting him to the shore.

Lastly, earnest and constant prayer to God for divine grace, is a sovereign means to preserve those who are in prosperity from the danger that attends it. **“I know how to abound,”** says the apostle; and immediately adds, **“I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me”** (Philippians 4:12-13). Supernatural strength in an eminent degree is requisite to keep us entire and upright in the dangerous conflict with the pleasant temptations of the world: and that strength is derived from Christ, and obtained by humble prayer. It is St. Austin’s observation, that Elisha wanted a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, because he was in public honor; and exposed to a more dangerous trial and extraordinary grace was necessary for him: But Elijah was under continual persecution. The trees that are exposed to storms are strong and firm, but those in the sunny valleys are brittle and easily blown down. We are directed to ask wisdom of God for the governing of ourselves in afflictions, that in patience we may possess our souls, and the turbulent passions may not cause rebellious disorders, but the sanctified mind may use afflictions for our spiritual and eternal good. And it is as necessary to beg heavenly wisdom for governing ourselves in prosperity, that when temptations are frequent, and favored by our joyful affections, which are equally vehement and exorbitant as the sad affections, reason may keep the throne, and manage prosperity, so as we may obtain our blessed end. Such is the malice of Satan, that he incessantly desires leave to tempt us, and love to our souls should make us pray continually for confirming grace against his temptations. Briefly, if the good things of this world make us more humble and holy, more fearful to offend God, and careful to please Him; if they are motives to renew our homage and thankfulness to Him, if they are used in subordination to His glory, they are the testimonies of His present favor, and the pledges of our future felicity. Our blessed Savior keeps the best wine for His obedient friends until the last.

(This concludes Mr. Bates’s study.)

New Testament Study: Matthew 24:23-31



The Olivet Discourse - pt. 3

²³“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect— if that were possible. ²⁵See, I have told you ahead of time.

²⁶“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹“Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

³⁰“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Jesus continues to answer the questions posed by His disciples in verse 3: “‘Tell us’, they said, ‘when will [the destruction of the Temple] happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age’” (Matt. 24: 3). In this section, Jesus addresses two aspects of the question: “His coming”, and the “end of the age”.

Again, Jesus warns His disciples not to be deceived by false Messiahs: “At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time” (vss. 23–25). As the distress and tribulations of the end-times approach, there

will be many claiming to be the returning Christ. Their deception will be supported by **“great signs and miracles”**. The **“signs”** and **“miracles”** will be a great aid in deceiving those who do not know the true Christ. We humans are overly preoccupied with the miraculous. We are always desiring to experience the supernatural. How many countless times have the unsaved said, “Well, I would believe in God if He would just show me a miracle”? Apparently, in the end-times, they will get their wish for the miraculous, but the **“signs”** and **“miracles”** will serve to lead them to false Christs. Rather than basing our allegiance on the presence of **“signs”** and **“miracles”**, we who know the true Christ, must lean on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, through prayer. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the **“elect”** will not be deceived by the false Christs and the **“miracles”**.

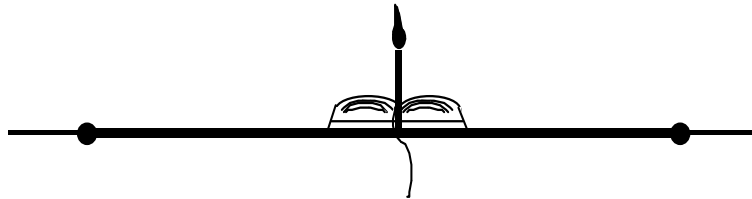
Jesus tells us that His return will be public, clear, and obvious: **“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather”** (vss. 26–28). In His first coming, Jesus came to the chosen people of God in Israel, as one of them. From a global perspective, it was a private event, restricted to one geographic region. Jesus then spent time in the **“desert”** and in **“the inner rooms”**. But Jesus’ second coming will not be private and regional; it will be public and global. And it will be as clear and obvious as **“lightning”**; anything else is not to be believed. No Christian who knows this verse should be deceived by any false Messiah. If it is not obvious and clear that it is Jesus, then it is not. We will all know; there will be no doubt. The deceived will **“gather”** around a **“carcass”**, like **“vultures”**; the godly will wait for Christ’s evident return.

Jesus next speaks of the signs in the heavens during the end-times tribulations: **“Immediately after the distress of those days, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken’”** (vs. 29). Jesus here is citing a passage in Isaiah that prophesies the judgment of the Lord in the end-times: **“See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins”** (Isa. 13:9–11). The darkening of the sun and skies, spoken of here, could be the result of smoke and debris in the air (presumably due to wars and fires), but the wording seems to indicate that it will be the supernatural work of the Lord.

Jesus next speaks directly of His glorious bodily return to earth: **“At**

that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory" (vs. 30). His second coming will be startlingly different than His first coming was. "He is speaking of His coming back to this earth, a return that will be so striking that it will leave no doubt as to His majesty... Jesus is speaking of the majestic appearance of a King, the very antithesis of His first coming, a lowly coming in the form of a servant" [Morris, 610]. The "great glory" and "power" with which Jesus will return will leave no doubt to anyone that it is He. A result of His coming will be that "the nations of the earth will mourn". The unsaved nations will mourn for themselves, at having rejected Christ, and having failed to serve Him.

His coming will be followed by a significant event: "And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other" (vs. 31). Those who serve the Lord will be taken from the tribulations of the earth, and gathered by the angels to Jesus. What exactly this means, and physically how it will all come about, is a mystery. But, it will no doubt be a glorious event for the children of God.



"What I paint, I paint for eternity. So it is with every man and woman in the exercise of godliness, it is of eternal concernment; we pray, we hear for eternity, we read, we sing, we watch, we fast, we live, we die for eternity; oh, how exactly, how diligently, should all be done!"

-- George Swinmock (1627-1673)



A Topical Study: Contentment

The Art of Divine Contentment, pt. 1 by Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

[Here, we begin a study by Thomas Watson, concerning being content with the life that our loving God has made for us.]—*Ed.*

**I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith
to be content (Philippians 4:11, AV).**

Introduction to the Text

These words are brought in to anticipate and prevent an objection. The apostle had, in the former verses, laid down many grave and heavenly exhortations; among the rest, to be **“careful for nothing,”** (Phil. 4:6). This does not exclude, 1. A prudential care. For, he that provides not for his own house, **“hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,”** (I Tim. 5:8). Nor, 2. A religious care: for we must give all diligence to make our calling and election sure (see II Pet. 1:10). But, 3. To exclude all anxious care about the issues and events of things; **“Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat,”** (Matt. 6:25); and in this sense it should be a Christian’s care not to be careful. The word in the Greek, **“careful”**, comes from a primitive that signifies, to cut the heart in pieces, a soul-dividing care: take heed of this. We are told to commit our way unto the Lord (see Ps. 37:5): the Hebrew word is, “Roll thy way upon the Lord.” It is our work to cast care (see I Pet. 5:7), and it is God’s work to take care. By our immoderate anxiety we take His work out of His hand.

Care, when it is either distrustful or distracting, is very dishonorable to God: it takes away His providence, as if He sat in heaven, and minded not what became of things here below; like a man that makes a clock, and then leaves it to go of itself. Immoderate care takes the heart off from better things; and usually while we are thinking how we shall do to live, we forget how to die. Care is a spiritual canker, that wastes and dispirits; and to what purpose? We may sooner by our care add a furlong to our grief, than a foot to our comfort. God threatens it as a curse: **“They shall eat their bread with carefulness,”** (Ezek. 12:19): better fast, than eat of that bread. **“Be careful for nothing”** (Phil. 4:6).

Now lest anyone should say, “Yea, Paul, you preach that to us, which you have scarce learned yourself; have you learned not to be careful?” The apostle seems tacitly to answer that, in the words of the text: **“I have**

learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." A speech worthy to be engraven upon our hearts, and to be written in letters of gold upon the crowns and diadems of princes. The text branches itself into these two general parts.

I. The scholar, Paul: **"I have learned."**

II. The lesson: **"In every state to be content."**

I begin with the first. I. The scholar, and his proficiency; **"I have learned."** Out of which I shall, in passing, observe by way of paraphrase, that the apostle does not say, "I have heard, that in every estate I should be content," but, **"I have learned."** Whence we learn, that it is not enough for Christians to hear their duty, but they must learn their duty. It is one thing to hear, and another thing to learn; as it is one thing to eat, and another thing to digest food. Paul was a practitioner. Christians hear much, but, it is feared, learn little. There were four sorts of ground in the parable in Luke 8:5-8, and but one good ground; an emblem of this truth: Many hearers, but few learners.

There are two things which keep us from learning:

1. Slighting what we hear. Christ is the pearl of price: when we esteem this pearl, we shall never learn, either its value, or its virtue. The gospel is a rare mystery; in one place it is called, **"The gospel of grace"** (Acts 20:24); in another, **"The gospel of glory"** (II Cor. 4:4), because in it, as in a transparent glass, the glory of God is resplendent: but he that has learned to contemn this mystery, will hardly ever learn to obey it. He that looks upon the things of heaven as things by-the-by, and perhaps the driving of a trade, or carrying on some politic design, to be of greater importance, this man is in the high road to damnation and will hardly ever learn the things of his peace. Who will learn that which he thinks is scarce worth learning?

2. Forgetting what we hear. If a scholar have his rules laid before him, and he forgets them as fast as he reads them, he will never learn (see James 1:23-24). Aristotle calls the memory the scribe of the soul; and Bernard calls it the stomach of the soul, because it hath a retentive faculty, and turns heavenly food into blood and spirits. We have great memories in other things. We remember that which is vain. Cyrus, it is said, could remember every soldier in his huge army. We remember injuries. This is to fill a precious cabinet with dung; but, as Jerome said, "How soon do we forget the sacred truths of God!" We are apt to forget three things—our faults, our friends, our instructions. Many Christians are like sieves; put a sieve into the water and it is full, but take it forth of the water, and all runs out: so, while they are hearing a sermon, they remember something; but, take the sieve out of the water, as soon as they are gone out of the church, all is forgotten. **"Let these sayings,"** said Christ, **"sink down into your ears"** (Luke 9:44): in the original it is, "Put these sayings into your ears"; as a man that would hide a jewel from being stolen, locks it up safe in his chest. Let them sink; the word must not only fall as dew that wets the leaf, but as rain which soaks to the root of the tree, and makes it fructify. Oh, how often does Satan, that fowl of the air, pick up the good seed that

is sown!

Use. Let me put you upon a serious trial. Some of you have heard much; you have lived forty, fifty, sixty years, under the blessed trumpet of the gospel; what have you learned? You may have heard a thousand sermons, and yet not have learned one. Search your consciences.

You have heard much against sin: are you hearers? Or are you scholars?

How many sermons have you heard against covetousness, that it is the root on which pride, idolatry, treason do grow? (see I Tim. 6:6–10). One calls it a metropolitan sin: it twists a great many sins in with it. There is hardly any sin, but covetousness is a main ingredient in it; and yet men are like the two daughters of the horse-leech, that cry, “Give, give.” How much have you heard against rash anger, that it is a short frenzy, a dry drunkenness; that it rests in the bosom of fools (see Eccl. 7:9); and upon the least occasion do your spirits begin to take fire? How much have you heard against swearing? It is Christ’s express mandate, “**Swear not at all,**” (Matt. 5:34). This sin of all others may be termed the “**unfruitful work of darkness,**” (Eph. 5:11). It is neither sweetened with pleasure, nor enriched with profit, the usual vermilion wherewith Satan paints sin. Swearing is forbidden with a curse. While the swearer shoots his oaths, like flying arrows, at God, to pierce His glory, God shoots a flying roll of curses against him (see Zech. 5:2–4): and do you make your tongue a racket, by which you toss oaths as tennis-balls? Do you sport yourselves with oaths as the Philistines did with Samson, which will at last pull the house about your ears? Alas! How have they learned what sin is, that have not yet learned to leave sin! Does he know what a viper is, that plays with it?

You have heard much of Christ; have you learned Christ? The Jews, as one said, carried Christ in their Bibles, but not in their hearts; “**their sound went into all the earth**” (see Rom. 10:18). The prophets and apostles were as trumpets, whose sound went abroad into the world; yet many thousands who heard the noise of these trumpets, had not learned Christ, “**They have not all obeyed,**” (Rom. 10:16).

A man may know much of Christ, and yet not learn Christ. Even the devils knew Christ (see Mark 1:34).

A man may preach Christ, and yet not learn Christ; as Judas and the false apostles (see Phil. 1:15).

A man may profess Christ, and yet not learn Christ. There are many professors in the world whom Christ will profess against (see Matt. 7:23).

Question. What is it then to learn Christ?

Answer. 1. To learn Christ is to be made like Christ; when the Divine characters of His holiness are engraven upon our hearts. “**We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image**” (II Cor. 3:18). There is a metamorphosis made; a sinner viewing Christ’s image in the glass of the gospel, is transformed into that image. Never did any man look upon Christ with a spiritual eye, but he went away quite changed. A true saint is a divine landscape or pic-

ture, where all the true beauties of Christ are portrayed in a lively manner and drawn forth. He hath the same spirit, the same judgment, the same will with Jesus Christ.

2. To learn Christ is to believe in Him, as our Lord and our God (see John 20:28). When we do not only believe God, but in God; which is the actual application of Christ to ourselves, and, as it were, the spreading of the sacred medicine of His blood upon our souls. You that have heard much of Christ, and yet cannot with an humble adherence say, "My Jesus"; be not offended if I tell you, the devil can say his creed as well as you.

3. To learn Christ is to live Christ. When we have Bible conversations, our lives, as rich diamonds, cast a sparkling luster in the church of God (see Phil. 1:27); and are, in some sense, parallel with the life of Christ, as the transcript with the original. So much for the first notion of the word.

This expression, "**I have learned,**" imports difficulty; it shows with what difficulty the apostle came by his contentment of mind; it did not spring up naturally. Paul did not come naturally by it, but he had learned it. It cost him many a prayer and tear; it was taught him by the Spirit. Whence we learn that, *good things are hard to obtain*. The business of religion is not so easy as most do imagine. "**I have learned,**" said Paul. Indeed you need not teach a man to sin; this is natural (see Ps. 58:3), and therefore easy; it comes as water out of a spring. It is an easy thing to be wicked; hell will be taken without storm, but religion must be learned. To cut the flesh is easy; but to prick a vein, and not to cut an artery, is hard. The trade of sin needs not to be learned, but the art of divine contentment is not achieved without holy industry; "**I have learned.**"

There are two reasons why there must be so much study and exertation.

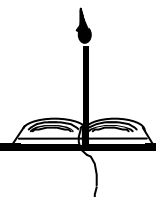
1. Because spiritual things are against nature. Everything in religion is antipodes to nature. There are in religion things to be believed and to be done, and both are against nature. Matters of faith, such as, for a man to be justified by the righteousness of another, to become a fool that he may be wise, to save all by losing all; these are against nature. And, matters of practice, such as, (1.) Self-denial: for a man to deny his own wisdom, and see himself blind; his own will, and have it melted into the will of God; plucking out the right eye, beheading and crucifying that sin, which is the favorite, and lies nearest to the heart; for a man to be dead to the world, and in the midst of want to abound; for him to take up the cross, and follow Christ, not only in golden, but bloody paths; to embrace religion when it is dressed in its plainest clothes, all the jewels of honor and preferment being pulled off: this is against nature, and therefore must be learned. (2.) Self-examination. For a man to take his heart, as a watch, all in pieces; to set up a spiritual inquisition, or court of conscience, and traverse things in his own soul; to take David's candle and lantern (see Ps. 119:105), and search for sin; nay, as judge, to pass the sentence upon himself (see II Sam. 24:17): this is against nature, and will not easily be attained to without learning. (3.) Self-reformation. To see a man, as

Caleb, of another spirit, walking antipodes to himself, the current of his life altered, and running into the channel of religion; this is wholly against nature. When a stone ascends, it is not a natural, but a violent motion: the motion of the soul heavenward is a violent motion, it must be learned; flesh and blood is not skilled in these things. Nature can no more cast out nature, than Satan can cast out Satan.

2. Because spiritual things are above nature. There are some things in nature that are hard to find out, as the causes of things, which are not learned without study. Aristotle, a great philosopher (whom some have called an eagle fallen from the clouds), yet could not find out the motion of the river Euripus, therefore he threw himself into it. What then are divine things, which are in a sphere above nature, and beyond all human disquisition, such as the Trinity, the hypostatical union, the mystery of faith to believe against hope? Only God's Spirit can light our candle. The apostle calls these "**the deep things of God**" (see I Cor. 2:10). The gospel is full of jewels, but they are locked up from sense and reason. The angels in heaven are searching into these sacred depths (see I Pet. 1:12).

Use. Let us beg the Spirit of God to teach us. We must be Divinely instructed. The eunuch could read, but he could not understand, till Philip joined himself to his chariot (see Acts 8:29). God's Spirit must join himself to our chariot; He must teach, or we cannot learn: "**All thy children shall be taught of the Lord**" (Isa. 54:13). A man may read the figure on the dial, but he cannot tell how the day goes, unless the sun shine upon the dial: we may read the Bible over, but we cannot learn to purpose till the spirit of God shine into our hearts (see II Cor. 4:6). Oh, implore this blessed Spirit; it is God's royal prerogative to teach. "**I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit**" (Isa. 48:17). Ministers may tell us our lesson; God only can teach us. We have lost both our hearing and eye-sight, therefore are very unfit to learn. Ever since Eve listened to the serpent, we have been deaf; and since she looked on the tree of knowledge, we have been blind: but when God comes to teach, He removes these impediments (see Isa. 35:5). We are naturally dead (see Eph. 2:1). Who will go about to teach a dead man? Yet behold, God undertakes to make dead men to understand mysteries! God is the grand Teacher. This is the reason the word preached works so differently upon men. Where two are in a pew, the one is wrought upon effectually, the other lies at the ordinances as a dead child at the breast, and gets no nourishment. What is the reason? Because the heavenly gale of the Spirit blows upon one, and not upon the other. One has the anointing of God, which teaches him all things (see I John 2:27); the other has it not. God's Spirit speaks sweetly, but irresistibly. In that heavenly doxology, none could sing the new song, but those who were sealed in their foreheads (see Rev. 14:1); reprobates could not sing it. Those that are skillful in the mysteries of salvation, must have the seal of the Spirit upon them. Let us make this our prayer, Lord: breathe Thy Spirit into Thy word. And we have a promise, which may add wings to prayer, "**If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?**" (Luke 11:13).

A Study in Wisdom: Job 1:4 (pt. 1)



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

Job 1:4 (pt. 1) - Job's Children, by Joseph Caryl

⁴And his sons went and feasted in their homes, every one his day, and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and drink with them.

This verse sets forth the third part of Job's happiness in respect of his outward estate. He had children, and many children in the second verse: here in the fourth we find all these children, sons and daughters agreeing and feasting one with another. We may note from the words four things concerning this feasting.

1. Their alacrity and cheerfulness, which most do observe out of that expression, they "**went and feasted**", which phrase in the Hebrew signifies the doing of a thing with cheerfulness and readiness.

2. Their unanimity: It is not said that some two or three of his sons feasted, but his sons indefinitely, all his sons: and not only his sons, but his daughters, the three sisters were called too. So that they were all of one mind, they all met together in love, though they were ten in number, they were but one in heart, the same in spirit. The place where they feasted, it was in their houses, they did not go to suspected places, but in their own private houses and families, where it was most convenient, and where they might celebrate those meetings with most security, both for their bodies and for their souls.

3. The frequency of that feasting, it was not only once, but "**everyone his day**". They did meet at every one of their houses upon a special and a set day. "**Everyone his day**", some make the sense thus: they feasted in their houses one every day, as if it had been a continual feast with them, they feasted all the week long; and they would seem to allow it by the moderation used in their feasting. But the words "**everyone his day**", note a course, a certain time wherein they did feast, not a continued feasting. Some conceive it was upon their birth days: whether that be so or no

there is nothing appears from the text, only it is said, They feasted **“everyone his day”**.

“And they sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.”

In that, we may observe three things:

1. The humanity of the brethren, they would not banquet alone and leave out their sisters, but they sent and called them.

2. The modesty of the sisters, that they would not come but upon special invitation, they were not forward of themselves, but they were sent and called for.

3. The end of this invitation, it was to eat and to drink with them. As under the notions of bread and water, or bread and wine, all necessities for food are comprised; so under the actions of eating and drinking, the whole business of feasting is contained.

There is nothing further in the words that we need stay longer in opening or clearing of them. We shall only give you some few notes out of them.

“His sons went and feasted in their houses, everyone his day.”

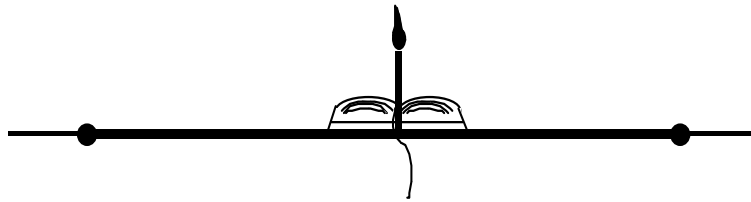
This is set forth as the third part of Jobs outward happiness. Then note we first that they love, and mutual agreement of children is one of the greatest blessings to a parent.

The love of children is the father’s blessings, and it is a great blessing. How many fathers have their hearts rent and divided by the rents and divisions that are amongst their children. It does blast and wither all the comfort the parent hath, to see that there is no agreement of love, no correspondency of affection amongst those that come all from the same bowels from the same loins. This is a blessing which was not (it seems) common in the world, no not in those times. Adam had not this blessing. Adam when he had only two sons, they could not agree, but one murdered the other. Abraham enjoyed not this blessing, when he had but two sons: Ishmael mocked Isaac. Isaac failed of this blessing, he had but two sons and one threatened to murder the other: **“The days of mourning for my father are at hand then will I slay my brother Jacob”** (Gen. 27.41). This was not Jacob’s blessing: he had twelve sons, there was one of them, Joseph the common butt of all his brethren’s envy; they did all spite him; the archers did shoot at him and grieved him sorely and hated him. They could not all agree; there were divisions among them. It is no ordinary blessing then. You see David a holy man, yet what divisions were there among his children: one murdereth another (Absolom caused Amnon to be murdered); Adonah rose up against Solomon (he could not bear it that his brother should have the crown). You see then that it is a blessing and it is an extraordinary blessing. Therefore, take notice of it, you that have an agreeing family, children that live together in love and unity. Look upon it as a special blessing from God.

Secondly, we may observe, that it is a very comely thing for brethren and sisters to live together in unity.

In Job's children, we have that of Psalm 133 fulfilled, "**Behold**" (he calls all to look upon it) "**how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity**" (Ps. 133:1). Such a sight may draw all eyes after it. Job's children were many in number, in heart but one, in love the same. And as there is nothing more troublesome, so nothing more uncomely and unnatural, than rents and divisions in a family.

Thirdly, we may note that it is lawful to use feasting. The children of Job here went and feasted at their houses, everyone his day. The Christians in the primitive churches had their love feasts. In a feast, there are two things: extraordinary provision, and extraordinary company, both are lawful. God hath given us the creature, not only for necessity, but for delight; and it is a clear argument that such using of the creatures in feasting, is lawful, because God hath made more creatures, serving for the delight of man, than He hath made for the necessity of man. If God had meant that men should do nothing but serve their own necessity and maintain their lives; so, as they might go on in their places and callings, one half of the creatures might have been spared. But God made nothing in vain. Therefore He is willing we should use the creatures for moderate delight. Abraham made a great feast at the weaning of Isaac; and Isaac makes a feast for Abimelech and Phicol, the chief captain of his army. And the like examples we have in many other places: And our Savior Christ himself was at a feast in Cana of Galilee, where when wine failed he supplied it by miracle.



"The way to make godly parishes, and godly countries, and godly kingdoms, is to make godly families."

-- George Swinnock (1627-1673)

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Christian Perspective

"How entirely do just views of God's Word and providence change the aspects of every thing. He, who has any right views, would rather be with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace, or with Daniel in the lions' den than with Nebuchadnezzar on the throne. Paul, bound with a chain, was far more to envied than Nero wearing the imperial purple. Paul and Silas were far from being the most unhappy men in Philippi the night their feet were in the stocks. There are two sides to every providence."

-- William Plumer (1802-1880)

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