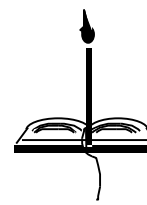


"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord... Isaiah 1:18

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Old Testament Study: Exodus 20



The Law and Grace,
by C. H. Mackintosh (1820-1896)

¹And God spake all these words, saying, ²"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³"Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

⁴"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; ⁶And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

⁷"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

⁸"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁰But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: ¹¹For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

12"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

13"Thou shalt not kill.

14"Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15"Thou shalt not steal.

16"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

17"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's."

18And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. 19And they said unto Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

20And Moses said unto the people, "Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

21And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

22And the Lord said unto Moses, "Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, 'Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. 23Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

24"An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. 25And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. 26Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.'" (KJV)

It is of the utmost importance to understand the true character and object of the moral law, as set forth in this chapter.

There is a tendency in the mind to confound the principles of law and grace, so that neither the one nor the other can be rightly understood. Law is shorn of its stern and unbending majesty; and grace is robbed of all its divine attractions. God's holy claims remain unanswered, and the sinner's deep and manifold necessities remain unreached by the anomalous system framed by those who attempt to mingle law and grace. In point of fact, they can never be made to coalesce, for they are as distinct as any two things can be. Law sets forth what man ought to be; grace exhibits what God is. How can these ever be wrought up into one system? How can the sinner ever be saved by a system made up of half law, half grace? Impossible. It must be either the one or the other.

The law has sometimes been termed "the transcript of the mind of God." This definition is entirely defective. Were we to term it a transcript of the mind of God as to what man ought to be, we should be nearer the truth. If I am to regard the ten commandments as the transcript of the mind of God, then, I ask, is there nothing in the mind of God save "**thou shalt**" and "**thou shalt not**"? Is there no grace? No mercy? No lovingkindness? Is God not to manifest what He is? Is He not to tell out the deep secrets of that love which dwells in His bosom? Is there nought in the divine character but stern requirement and prohibition? Were this so, we should have to say, "God is law" instead of "**God is love**" (1 John 4:8). But blessed be His name, there is more in His heart than could ever be wrapped up in the "ten words" uttered on the fiery mount. If I want to see what God is, I must look at Christ, "**for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily**" (Col. 2:9). "**The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**" (John 1:17). Assuredly there was a measure of truth in the law. It contained the truth as to what man ought to be. Like everything else emanating from God, it was perfect so far as it went—perfect for the object for which it was administered; but that object was not, by any means, to unfold, in the view of guilty sinners, the nature and character of God. There was no grace—no mercy. "**He that despised Moses' law died without mercy**" (Heb.

10:28). **“The man that doeth these things shall live by them”** (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5). **“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them”** (Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10). This was not grace. Indeed, mount Sinai was not the place to look for any such thing. There Jehovah revealed Himself in awful majesty, amid blackness, darkness, tempest, thunderings, and lightnings. These were not the attendant circumstances of an economy of grace and mercy; but they were well suited to one of truth and righteousness; and the law was that and nothing else.

In the law God sets forth what a man ought to be, and pronounces a curse upon him if he is not that. But then a man finds, when he looks at himself in the light of the law, that he actually is the very thing which the law condemns. How then is he to get life by it? It proposes life and righteousness as the ends to be attained by keeping it; but it proves, at the very outset, that we are in a state of death and unrighteousness. We want the very things at the beginning which the law proposes to be gained at the end. How, therefore, are we to gain them? In order to do what the law requires, I must have life; and in order to be what the law requires, I must have righteousness; and if I have not both the one and the other, I am **“cursed.”** But the fact is, I have neither. What am I to do? This is the question. Let those who **“desire to be teachers of the law”** furnish an answer. Let them furnish a satisfactory reply to an upright conscience, bowed down under the double sense of the spirituality and inflexibility of the law and its own hopeless carnality.

The truth is, as the apostle teaches us, **“the law entered that the offence might abound”** (Rom. 5:20). This shows us, very distinctly, the real object of the law. It came in by the way in order to set forth the exceeding sinfulness of sin. (see Rom. 7:13). It was, in a certain sense, like a perfect mirror let down from heaven to reveal to man his moral derangement. If I present myself with deranged habit before a mirror, it shows me the derangement, but does not set it

right. If I measure a crooked wall, with a perfect plumb-line, it reveals the crookedness, but does not remove it. If I take out a lamp on a dark night, it reveals to me all the hindrances and disagreeables in the way, but it does not remove them. Moreover, the mirror, the plumb-line, and the lamp, do not *create* the evils which they severally point out; they neither *create* nor *remove*, but simply *reveal*. Thus it is with the law; it does not create the evil in man’s heart, neither does it remove it; but, with unerring accuracy, it reveals it.

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Yea, I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet’” (Rom. 7:7). He does not say that he would not have had “lust.” No; but merely that **“he had not known it.”** The “lust” was there; but he was in the dark about it until the law, as “the candle of the Almighty,” shone in upon the dark chambers of his heart and revealed the evil that was there. Like a man in a dark room, who may be surrounded with dust and confusion, but he cannot see aught thereof by reason of the darkness, let the beams of the sun dart in upon him, and he quickly perceives all. Do the sunbeams create the dust? Surely not. The dust is there, and they only detect and reveal it. This is a simple illustration of the effect of the law. It judges man’s character and condition. It proves him to be a sinner and shuts him up under the curse. It comes to judge what he is, and curses him, if he is not what it tells him he ought to be.

It is, therefore, a manifest impossibility that anyone can get life and righteousness by that which can only curse him; and unless the condition of the sinner, and the character of the law are totally changed, it can do nought else but curse him. It makes no allowance for infirmities, and knows nothing of sincere, though imperfect, obedience. Were it to do so, it would not be what it is, **“holy, just, and good.”** It is just because the law is what it is, that the sinner cannot get life by it. If he could get life by it, it would not be perfect, or else he would not be a sinner. It is impossible that a sinner can get life by a perfect law, for inasmuch as it is perfect, it must needs condemn him. Its absolute perfectness makes manifest and seals

man's absolute ruin and condemnation. **"Therefore by deeds of law shall no flesh living be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin"** (Rom. 3:20). He does not say, "by the law is sin," but only **"the knowledge of sin."** **"For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law"** (Rom. 5:13). Sin was there, and it only needed law to develop it in the form of **"transgression."** It is as if I say to my child, "you must not touch that knife." My very prohibition reveals the tendency in his heart to do his own will. It does not create the tendency, but only reveals it.

The apostle John says that **"sin is lawlessness"** (1 John 3:4). The word "transgression" does not develop the true idea of the Spirit in this passage. In order to have "transgression" I must have a definite rule or line laid down. Transgression means a passing across a prohibited line; such a line I have in the law. I take any one of its prohibitions, such as, **"thou shalt not kill," "thou shalt not commit adultery," "thou shalt not steal."** Here, I have a rule or line set before me; but I find I have within me the very principles against which these prohibitions are expressly directed. Yea, the very fact of my being told not to commit murder, shows that I have murder in my nature. There would be no necessity to tell me not to do a thing which I had no tendency to do; but the exhibition of God's will, as to what I ought to be, makes manifest the tendency of my will to be what I ought not. This is plain enough, and is in full keeping with the whole of the apostolic reasoning on the point.

Many, however, will admit that we cannot get life by the law; but they maintain, at the same time, that the law is our rule of life. Now, the apostle declares that **"as many as are of works of law are under the curse"** (Gal. 3:10). It matters not who they are, if they occupy the ground of law, they are, of necessity, under the curse. A man may say, "I am regenerate, and, therefore, not exposed to the curse." This will not do. If regeneration does not take one off the ground of law, it cannot take him beyond the range of the curse of the law. If the Christian be under the former, he is, of necessity, exposed

to the latter. But what has the law to do with regeneration? Where do we find anything about it in Exodus 20?

The law has but one question to put to a man—a brief, solemn, pointed question, namely, "are you what you ought to be?" If he answer in the negative, it can but hurl its terrible anathema at him and slay him. And who will so readily and emphatically admit that, in himself, he is anything but what he ought to be, as the really regenerate man? Wherefore, if he is under the law, he must, inevitably, be under the curse. The law cannot possibly lower its standard; nor yet amalgamate with grace. Men do constantly seek to lower its standard; they feel that they cannot get up to it, and they, therefore, seek to bring it down to them; but the effort is in vain: it stands forth in all its purity, majesty, and stern inflexibility, and will not accept a single hair's breadth short of perfect obedience; and where is the man, regenerate or unregenerate, that can undertake to produce that? It will be said, "we have perfection in Christ." True; but that is not by the law, but by grace; and we cannot possibly confound the two economies. Scripture largely and distinctly teaches that we are not justified by the law; nor is the law our rule of life. That which can only curse can never justify; and that which can only kill can never be a rule of life. As well might a man attempt to make a fortune by a deed of bankruptcy filed against him.

If my reader will turn to the fifteenth of Acts, he will see how the attempt to put Gentile believers under the law, as a rule of life, was met by the Holy Ghost: **"There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses"** (Acts 15:5). This was nothing else than the hiss of the old serpent, making itself heard in the dark and depressing suggestion of those early legalists. But let us see how it was met by the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost, and the unanimous voice of the twelve apostles and the whole Church. **"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, 'Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should**

hear,”—what? Was it the requirements and the curses of the law of Moses? No; blessed be God, these are not what He would have falling on the ears of helpless sinners. Hear what, then? **“Should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe.”** (Acts 15:7). This was what suited the nature and character of God. He never would have troubled men with the dismal accents of requirement and prohibition. These Pharisees were not His messengers; far from it. They were not the bearers of glad tidings, nor the publishers of peace, and, therefore, their **“feet”** were aught but **“beautiful”** in the eyes of One who only delights in mercy.

“Now, therefore,” continues the apostle, **“why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”** (Acts 15:10). This was strong, earnest language. God did not want **“to put a yoke upon the neck”** of those whose hearts had been set free by the gospel of peace. He would rather exhort them to stand fast in the liberty of Christ, and not be **“entangled again with the yoke of bondage”** (Gal. 5:1). He would not send those whom He had received to His bosom of love, to be terrified by the **“blackness, and darkness, and tempest”**, of **“the mount that might be touched”** (Heb. 12:18). How could we ever admit the thought that those whom God had received in grace He would rule by law? Impossible. **“We believe,”** says Peter, **“that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they”** (Acts 15:11). Both the Jews, who had received the law, and the Gentiles, who never had, were now to be **“saved through grace.”** And not only were they to be **“saved”** by grace, but they were to **“stand”** in grace (see Rom. 5:2), and to **“grow in grace”** (2 Pet. 3:18). To teach anything else was to **“tempt God.”** Those Pharisees were subverting the very foundations of the Christian faith; and so are all those who seek to put believers under the law. There is no evil or error more abominable in the sight of the Lord than legalism. Harken to the strong language—the accents of righteous indignation—which fall from the Holy Ghost, in reference to those teachers of the law: **“I would they were even cut off**

which trouble you” (Gal. 5:12).

And, let me ask, are the thoughts of the Holy Ghost changed, in reference to this question? Has it ceased to be a tempting of God to place the yoke of legality upon a sinner's neck? Is it now in accordance with His gracious will that the law should be read out in the ears of sinners? Let my reader reply to these inquiries in the light of the fifteenth of Acts, and the epistle to the Galatians. These scriptures, were there no other, are amply sufficient to prove that God never intended that the **“Gentiles should hear the word”** of the law. Had He so intended, He would, assuredly, have **“made choice”** of someone to proclaim it in their ears. But no; when He sent forth His **“fiery law,”** He spoke only in *one* tongue; but when He proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation, through the blood of the Lamb, He spoke in the language **“of every nation under heaven.”** He spoke in such a way as that **“every man in his own tongue wherein he was born,”** might hear the sweet story of grace (Acts 2:1-11).

Further, when He was giving forth from mount Sinai the stern requirements of the covenant of works, He addressed Himself exclusively to *one* people. His voice was only heard within the narrow enclosures of the Jewish nation; but when, on the plains of Bethlehem, **“the angel of the Lord”** declared **“good tidings of great joy,”** he added those characteristic words, **“which shall be to all people”** (Luke 2:10). And, again, when the risen Christ was sending forth His heralds of salvation, His commission ran thus, **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15; Luke 2:10). The mighty tide of grace which had its source in the bosom of God, and its channel in the blood of the Lamb, was designed to rise, in the resistless energy of the Holy Ghost, far above the narrow enclosures of Israel, and roll through the length and breadth of a sin-stained world. **“Every creature”** must hear, **“in his own tongue,”** the message of peace, the word of the gospel, the record of salvation, through the blood of the cross.

Finally, that nothing might be lacking to prove to our poor legal hearts that mount Sinai was not, by any means, the spot

where the deep secrets of the bosom of God were told out, the Holy Ghost has said, both by the mouth of a prophet and an apostle, **“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!”** (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15). But of those who sought to be teachers of the law the same Holy Ghost has said, **“I would they were even cut off that trouble you”** (Gal. 5:12).

Thus, then, it is obvious that the law is neither the ground of life to the sinner nor the rule of life to the Christian. Christ is both the one and the other. He is our life and He is our rule of life. The law can only curse and slay. Christ is our life and righteousness. He became a curse for us by hanging on a tree. He went down into the place where the sinner lay—into the place of death and judgment—and having, by His death, entirely discharged all that was or could be against us, He became, in resurrection, the source of life and the ground of righteousness to all who believe in His name. Having this life and righteousness in Him, we are called to walk, not merely as the law directs, but to **“walk even as He walked”** (1 John 2:6). It will hardly be deemed needful to assert that it is directly contrary to Christian ethics to kill, commit adultery, or steal. But were a Christian to shape his way according to these commands or according to the entire decalogue, would he yield the rare and delicate fruits which the Epistle to the Ephesians sets forth? Would the ten commandments ever cause a thief to give up stealing, and go to work that he might have to give? Would they ever transform a thief into a laborious and liberal man? Assuredly not. The law says, **“thou shalt not steal”**; but does it say, “go and give to him that needeth”—“go feed, clothe, and bless your enemy”—“go gladden by your benevolent feelings and your beneficent acts the heart of him who only and always seeks your hurt”? By no means; and yet, were I under the law, as a rule, it could only curse me and slay me. How is this, when the standard in the New Testament is so much higher? Because I am weak and the law gives me no strength and shows me no mercy. The law *demand*s strength from one that has none, and *curses* him if he cannot display it.

The gospel *gives* strength to one that has none, and blesses him in the exhibition of it. The law proposes life as the *end* of obedience. The gospel gives life as the only proper *ground* of obedience.

But that I may not weary the reader with arguments, let me ask if the law be, indeed, the rule of a believer's life, where are we to find it so presented in the New Testament? The inspired apostle evidently had no thought of its being the rule when he penned the following words: **“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to *this rule*, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God”** (Gal. 6:15-16). What **“rule”**? The law? No, but the **“new creation.”** Where shall we find this in Exodus 20? It speaks not a word about **“new creation.”** On the contrary, it addresses itself to man as he is, in his natural or old-creation state, and puts him to the test as to what he is really able to do. Now if the law were the rule by which believers are to walk, why does the apostle pronounce his benediction on those who walk by another rule altogether? Why does he not say, “as many as walk according to the rule of the ten commandments”? Is it not evident, from this one passage, that the Church of God has a higher rule by which to walk? Unquestionably. The ten commandments, though forming, as all true Christians admit, a part of the canon of inspiration, could never be the rule of life to one who has, through infinite grace, been introduced into the new creation—one who has received new life in Christ.

But some may ask, “Is not the law perfect? And, if perfect, what more would you have?” The law is divinely perfect. Yea, it is the very perfection of the law which causes it to curse and slay those who are not perfect, if they attempt to stand before it, **“The law is spiritual, but I am carnal”** (Rom. 7:14). It is utterly impossible to form an adequate idea of the infinite perfectness and spirituality of the law. But then this perfect law coming in contact with fallen humanity—this spiritual law coming in contact with **“the carnal mind,”** could only **“work wrath”** and **“enmity.”** (Rom. 4:15; 8:7). Why? Is it

because the law is not perfect? No, but because it is, and man is a sinner. If man were perfect he would carry out the law in all its spiritual perfectness; and even in the case of true believers, though they still carry about with them an evil nature, the apostle teaches us **“that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”** (Rom. 8:4). **“He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law”**—**“love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law”** (Rom. 13:8,10). If I love a man, I shall not steal his property—nay, I shall seek to do him all the good I can. All this is plain and easily understood by the spiritual mind; but it leaves entirely untouched the question of the law, whether as the ground of life to a sinner or the rule of life to the believer.

If we look at the law, in its two grand divisions, it tells a man to love God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind; and to love his neighbour as himself. This is the sum of the law. This, and not a tittle less, is what the law demands. But where has this demand ever been responded to by any member of Adam’s fallen posterity? Where is the man who could say he loves God after such a fashion? **“The carnal mind”** (i.e., the mind which we have by nature) **“is enmity against God”** (Rom. 8:7). Man hates God and His ways. God came, in the Person of Christ, and showed Himself to man—showed Himself, not in the overwhelming brightness of His majesty, but in all the charm and sweetness of perfect grace and condescension. What was the result? Man hated God. **“Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father”** (John 15:24). But, it may be said, “man ought to love God.” No doubt, and he deserves death and eternal perdition if he does not. But can the law produce this love in man’s heart? Was that its design? By no means, **“for the law worketh wrath”** (Rom. 4:15). The law finds man in a state of enmity against God; and, without ever altering that state—for that was not its province—it commands him to love God with all his heart, and curses him if he does not. It was not the province of the law to alter or improve man’s nature; nor yet could it impart any power to carry out its righteous demands.

It said, **“this do, and thou shalt live”** (Luke 10:28). It commanded man to love God. It did not reveal what God was to man, even in his guilt and ruin; but it told man what he ought to be toward God. This was dismal work. It was not the unfolding of the powerful attractions of the divine character, producing in man true repentance toward God, melting his icy heart, and elevating his soul in genuine affection and worship. No; it was an inflexible command to love God; and, instead of producing love, it **“worked wrath”**; not because God ought not to be loved, but because man was a sinner.

Again, **“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”** Can **“the natural man”** do this? Does he love his neighbour as himself? Is this the principle which obtains in the chambers of commerce, the exchanges, the banks, the marts, the fairs, and the markets of this world? Alas! no. Man does not love his neighbour as he loves himself. No doubt he ought; and if he were right, he would. But, then, he is all wrong—totally wrong—and unless he is **“born again”** of the word and the Spirit of God, he cannot **“see nor enter the kingdom of God”** (John 3:3,5). The law cannot produce this new birth. It kills “the old man,” but does not, and cannot, create “the new.” As an actual fact we know that the Lord Jesus Christ embodied, in His glorious Person, both God and our neighbour, inasmuch as He was, according to the foundation-truth of the Christian religion, **“God manifest in the flesh”** (I Tim. 3:16). How did man treat Him? Did he love Him with all his heart, or as himself? The very reverse. He crucified Him between two thieves, having previously preferred a murderer and a robber to that blessed One who had gone about doing good—who had come forth from the eternal dwelling-place of light and love—Himself the very living personification of that light and love—whose bosom had ever heaved with purest sympathy with human need—whose hand had ever been ready to dry the sinner’s tears and alleviate his sorrows. Thus we stand and gaze upon the cross of Christ, and behold in it an unanswerable demonstration of the fact that it is not within the range of man’s nature or capacity to keep the law.

It is peculiarly interesting to the spiritual mind, after all that

has passed before us, to observe the relative position of God and the sinner at the close of this memorable chapter. **“And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel an altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings, and thy peaceofferings, thy sheep and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon’”** (ver. 22-26).

Here we find man not in the position of *a doer*, but of *a worshipper*; and this, too, at the close of Exodus 20. How plainly this teaches us that the atmosphere of mount Sinai is not that which God would have the sinner breathing; that it is not the proper meeting-place between God and man. **“In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee”** (Ex. 20:24). How unlike the terrors of the fiery mount is that spot where Jehovah records *His name*, whither He **“comes”** to **“bless”** His worshipping people!

But, further, God will meet the sinner at an altar without a hewn stone or a step—a place of worship which requires no human workmanship to erect, or human effort to approach. The former could only “pollute,” and the latter could only display human “nakedness”: an admirable type of the meeting-place where God meets the sinner now, even the Person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ, where all the claims of law, of justice, and of conscience, are perfectly answered! Man has, in every age, and in every clime, been prone, in one way or another, to lift up his tool in the erection of his altar, or to approach thereto by steps of his own making. But the issue of all such attempts has been “pollution” and “nakedness.” **“We all do fade as a leaf, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”** (Isa. 64:6)? Who will presume to approach God clad in a garment of **“filthy rags”**? Or who will stand to worship with a revealed **“nakedness”**? What can be more preposterous than to think of approaching God in a way which neces-

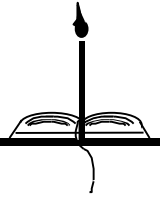
sarily involves either pollution or nakedness? And yet thus it is in every case in which human effort is put forth to open the sinner’s way to God. Not only is there no need of such effort, but defilement and nakedness are stamped upon it. God has come down so very near to the sinner, even in the very depths of his ruin, that there is no need for his lifting up the tool of legality, or ascending the steps of self-righteousness—yea, to do so, is but to expose his uncleanness and his nakedness.

Such are the principles with which the Holy Ghost closes this most remarkable section of inspiration. May they be indelibly written upon our hearts, that so we may more clearly and fully understand the essential difference between *law* and *grace*.

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



A Classic Study: Job 1:7-8 (part 2)



[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 1:7-8 (part 2) - Satan's Answer to God, by Joseph Caryl (1644)

⁷And the Lord said unto Satan, "Whence comest thou?" Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." ⁸And the Lord said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (KJV)

Now let us examine Satan's answer: **"Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, 'From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it'"** (vs. 7).

"If I am enquired" (says Satan), "whence I come, I answer, **'I come from walking up and down in the earth, from going to and fro in it.'**"

Here again it may be questioned as to how Satan speaks to the Lord (just as before it was questioned about the Lord's speaking to Satan).

The speaking of Satan and all spirits is according to the manner before explained of God's speaking. So, Angels speak one to another or to God when they direct or intend such or such things to be known. Like a thought, a conception in the mind is a word in the mind; so the directing or putting forth, or an intending to put forth that word or that thought, is the speaking of the mind. That is how the the mind speaks. So we know in ourselves: As a man meditates he conceives such

and such things; he forms them all in his spirit under some words into such notions, and he can put forth these as he desires, though he does not speak. And so we are said often in Scripture to speak to God in our hearts, when the mouth does not speak at all, as Moses, in Ex. 14:15, is said to **"cry unto God"**: That was nothing but the directing or actual intending of such and such secret desires unto God; that was **"crying unto God."** So it is said of Hannah, in I Sam. 1:13, that **"she spake to the Lord in her heart."**

After this manner do Angels and spirits speak. As we can speak to God in our spirits, by our hearts, when we intend or lift up such and such thoughts to God, so they speak in the same manner by making known and revealing so much of their minds to God, as they desire He should take notice of. For if a man have such and such thoughts, and only reserve them to himself, he is said to speak to himself, to speak within himself. So Angels, though they have such and such thoughts, they do speak to themselves, and not to God, while they keep those thoughts within themselves. Despite that God knows all thoughts, yet an Angel is said to speak no more to God than he does intentionally and obediently (as some express it) make known and declare to God his desire, that God may take notice of it.

So here Satan answers and says to God, or he speaks to God these things, that is, he does actually intend that God should know this much of him what he had been about, that he was come now, **"from going to and fro in the earth, from walking up and down in it."**

"From going to and fro...": It may be doubted how Satan can be said to **"go to and fro in the earth, and to walk up and down in it"**, whereas it is express in the Epistle of Jude, vs. 6, that **"the Angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."** Now if Satan, if the Angels that fell be in **"chains"**, and in **"chains of everlasting darkness"**, and reserved to the judgment of the great day.

How does Satan here speak of himself as being at liberty, going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it?

I answer: though the devil goes up and down, yet he is ever in **“chains”**. He is in a *double chain*, even when he goes and circuits the whole earth abroad, he is in a *chain of justice*, and in a *chain of Providence*. He is in a chain of justice, that is, under the *wrath of God*, and he is in a chain of Providence, that is under the *eye of God*, he can go no further than God gives him leave, than God lets out and lengthens his chain. So still, he is reserved under chains, even chains of darkness. When he goes abroad, he goes like a prisoner with his fetters on his heels.

But it may be here inquired further, if Satan be thus under the wrath of God, and be a condemned spirit, if he be in such darkness, how can he intend or attempt, plot or execute those designs of temptation for the overthrow of souls, and disturbance of the Churches of God throughout the world. Will not such torment and horror of darkness, disable and unfit him for such curious methods of doing mischief? Can he have his thoughts upon anything but upon his own woeful condition and miserable estate?

For this likewise (to clear it) we may conceive, that Satan, although he be at the present under the *wrath of God*, yet he is not under the fullness of the *wrath of God*, he is not yet in *extremity*, he is not yet in the *degree* of judgment which hereafter he shall receive. Satan is now as full of *discontent* as he can be, but he is not so full of *torment* as he can be. This we see expressly in Matt. 8:29, where the devils say to Christ, **“Art thou come to torment us before our time?”**, noting that there will be a time wherein they shall have more torment, their fill of torment; such torment, as what they now endure, compared with it, may pass for no torment, if not for pleasure. Then they shall drink the very dregs of the cup of God’s wrath, now they do (as it were) but sip or taste it. The devils, though they are already cast down from their glorious estate, yet they are not cast into such a woeful state as hereafter they shall be; therefore they may walk up and own in the world, and incessantly set themselves about the

destruction of others.

For the words, **“From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it,”** Satan here speaks like a prince. Therefore some conceive that this is the prince of devils that is here mentioned in this text—Beelzebub the chief of the devils—for here he speaks of himself as some great prince that had gone about his countries to view his provinces, his kingdoms and cities. “I come,” says he, “from visiting my several places and dominions, **‘I come from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it’**”

These expressions are not to be understood properly, for properly spirits such as Satan is cannot be said **“to go or to walk.”** *A spirit moves*, that is proper to a spirit: but properly a spirit does not walk or go that is proper only to bodies. But the word which we translate, **“from going to and fro,”** is translated by some, **“from compassing the earth,”** or **“from compassing about in the world,”** and then it is proper: the original signifying to compass or circuit about by any kind of motion as well as by going.

Further, for the understanding of Satan’s **“going to and fro in the earth”**: We must not conceive that this is all that Satan does, to walk up and down in the world, to go to and fro. He is no idle peripatetic, but by going to and fro in the earth is noted.

First, consider *the exact discovery which Satan makes of all things in the earth*. The wording signifies to inquire, to search diligently into a thing. It is not a bare going about, but it is a going about as a spy, to search, to inquire, to observe and consider diligently all things as one passes along. The same word is used in Dan. 12:4 for discoursing; we translate it thus: **“Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.”** Now, we may wonder how knowledge should be increased by running to and fro, up and down. They that would increase knowledge should rather sit still and consider, and debate things; but the word (so some translate it) signifies to discourse or dispute of things: They shall discourse or go about to inquire into things and

knowledge shall be increased. Thus Satan's going to and fro in the earth is a discoursing upon everything, a disputing upon every point and person.

He does as it were debate every man's condition as he goes, and every man's estate, every man's temper, and every man's calling; he considers what is fittest to be done against him, and how he may assault him with greatest advantage. That is the running or going to and fro which is here meant in the text: It is a going to and fro to increase his knowledge, and inform himself of all things as he goes.

The same word is used concerning the good Angels, in Zech. 1:10. It is said there, that they were sent **"to walk to and fro through the earth"**; it was not a bare passing through the earth, but a curious observing and prying into all things as they went. We translate it as walking to and fro, but it is a walking as to bring God in intelligence, for these were sent out as Christ's intelligencers, to bring Him in a report of the state of things abroad: for so there in the vision it is expressed after the manner of men. Though Christ needs not to inform Him about the estate of His Church and people, yet He alludes to the custom of princes, who maintain intelligencers in all courts and kingdoms, to advise them how the affairs of other nations are transacted. The very same original word is used of God Himself in Zech. 4:10: **"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth."** He is His own intelligencer, exactly discovering and taking notice of everything that is done in the world. So then, this is the meaning of **"I have been going to and fro in the earth," says Satan**, that is, "I have fully and thoroughly taken notice of all passages, of all persons in all places, of all conditions and sorts of men. That is the thing I have been doing." Thus, Mr. Broughton translates, **"From searching to and fro in the earth"**, noting his exactness of inquiry in his travels.

Then secondly, it notes the *unquietness of Satan*. He is unquiet, a restless spirit, and being cast out of Heaven, he can rest nowhere. A soul that is once displaced and out of the favor of God, has no place to repose in afterward. Now

says he, all my business is walking to and fro, going up and down, *Satan has no rest*. As the sentence of Cain was, in Gen. 4, when God had cast him out of His presence, **"Thou shalt be a fugitive and a vagabond"**: You shall do nothing but run up and down the world as long as you live. Satan is such a fugitive, a vagabond, one that runs up and down in the world; he is an unsettled, an unquiet spirit. *They who are once departed from God, can never find rest in any creature*, but running to and fro is their condition and their curse.

Thirdly, some understand it thus, *that Satan makes (as it were) a recreation of his tempting and drawing men to hell*. Satan cannot possibly, in a proper sense, take any comfort or be refreshed, but as one does well express it, he himself being lost, undone and damned, seeks to comfort himself by undoing and damning others. It is a joy to some to have companions in sorrow. All Satan's delight (if we may conceive he has any delight) is in this, in making others as bad and miserable as himself. Therefore it may be he calls his trade of seduction and destruction, **"walking up and down in the earth"**, as men are said to walk up and down for refreshing and recreation; he speaks of it, not as of some toilsome hard journey, but as of walking for delight. But I conceive the former to be more proper.

Take two or three notes from this:

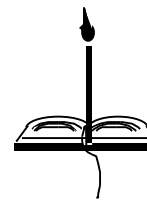
First, here we may observe, *that there is no place in the world that can secure a man from temptation, or be a sanctuary from Satan's assault*. For Satan goes to and fro through the earth; he is a ubiquitous; he stays nowhere but runs everywhere. It is folly to think one can shut oneself up in walls from the temptations of Satan. Cloisters are as open to Satan as the open field. **"Satan walks to and fro through the earth."**

Secondly, we may note here *the diligence of Satan; Satan is very active to do mischief*. **"He walks to and fro"**, as Peter expresses it in I Pet. 5:8: **"[Satan] goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."** There is his diligence, and there is his intent. Satan speaks nothing of his intent here; he conceals that. He speaks only as if he went about like a pilgrim walking through the earth; his main busi-

ness that he went about to devour souls is kept in silence; but the Holy Ghost unmasks him and discovers the design of his walking to and fro: **“he seeks whom he may devour.”** If Satan be thus diligent, going about to tempt, we ought to be as diligent standing always upon our watch, to prevent his temptations. Mr. Latimer, in one of his sermons where he taxes clergy, especially the Bishops of those times, for their idleness, proposes to them the example of the Prophets and Apostles and of Christ Himself. Their diligence in going about to preach should quicken those idlers; but (says he) if you will not follow their example, follow the example of Satan: he goes about in his diocese to and fro continually. Take example from him in doing evil, on how to do good; we may take example thus far from Satan, to be as forward to do good as he is to do hurt, to be as watchful against him as he is watchful against us. If this be his business, to go to and fro through the earth, and his intent be to devour souls, then wherever we go in the world up and down, we ought to be careful to keep our own souls and gain the souls of others.

Thirdly, we may observe from it, *that Satan is confined in his business to the earth.* He can get no farther than the earth or to the aerial part; he is called the *prince of the air* (Eph. 2:2). Satan being once cast out of heaven can never get into heaven evermore. There is no tempter in heaven; there is no serpent shall ever come into the *celestial Paradise*; there was one in the earthly Paradise, but there shall never be any in the celestial. Therefore when we are once beyond the earth, we are beyond the reach of all temptations. We are then at rest from Satan’s snares and practices, as well as from our own labors.

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



New Testament Study: Matthew 26:69-27:10

Matthew 26:69-75 - Peter’s Denial, by Scott Sperling

⁶⁹Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

⁷⁰But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

⁷¹Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

⁷²He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

⁷³After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

⁷⁴Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!”

Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

The previous section concluded with the beginning of Jesus’ physical suffering, as He was buffeted and mocked by the Sanhedrin (see vs. 67-68). Now in this section, Jesus is denied three times by His most faithful disciple. Appropriately, Matthew juxtaposes the two episodes, for Peter’s denial of Christ is part of Jesus’ sufferings.

All four of the Gospel writers in the Bible recount this episode. Matthew chooses to relate all three of Peter’s denials

together in his Gospel, though they took place at different times during the evening (see John 16:16ff; Luke 22:58). There are other differences in the accounts Peter's denials in the Gospels, mainly as to who the speakers were. These differences can be explained by the fact that there were a number of people in the area where Peter was, and it is probable that multiple people spoke up, inquiring if Peter knew Jesus. Remember that Peter was pretty much Jesus' right-hand man, nearly always with Him as He ministered. Those who saw Jesus, probably saw Peter with Him.

Peter's sin of denying Christ did not occur spontaneously, out of the blue. As we look back at Matthew's account of the events of the evening of Jesus', and even earlier events, we can see things that Peter did and said that led up to his denials of Christ. For instance, when Jesus first laid out to the disciples God's plan of Jesus' suffering, dying, and being raised to life, Peter responded by **"rebuking"** his Lord, saying, **"Never, Lord!... This shall never happen to you!"** (Matt. 16:22). Peter clearly did not fully accept God's plan that Christ would suffer and die for mankind. This is also reflected by Peter pulling his sword in an attempt to prevent the arrest of Jesus.

Another indication in Peter's behavior that lead up to his denying Christ was his over-confidence concerning his loyalty to Jesus. Earlier in the evening, when Jesus predicted that all of the disciples would **"fall away"**, Peter, rather than carefully considering what Jesus was saying, impulsively answered: **"Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will"** (Matt. 26:33). "Peter, the bold, venturesome, straightforward disciple, fell by cowardice and lying; as Moses the meek by anger, and Solomon the wise by folly. Often our most flagrant transgressions arise from parts of our character we have not inspected" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 559].

Yet another indication in Peter's behavior that lead up to his denying Christ was his spiritual negligence in the Garden of Gethsemane. Rather than being in watchful prayer, and deep spiritual meditation in preparation for the momentous events that Jesus said would occur that very evening, Peter

slept. This spiritual negligence left Peter spiritually unprepared for the challenges he would face that evening.

We can all, of course, learn from the path that Peter took which led to his great sin. We must seek to understand, and buy into God's will. We must seek to understand our own weaknesses. We must fervently seek God in prayer for guidance and strength, especially when momentous events are about to occur, or important decisions need to be made.

It is significant that all four Gospels relate the episode where one of the Christian religion's heroes experiences a major fall into sin. This is not the first time in the Bible where the weaknesses, and even major sins of its heroes, are related to us. We are told of David's descent into adultery, and even murder (as he tried to cover his sin of adultery). We are told of Solomon's descent into idolatry, and lascivious living. The relating of these episodes speaks to the truth of the Bible. The Biblical writers speak truth, even when the truth tars and mars its heroes. "[Peter's denial of Christ] is one of those events, which indirectly prove the truth of the Bible. If the Gospel had been a mere invention of man, we should never have been told that one of its principal preachers was once so weak and erring, as to deny his Master" [Ryle, 374-375]. "It is remarkable and significant that the story of the denials should have been recorded at all. When the Gospels were written, Peter was regarded as the leading apostle, the chief man in the church. It would have been very natural to pass over in silence this man's fall from grace. But all four of our Gospels recount it. They do not do this by way of demoting Peter, for in due course he repented, was reinstated, and continued in a position of leadership. But the church knew that its leader was a fallible sinner like all others and that he had had a dreadful fall. The church knew, too, that he had repented and by the grace of God had gone on to greater and better things" [Morris, 687-688].

Yes, Peter, by the grace of God, went on to greater and better things. We must all remember, and learn from this: those godly men and women who stumble into sin, can and will be forgiven by God. They must also be forgiven by men, and

be allowed by man (as they are allowed by God) to greatly serve God, even after serious sin. “Let us mark this history, and store it up in our minds. It teaches us plainly that the best of saints are only men, and men encompassed with many infirmities. A man may be converted to God, have faith, and hope, and love towards Christ, and yet be overtaken in a fault, and have awful falls. It shews us the necessity of humility. So long as we are in the body we are in danger. The flesh is weak, and the devil is active. We must never think, “I cannot fall.” It points out to us the duty of charity towards erring saints. We must not set down men as graceless reprobates, because they occasionally stumble and err. We must remember Peter, and **‘restore them in the spirit of meekness’** (Gal. 6:1)” [Ryle, 375-376]. Sadly, these days, though the religion we profess is based on forgiveness, we are very slow to forgive men of God for significant sins. Those who have sinned, even significantly, can be restored by God’s forgiveness, and can be still mightily used for His purposes. We must remember this, and not be an obstacle to the work that God wants to do in the life of a sinner.

Now to the text: **“Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. ‘You also were with Jesus of Galilee,’ she said. But he denied it before them all. ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about,’ he said”** (vss. 69-71). It’s difficult to imagine a more innocuous statement, from a less threatening individual, than the one from the **“servant girl”**. “Notice that this challenge was as gentle as could be imagined. It was not a man but a woman, not a mature woman but a girl, not a free woman but a slave... She made no accusation of rebellion, blasphemy, or the like; she simply said that he was with Jesus” [Morris, 588]. “A silly wench daunteth and dispiriteth this stout champion... What poor things the best of us are, when left a little to ourselves, when our faith is in the wane” [Trapp, 267]. Peter, the *rock*, less a rock than a reed, blown over by a servant girl’s breath [Burkitt, in Lange, 500].

Her statement is taken a bit out of context by Matthew here. She says, **“You also...”** This suggests that she was referring to someone else who was a follower of Jesus—and she was. This

is clear from the recounting of this episode in John’s Gospel: **“Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest’s courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in. ‘You aren’t one of this man’s disciples too, are you?’ she asked Peter”** (John 18:15-17). Many think that this **“other disciple”** was John himself (John seems to refer to himself as **“the other disciple”**, or **“the disciple whom Jesus loved”**, in other places in his Gospel; see John 13:23, John 19:26; John 20:2; John 21:7; John 21:20), but it may have been someone like Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea, who were known to be disciples of Jesus (though not of the Twelve Apostles), and were also known to have access to the Sanhedrin hearings. So, here in Matthew, when the servant girl says, **“You also were with Jesus of Galilee”**, she is effectively saying, “You, just like this **‘other disciple’**” (who seemed to have been previously known to her) “were a disciple of Jesus.”

In light of this, it is even more surprising that Peter denied knowing Christ, for **“the other disciple”** showed himself to the same servant girl, and the same gathering of people who were near Peter, and yet (presumably) no harm came to the **“other disciple”**, despite his known connection with Christ. Her statement seemed to have been an innocent conversation starter, with the intention of carrying on banter in the courtyard about the events going on before the Sanhedrin. Perhaps, because of the arrest, she was curious about Jesus. It would have been timely for Peter to tell her what he knew of his Lord and Master: His love; His power; His goodness; His Deity, His coming death and resurrection.

Yet, it seems, Peter’s faith was shaken. Was Jesus, indeed, still Peter’s Master and Lord, now that Jesus was in chains? Did Peter believe the words of Jesus, spoken directly to him, just a few days previously: **“We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests**

and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" (Matt. 20:18-19)? All was to end well. This very same evening, Jesus promised: **"But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee"** (Matt. 26:32).

Jesus had prepared Peter for this difficult trial, and yet Peter responds to the servant girl: **"I don't know what you're talking about."** This is a kind-of half denial: not specifically denying Christ, but claiming ignorance. It's more of an evasion than a denial, so (we presume) thinks Peter. This is how the path to great sin begins. "In the garden St. Peter was brave as a lion, slashing at the high priest's servant with his sword. In the palace court-yard he cowers before a waiting-maid's joke" [*Pulpit Comm.*, 555].

Why did Peter deny knowing Jesus? I think more than just fear is involved, especially in light of the fact that the **"other disciple"** was known, and nearby, and experienced no harm. I think Peter, part of him at least, had lost his faith. Seeing Jesus arrested and tortured, and then seeing Jesus not even really answer the charges that the Sanhedrin brought, caused Peter to consider washing his hands of Jesus, in effect. He would pretend he never even knew Jesus. This agrees with what Jesus said when predicting Peter's denial: **"Truly I tell you, Jesus answered, 'this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times'"** (Matt. 26:34). The word here translated **"disown"** is a strong word, meaning, "to deny utterly, to abjure, to affirm that one has no connection with" [Strong's]. Earlier, before the Transfiguration, Jesus had warned His disciples that He would **"suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life"** (Matt. 16:21-22). Peter flatly rejected that things would unfold in this manner: **"Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'"** (Matt. 16:22). So back then, Peter was not willing to follow a Master

who was to suffer and die; and clearly, as we see here on the night of Jesus' arrest, Peter was still unprepared to follow a Master who was suffering, and was to very soon die. The truth of the coming resurrection had not reached Peter's heart, so he denied even knowing Jesus.

Peter's denials of Christ continue: **"Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, 'This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.' He denied it again, with an oath: 'I don't know the man!'"** (vss. 71-72). This servant girl does not even speak directly to Peter. And again, there is no accusation involved, merely banter around a courtyard fire. "How weak, comparatively, the temptation was; it was not the judge, or any of the officers of the court, that charged him with being a disciple of Jesus, but a silly maid or two, that probably designed him no hurt, nor would have done him any, if he had owned it" [Henry, 235]. "One temptation, unresisted, seldom fails to bring on another and a third" [Quesnel, in Lange, 500]. "Embarked on this course of denial he is led further into evil; the first denial involved a lie, the second time Peter perjured himself. The first was no more than a declaration that he did not know what the girl was talking about; the second was a clear repudiation of Jesus" [Morris, 689].

Peter moved beyond his previous plea of ignorance, and emphatically denied he knew Jesus, even with an oath. He was determined to deny any knowledge of Jesus. Peter's direct denial of Christ put his own eternal security in jeopardy. Jesus stated: **"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven"** (Matt. 10:32-33). This was stated by Jesus in the context that there will be bodily danger in this world, for (in the Gospel of Matthew) Jesus followed this statement with: **"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword"** (Matt. 10:34). Jesus also made the statement in the context of promising that God will take care of His people,

and not let anything happen to them that is outside His will, for immediately preceding this statement, Jesus said: **“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows”** (Matt. 10:28-32). So, these statements of Jesus were meant to prepare Peter for the very situation he faced and, in no uncertain terms, Jesus stated that denial of Christ was a sin: **“But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.”**

And yet, even the sin of disowning Jesus, Peter’s sin, can be forgiven, for we know that Peter himself was forgiven, and went on to mightily serve Jesus, and went on even to follow Jesus in His death by being put to death for his faith and service to Christ. In the Gospel of John, after Jesus’ resurrection, Jesus asks Peter three times, **“Do you love me?”**, and Peter answers, **“You know that I love you”** (see John 21:15-17). Then Jesus predicts Peter’s death: **“Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.’ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God”** (John 21:18-19). “Peter’s example warns us to be ready for testing; but it also summons us to start afresh if we have failed, and to show mercy to those who have already stumbled but wish to return to the way of Christ” [Keener, on vs. 75].

In the third confrontation, in the Sanhedrin courtyard, the people are certain that Peter knew Jesus, offering Peter’s Galilean accent as proof: **“After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, ‘Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.’ Then he be-**

gan to call down curses, and he swore to them, ‘I don’t know the man!’” (vss. 73-74). The old fisherman in Peter returns; he has reverted to his pre-Christ personage, cursing like a sailor. “Having lied twice Peter finds himself forced to lie again, this time with more oaths” [Carson]. “This was worst of all; for the way of sin is downhill... We have reason to suspect the truth of that which is backed with rash oaths and imprecations. None but the devil’s sayings need the devil’s proofs. He that will not be restrained by the third commandment from mocking his God, will not be kept by the ninth from deceiving his brother... [Peter] designed it to be an evidence for him, that he was not of Christ’s disciples, for this was none of their language. Cursing and swearing is enough to prove a man no disciple of Christ, for it is the language of His enemies thus to take His name in vain” [Henry, 235].

Just as Jesus predicted, **“Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: ‘Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly”** (vss. 74-75). The recollection of Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s sin, reminded Peter how far he had fallen, and so he **“wept bitterly.”** Peter regrets **“bitterly”** his misguided denials of Christ. The recollected words of Christ bring Peter back to faith in Christ. “A serious reflection upon the words of the Lord Jesus will be a powerful inducement to repentance, and will help to break the heart for sin. Nothing grieves a penitent more, than that he has sinned against the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the tokens of his love” [Henry, 236].

The **“bitter”** tears of Peter are tears of true repentance. “In this troubled pool Peter washed himself, in this Red Sea the army of his iniquities was drowned. As once his faith was so great that he leapt into a sea of waters to come to Christ, so now his repentance was so great, that he leapt, as it were, into a sea of tears for that he had gone from Christ” [Trapp, 268]. “Peter who wept so bitterly for denying Christ, never denied him again, but confessed him often, and openly, and in the mouth of danger” [Henry, 236].

Let us remember Peter's tears, and not take the same path that led to them. "This is written for warning to us, that we sin not after the similitude of Peter's transgression; that we never, either directly or indirectly, deny Christ (the Lord who bought us) by rejecting His offers, resisting His Spirit, dissembling our knowledge of Him, and being ashamed of Him and His words, or afraid of suffering for Him, and with His suffering people" [Henry, 235].

Matthew 27:1-10 - Judas's Death

¹Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. ²So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

³When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴"I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood."

"What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility."

⁵So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

⁶The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." ⁷So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. ⁸That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, ¹⁰and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

The Sanhedrin met again early the next morning, apparently to ratify the decision made the previous evening, and to plan a strategy of how to move forward in the Roman court: **"Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor"** (vss. 1-2). "This meeting of the Sanhedrin, which Luke describes in his Gospel, was intended at the same time to meet all the forms of law, and definitely to express the grounds of the charge against Jesus. But, as we have already seen, in point of fact, it only served to cover those violations of the law into which their reckless fanaticism had hurried them. One of the main objects of the Sanhedrin now was, to present the charge in such a light as to oblige Pilate to pronounce sentence of death" [Lange, 501].

Unnecessarily, they **"bound"** Jesus. But, however they **"bound"** Him, Jesus had the power to escape the bonds, if He so desired. He endured this shame because He chose to, not because He was **"bound"** by man's measly shackles. "He was already bound with the bonds of love to man, and of His own undertaking, else He had soon broke these bonds, as Samson did his. We were fettered with the bond of iniquity, held in the cords of our sins, but God had bound the yoke of our transgressions upon the neck of the Lord Jesus, that we might be loosed by His bonds as we are healed by His stripes" [Henry, 236].

Jesus was **"handed over to Pilate the governor."** As we previously said, the Sanhedrin did not have the authority to put a man to death, and so they would seek the death penalty from the Roman-appointed **"governor"**. "Pilate was in fact appointed prefect or procurator by Tiberius Caesar in A.D. 26. Prefects governed small, troubled areas; and in judicial matters they possessed powers like those of the far more powerful proconsuls and imperial legates; in short, they held the power of life and death, apart from appeal to Caesar" [Carson]. "Pilate is characterized by the Roman writers of that time, to be a man of a rough and haughty spirit, willful and implacable, and extremely

covetous and oppressive; the Jews had a great enmity to his person, and were weary of his government, and yet they made use of him as the tool of their malice against Christ” [Henry, 236].

As Judas witnessed the results of his betrayal of Christ, his conscience was tormenting him: **“When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders.** (vs. 3). Judas recognized the full force of what he had done. His actions would lead to Jesus’ death. Judas felt the weight on his conscience of murdering a man of peace, even the Son of God.

Judas **“returned the thirty pieces of silver”**, the price of his betrayal, possible (and absurdly) thinking that the Sanhedrin would reconsider their verdict. Judas wanted desperately to undo what he had done. Regret always and ever follows sin. Remember this before you take that first step on the path to sin. “Though before a sin be committed the bait and allurement is only seen, and the conscience blindfolded, kept captive and benumbed; yet after sin is committed it shall be wakened at last, and see the ugliness of sin discovered” [Dickson, 326].

Judas spoke to the chief priests and elders: **“I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood”** (vs. 4). Judas mistakenly goes to men, even accomplices in the same crime, for his confession of **“I have sinned”**. Far better for Judas if he had kneeled before God, even before Jesus Himself, to confess his sin. If he had, then Judas—yes, even Judas—could have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

Judas himself proclaims Jesus’ innocence, saying, **“I have betrayed innocent blood.”** This is significant. The betrayer of Christ proclaims His innocence. If Jesus was a blasphemer, and not the true Son of God, certainly Judas, a close follower of His, would have known, and would have himself been a witness before the Sanhedrin to Jesus’ crimes. But Judas knew that Jesus was innocent, innocent of everything. Jesus

committed no crime. He was not a blasphemer; He was the Messiah, the true Son of God. “We see in the end of Judas a plain proof of our Lord’s innocence of every charge laid against Him. If there was any living witness who could give evidence against our Lord Jesus Christ, Judas Iscariot was the man. A chosen apostle of Jesus, a constant companion in all His journeyings, a hearer of all His teaching, both in public and private,—he must have known well if our Lord had done any wrong, either in word or deed. A deserter from our Lord’s company, a betrayer of Him into the hands of His enemies, it was his interest for his own character’s sake, to prove Jesus guilty. It would extenuate and excuse his own conduct, if he could make out that His former master was an offender, and an impostor... Bad as [Judas] was, he knew he could prove nothing against Christ. Wicked as he was, he knew well that his Master was holy, harmless, innocent, blameless, and true” [Ryle, 379-380].

The response of the chief priests and elders to Judas’ proclamation of Jesus’ innocence is surprising: **“What is that to us?” they replied. ‘That’s your responsibility”** (vs. 4). The chief priests were sanctioned by God to judge justly, yet they did not care whether Jesus was innocent or not. They should have been as remorseful as Judas, for they had condemned **“innocent blood.”** Their statement, **“What is that to us?”**, proves their guilt, proves that they deserve the greatest condemnation for their actions. The Sanhedrin did not ignorantly hand Jesus over to death; they were not seeking truth in their condemnation of Jesus; they purposely sought to kill their Messiah, the one sent to save them.

“So Judas threw the money into the temple and left” (vs. 5). The silver had lost its luster to Judas. The rewards of sin always look better from the outside. “When he was tempted to betray his master, the thirty pieces of silver looked very fine and glittering, like the wine when it is red, and gives its colour in the cup. But when the thing was done, and the money paid, the silver was become dross, it bit like a serpent, and stung like an adder... Sin will soon change its taste. Though it be rolled under his tongue as a sweet morsel, in the bowels it will be

turned into the gall of asps” [Henry, 237]. “Conscience reverses our estimates. These silver pieces now seemed red with blood and hot with fire” [Thomas, 519-520].

Judas’s betrayal brought about his end: **“Then he went away and hanged himself”** (vs. 5). As his conscience tormented him, Judas ran away from Christ, and to the hangman’s noose. Far better if Judas had run toward Christ—if instead, Judas had knelt at the cross of Christ—which he literally could have done. In the midst of our remorse from sin, we have a choice of two directions to run: toward Jesus to seek forgiveness, or away from Jesus in defiance of the gift of forgiveness that He offers. Judas chose the latter, and **“hanged himself.”** “See here how Judas repented, not like Peter, who repented, believed, and was pardoned: no, he repented, despaired, and was ruined... Judas had a sight, and sense of sin, but no apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and so he pined away in his iniquity. His sin, we may suppose, was not in its own nature unpardonable, there were some of those saved that had been Christ’s betrayers and murderers; but he concluded, as Cain, that his iniquity was greater than could be forgiven, and would rather throw himself on the devil’s mercy than God’s” [Henry, 237-238]. Peter and Judas shared remarkable similarities, for one so revered and the other so hated: “1. They both, and they only, are called Satan, (see Matt. 16:23; John 6:70). 2. They both, and they only [of the twelve disciples], turned openly against the Master at the end. 3. They both sorrowed deeply, but in one it was remorse, in the other it was humble and loving repentance. 4. One committed suicide, the other found forgiveness and lived a long life of usefulness” [Broadus, 559].

The chief priests and elders were unmoved by Judas’s remorse. They were more concerned with what to do with the returned pieces of silver: **“The chief priests picked up the coins and said, ‘It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.’ So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of**

Blood to this day” (vss. 6-8). There is absurd irony here: The chief priests are very concerned about dealing with the legality of how to handle the returned **“blood money”**, and yet they show no concern in violating God’s rules of justice of condemning an innocent man to death. “These leaders were willing to pay out blood money for Jesus’ capture, willing to allow Judas’s suicide, but too pious to accept their own blood money into the temple treasury” [Keener, on vss. 3-8]. “It is no new thing to see Christ’s most cruel adversaries deep in hypocrisy, pretending to be feared to offend in the least things; as these men stand not to give Judas a hire to betray innocent blood, but will not meddle with the gain, when it is cast back” [Dickson, 326].

Matthew points out a prophetic allusion to the thirty pieces of silver, and their use to buy a potter’s field: **“Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: ‘They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me’”** (vss. 9-10). Matthew’s citation seems to be taken from the book of Zechariah, in which a passage reads (in our modern translation): **“I told them, ‘If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.’ So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the Lord”** (Zech. 11:12-13). So, in the midst of a clearly Messianic passage in the book of Zechariah, we have mention of a transaction of **“thirty pieces of silver”**, which is the **“price at which they valued me”**; and then the silver is thrown **“at the house of the Lord”**, along with references to the silver ending up being thrown **“to the potter.”** Clearly, Zechariah’s prophetic, Messianic vision has some level of fulfillment in Judas’s betrayal of Christ.

There is a minor textual difficulty here, in that Matthew cites Jeremiah instead of Zechariah. Many commentators have offered up solutions to this difficulty (for instance, the possibility

that Matthew was referring to some writings of Jeremiah—such as Jer. 19:1-13—in addition to Zechariah). The solution to the difficulty may lie in something as simple as traditions at the time for citing prophets. In the New Testament, only Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel (all so-called major prophets) are mentioned by name, though there are references to the writings of other prophets. Indeed, there are some seventy-one references in the New Testament to the book of Zechariah [see Kaiser in *Mastering the Old Testament*, and Nelson in *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*; see also http://www.olive-tree.org/files/sermon_attachments/zechariah_in_the_nt.pdf for a summary of NT references to Zechariah], and yet Zechariah is never mentioned by name. Given this, some have postulated that the name Jeremiah was used to refer to the writings of Jeremiah, as well as the minor prophets, because those OT books were in the same compilation.

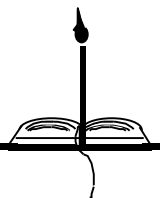
Whatever the case may be (all suggested solutions to this difficulty are speculations), it seems that at this time, thousands of years after the gospel of Matthew was written, we do not have enough information to reconcile the inconsistency so that everyone will be intellectually satisfied. That's okay. We need to realize that the Bible is an incredibly deep book; the minds of humans will never solve the book completely. "The words quoted are found in the prophecy of Zechariah, in Zech. 11:12. How they are here said to be spoken by Jeremiah, is a difficult question; but the credit of Christ's doctrine does not depend upon it; for that proves itself perfectly divine, though there should appear something human, as to small circumstances in the penmen of it" [Henry, 238]. "If not quite content with any of [the commentator's] explanations, we had better leave the question as it stands, remembering how slight an unknown circumstance might solve it in a moment, and how many a once celebrated difficulty has been cleared up in the gradual progress of Biblical knowledge" [Broadus, 559].

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All of these books, except Carson, Keener, and Morris can be downloaded free of charge from:
<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

A Topical Study: Prayer



[Matthew Henry is greatly known for his magnificent commentary on the whole Bible. He also wrote a book proposing A Method for Prayer, in between writing volumes of that commentary. This series of articles is from that book.]

How to Begin Every Day with God, pt. 1, by Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

**My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord;
in the morning will I direct my Prayer unto thee,
and I will look up**
(Psalm 5:3).

You would think it a rude question if I should ask you, and yet I must entreat you seriously to ask yourselves, What brings you to church on an early Sunday morning? And what is your business there? Whenever we are attending on God in holy ordinances (nay, wherever we are), we should be able to give a good answer to the question which God put to the prophet, **“What doest thou here, Elijah?”** (I Kings 19:9). Just as when we return from holy ordinances, we should be able to give a good answer to the question which Christ put to those that attended on John Baptist’s ministry, **“What went you out into the wilderness to see?”** (Matt. 11:7).

One hopes that it is not merely for a walk on a pleasant morning that you are go to a Sunday service, and that it is not for company, or to meet your friends there, but that you go with a pious design to give glory to God, and to receive grace from Him, and in both to keep up your communion with Him. And if you ask the minister, what his business is, we hope he can truly say, it is (as God shall enable him) to assist and further the congregation.

While the Sunday service continues, you have an oppor-

tunity of more than doubling your morning devotions. Besides your worshipping of God in secret, and in your families, which the service must not supercede, or jostle out, you there call upon God’s name in the solemn assembly. And it is as much your business, in all such exercises, to pray a prayer together, as it is to hear a sermon. And it is said, the original of the morning exercise was a meeting for prayer, at the time when the nation was groaning under the dreadful desolating judgment of a civil war. You have also an opportunity of conversing with the word of God; you have precept upon precept, and line upon line. O that, as the opportunity wakens you morning by morning, so (as the prophet speaks) your ears may be awakened to hear as the learned (see Isa. 50:4).

But this is not all; we desire that such impressions may be made upon you by this cluster of opportunities, as you may always abide under the influence of; that these articles may leave you better disposed to morning worship ever after; that these frequent acts of devotion may so confirm the habit of it, as that from henceforward your daily worship may become more easy, and, if I may say so, in a manner natural to you.

For your help herein, I would recommend to you holy David’s example in the text, who having resolved in general, in verse 2, that he would abound in the duty of prayer, and abide by it— **“Unto thee will I pray”**—here fixes one proper time for it, and that is the morning—**“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning”**—though not in the morning only. David solemnly addressed himself to the duty of prayer three times a day, as Daniel did: **“Morning and evening, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud”** (Ps. 55:17). Nay, he did not think that enough, but **“seven times a day will I praise thee”** (Ps. 119:164). But particularly in the morning.

Doctrine: It is our wisdom and duty to begin every day with God.

Let us observe in the Text :

First. The good work itself that we are to do.— God must hear our voice, we must direct our prayer to him, and we must look up.

Second. The special time appointed and observed for the

doing of this good work; and that is in the morning, and again in the morning; that is, every morning, as duly as the morning comes.

For the first: *The good work, which, by the example of David we are here taught to do, is, in one word, to pray.* This is a duty dictated by the light and law of nature, which plainly and loudly speaks, *Should not a people seek unto their God?* On this matter, the gospel of Christ gives us much better instructions in, and encouragement to, than any that nature furnishes us with; for it tells us what we must pray for, in whose name we must pray, and by whose assistance, and invites us to come boldly to the throne of grace, and to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. This work we are to do, not in the morning only, but at other times, at all times. We read of preaching the word out of season, but we do not read of praying out of season, for that is never out of season. The throne of grace is always open, and humble supplicants are always welcome, and cannot come unseasonably.

But let us see how David here expresses his pious resolution to abide by this duty.

1. *My voice shalt thou hear.* Two ways David may here be understood. Either,

(1.) *As promising himself a gracious acceptance with God.* Thou shalt, *i.e.* thou wilt hear my voice, when in the morning I direct my prayer to thee: so it is the language of his faith, grounded upon God's promise that His ear shall be always open to His people's cry. He had prayed, in ver. 1, **"Give ear to my words, O Lord"**: and, ver. 2, **"Hearken unto the voice of my cry"**; and here he receives an answer to that prayer, **"thou wilt hear"**: I doubt not but thou wilt, and though I have not presently a grant of the thing I prayed for, yet I am sure my prayer is heard, is accepted, and comes up for a memorial, as the prayer of Cornelius did; it is put upon the file, and shall not be forgotten. If we look inward, and can say, by experience, that God has prepared our heart, we may look upward, may look forward, and say with confidence that He will cause His ear to hear.

We may be sure of this, and we must pray, in the assurance of it, in a full assurance of His faith, that wherever God finds a praying heart, He will be found a prayer-hearing God. Though the voice of prayer be a low voice, a weak voice, yet if it come from an upright heart, it is a voice that God will hear, that He will hear with pleasure, it is His delight, and that He will return a gracious answer to. *He hath heard thy prayers, He hath seen thy tears.* When therefore we stand praying, this ground we must stand upon, this principle we must stand to, nothing doubting, nothing wavering, that whatever we ask of God as a Father, in the name of Jesus Christ the mediator, according to the will of God revealed in the Scripture, it shall be granted us either in kind or kindness. So says the promise in John 16:23, and the truth of it is sealed to by the concurring experience of the saints in all ages, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, that Jacob's God never yet said to Jacob's seed, *seek ye me in vain*, and He will not begin now. When we come to God by prayer, if we come aright, we may be confident of this, that notwithstanding the distance between heaven and earth, and our great unworthiness to have any notice taken of us or any favor showed us; yet God does hear our voice, and will not turn away our prayer, or His mercy.

Or, (2.) It is rather to be taken, as David's promising God a constant attendance on Him in the way He has appointed. **"My voice shalt thou hear"**, *i.e.*, I will speak to thee, because Thou hast inclined Thine ear unto me many a time, therefore I have taken up a resolution to call upon Thee at all times, even to the end of my time. Not a day shall pass but Thou shalt be sure to hear from me. Not that the voice is the thing that God regards, as they seemed to think who in prayer made their voice to be heard on high (see Isa. 58:4). Hannah prayed and prevailed, when her voice was not heard; but it is the voice of the heart that is here meant. God said to Moses, **"Wherefore criest thou unto me"**, when we do not find that he said one word (see Exod. 14:15). Praying is lifting the soul up to God, and pouring out the heart before Him; yet, as far as the expression of the devout affections of the heart by words may be of

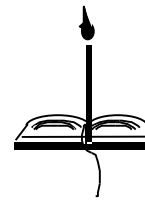
use to fix the thoughts, and to excite and quicken the desires, it is good to draw near to God, not only with a pure heart, but with a humble voice; so must we render the calves of our lips.

However, God understands the language of the heart, and that is the language in which we must speak to God. David prays here, in Psalm 5:1, not only **“give ear to my words”**, but also **“consider my meditation”**; and, in Psalm 19:14, **“Let the words of my mouth, proceeding from the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight.”**

This therefore we have to do in every prayer, we must speak to God. And we must see to it that God hears from us daily.

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

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



A Study in Wisdom: Proverbs 1:10-33

Proverbs 1:10-19 – An Enticement to Evil

- ¹⁰My son, if sinful men entice you,
do not give in to them.
- ¹¹If they say, “Come along with us;
let’s lie in wait for innocent blood,
let’s ambush some harmless soul;
- ¹²let’s swallow them alive, like the grave,
and whole, like those who go down to the pit;
- ¹³we will get all sorts of valuable things
and fill our houses with plunder;
- ¹⁴cast lots with us;
we will all share the loot” –
- ¹⁵my son, do not go along with them,
do not set foot on their paths;
- ¹⁶for their feet rush into evil,
they are swift to shed blood.
- ¹⁷How useless to spread a net
where every bird can see it
- ¹⁸These men lie in wait for their own blood;
they ambush only themselves!
- ¹⁹Such are the paths of all
who go after ill-gotten gain;
it takes away the life of those who get it.

In this passage, vss. 10-19, Solomon warns youth not to be enticed into evil behavior by their peers: **“My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them”** (vs. 10). Enticement via the ungodly is a rife *modus operandi* of Satan. “Almost as soon as Satan became an apostate, he became a tempter” [Bridges]. In this world, **“sinful men”** abound. Of course, in a sense, we are all **“sinful men”**, imperfect, fallen.

But Solomon is referring here to those who choose to be controlled by their sinful nature, who make sin the pattern of their lives, and try to draw others into their way of life.

And with **“sinful men”** abounding in this world, enticement also abounds. “In a world where the true fearers of God are so sadly in the minority, those who are under their dominion cannot fail to stand exposed to many temptations and to corresponding hazards. They are surrounded, on all sides, by **‘sinners’** of every description and of every degree. They come in contact, at all points, with the infection of evil. They are in danger, at every step, from the corrupting and deadening power of all the varieties of irreligion,—that of the openly profligate, and that of the creditably sober,—that of the avowed infidel, and that of the inconsistent professor of the faith. In a [world] like the one in which we dwell, such young men as are at all inclined to the fear of God are environed with innumerable perils. Their incipient piety, when not yet confirmed into decided godliness, is like a spark of fire hovering over the surface of the ocean. Allurements on the one hand, and intimidations on the other, everywhere abound; and the Arch-Adversary plies all his wiles, to catch away whatever seeds of truth and elements of goodness have been sown in their hearts.” [Wardlaw, 25].

Solomon, by way of example, presents a sample enticement: **“If they say, ‘Come along with us; let’s lie in wait for innocent blood, let’s ambush some harmless soul; let’s swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who do down to the pit’”** (vss. 11-12). This particular enticement is meant to be a specific example, illustrating a principle (temptation by peers), the warnings against which can be expanded to apply to other enticements (most of us are not tempted to join a roving band of thieves, specifically). Though here, the enticement comes from the voice of a colleague, we must note that sinful enticements can also come from *internal* voices, thoughts and ideas from our sinful nature, trying to draw us into sin. We must resist those enticements, as well.

The enticer says: **“Come along with us.”** In this particular plan, the **“sinner”** needs accomplices to aid in the success of the ambush. However, in general, it seems, those who do evil enjoy doing so with accomplices, whatever the plan. “Sinners have generally so much of the venom of the old serpent in them, that they do not wish to go unattended to hell, but desire to make others as much the children of the devil as themselves.” [Lawson]. This increases the prevalence of enticements to evil. If only, by nature, we habitually enticed others for *good*, instead, following the Apostle’s exhortation: **“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds”** (Heb. 10:24).

The tempter sweetens the enticement with the prospect of material gain: **“We will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; cast lots with us; we will all share the loot”** (vs. 13-14). The promise of riches is a common device. “The devil told our Lord, that he would give him all the kingdoms and glories of the world, if he would comply with his persuasions. The ministers of Satan in like manner endeavor to persuade men that they will obtain much advantage by sin, that the gains of it shall fill all their treasures, and every corner of their houses.” [Lawson]. Paul, writing to Timothy, famously warns against such temptations: **“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs”** (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

Solomon warns: **“My son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths”** (vs. 15). Don’t even start to walk on that path, even with the intention of later turning back. “Often has ruin followed by not *refraining* from the first step” [Bridges]. “Half-measures will not do. There must be no tampering with temptation—no compromise—no partial adoption of the practices of sinners, in the hope, or with the

resolution of stopping and retracing your steps when you have advanced a certain length” [Wardlaw].

Solomon metaphorically describes the enticement: **“How useless to spread a net where every bird can see it!”** (vs. 17). The danger of this enticement is clear and obvious. Nothing is hidden here. And as such, it’s an easy trap to avoid, being in plain sight, and yet, there are those, even us, who succumb to such temptations. We ignore the obvious danger of an enticement into sin. “The sight of danger leads, when possible, to the avoiding of it. Instinct directs the bird; reason the man. Yet such is the infatuation of sin, that man in his boasted wisdom will not do what the bird will by her native instinct... But sin is self-delusive, self-destructive” [Bridges].

Though in the enticement, the plan is to ambush and rob some harmless soul, Solomon sees it another way: **“These men lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush only themselves! Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the life of those who get it”** (vss. 18-19). Sinners are victims of their own plan. The harm to themselves in perpetrating the sin, is as much or more as that to their victims. Victims of crimes can usually recover; perpetrators will always have the sin on their conscience. “They are themselves their surest and most pitiable victims. The vengeance of offended heaven pursues the evil-doer; secretly, silently, invisibly, but closely, constantly, unswervingly, tracking his steps. It is behind him in all the windings and doublings of iniquity; it finds him out in all the hidden haunts of vice. In a memory from which nothing escapes, it treasures up against him every act and word and thought of evil... It may not be appointed to overtake him in this world. His schemes of evil may prosper to the end. But overtake him it inevitably will; if not here, hereafter” [Wardlaw].

Proverbs 1:20-33 – A Plea to Heed Wisdom

- 20 **Out in the open wisdom calls aloud,
she raises her voice in the public square;**
21 **on top of the wall she cries out,
at the city gate she makes her speech:**
22 **“How long will you who are simple
love your simple ways?
How long will mockers delight in mockery
and fools hate knowledge?**
23 **Repent at my rebuke!
Then I will pour out my thoughts to you,
I will make known to you my teachings.**
- 24 **But since you refuse to listen when I call
and no one pays attention
when I stretch out my hand,**
25 **since you disregard all my advice
and do not accept my rebuke,**
26 **I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you;
I will mock when calamity overtakes you –**
27 **when calamity overtakes you like a storm,
when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind,
when distress and trouble overwhelm you.**
28 **“Then they will call to me but I will not answer;
they will look for me but will not find me,**
29 **since they hated knowledge
and did not choose to fear the LORD.**
30 **Since they would not accept my advice
and spurned my rebuke,**
31 **they will eat the fruit of their ways
and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.**
32 **For the waywardness of the simple will kill them,
and the complacency of fools will destroy them;**
33 **but whoever listens to me will live in safety
and be at ease, without fear of harm.”**

This entire section (vss. 20-33) is parallel to the previous one. In the previous section, a **“sinful man”** entices an innocent man; in this section, a personified **“wisdom”** cries out that people would follow her advice: **“Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square; on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech”** (vss. 20-21). There is no secrecy in **“wisdom’s”** plea. She goes where best to be heard by the most people, in **“the public square”**, on **“the top of the wall”**, at **“the city gate”**. It is God’s desire, for our good, that we become wiser, that we follow wise advice, not sinful enticements. **“Wisdom** desires to be heard, and therefore speaks not in secret; she whispers not in the ears of a few favorites, but in the public places of resort, she proclaims to everyone that will listen her interesting truths. She cries without, in every place where a crowd is likely to be collected, in the streets, in the chief place of concourse, in the gates, the place of judgment, and in every part of the city” [Lawson].

“Wisdom” admonishes specifically three types of people who are least likely to heed wise advice: **“How long will you who are simple love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?”** (vs. 22). She speaks to the **“simple”**, to **“mockers”**, and to **“fools”**. As we stated in our comments on vs. 4, the **“simple”** are those who are easily influenced, in a good or bad way. Being such, they can benefit from solid instruction, if they choose to. But they **“love their simple ways”**. **“Mockers”** and **“fools”** are more hardened against wise instruction, for **“mockers delight in mockery”**, and **“fools hate knowledge”**. Wisdom entreats that they would all **“Repent at my rebuke!”** (vs. 23). Such a repentance from their anti-wisdom leanings would lead to an outpouring of wise instruction, a drastic change to the better: **“Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings”** (vs. 23).

But, alas, odds are that the perennially unwise will stay that way, by their own choice: **“But since you refuse to listen**

when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke...” (vss. 24-25). The willful ignoring of the advice of **“wisdom”** will result in **“wisdom”** herself mocking the mockers, and deriding the fools: **“I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you”** (vss. 26-27). This is a complicated, fallen world. We must live our lives wisely, or **“distress and trouble will overwhelm us.”** When this happens, the personified **“wisdom”** has no sympathy for the **“distress and trouble”** of fools. She did her best to warn them; she called out in the streets and public places; she even **“stretched out her hand”** with earnest and sincere care.

There will come a time when it is too late to heed the advice of **“wisdom”**, and those who did not heed it, will regret it: **“Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD”** (vss. 28-29). When embroiled in troubles due to lack of wisdom, it’s too late for the instruction to be of any value.

The primary failing of the doomed fool was that they **“did not choose to fear the LORD”** (vs. 29). This, of course, refers back to Solomon’s definition of the basis of all wisdom and knowledge: **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge”** (vs. 7). Such **“fear of the LORD”** drives one to the saving knowledge of faith in Christ’s sacrifice for our sins. **“Fools”** and **“mockers”** believe that they can put off repenting and turning to Christ. They put this off, so that they can continue living in their foolish and mocking ways. To put off the wise decision of turning to Christ is the most foolish act of fools. Deathbed conversions, though possible, are rare. **“Sinners miserably delude their own souls by proposing to live in the indulgence of their sins, and die in the exercise of repentance. True repentance is never too late, but late repentance is seldom true. Christ is not every day hanging on the cross, nor**

are thieves every day converted, and sent from the place of punishment to the paradise above” [Lawson].

J.A. Alexander speaks of delayed repentance in his eloquent poem of warning:

The Doomed Man

There is a time, we know not when,
A point, we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men
To glory or despair.

There is a line, by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God’s patience and His wrath.

Oh, where is this mysterious bourn,
By which our path is cross’d?
Beyond which, God Himself hath sworn,
That he who goes is lost.

How far may we go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end, and where begin
The confines of despair?

An answer from the skies is sent:
“Ye that from God depart,
While it is called to-day, repent
And harden not your heart.”

The personified wisdom continues to speak of the destruction of those who fail to heed her warnings (see vss. 30-32), but ends by detailing the benefits on those who do heed her advice: **“...but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm”** (vs. 33). It is somewhat ironic that a benefit of those who **“fear the LORD”**, is that they will live **“without fear of harm”**.

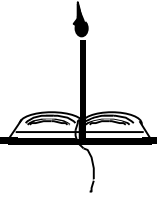
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<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist



Upon Banishment (or Living in a Foreign Land), by William Spurstowe (1666)

Exile is a change of place that brings no evil with it, but in opinion; a complaint, and affliction wholly imaginary, is a description some have made of it. But it seems to me to be rather a stoic's vaunt, than a Christian's just estimate, of the evils of that condition. What trial else would it have been of Abraham's faith **"to leave his country, kindred, and father's house, and to go to a land God would show him"** (Gen. 12:1)? Or why did God enjoin Israel to pity strangers, because they themselves had been strangers in the land of Egypt? Why have legislators deemed it as a punishment for Grand crimes, and next to Capital? Or why have many looked upon it as worse than death, choosing rather the lot of the *Goat* that was to be sacrificed, than to be the lot of the *Scape Goat*, which was to be sent into the wilderness? Is it not because (as Philo said), death is the full end of all evils, but banishment the beginning of many new ones?

Want, scorn, oppressions, unjust jealousies are the daily hard measures that exiles must expect to meet with. He must thank him who demands his coat, that he asks not his life. And he must oft times redeem his life with that little money which he has, which should be used to buy him bread to preserve it. He must be armed with nothing but patience, lest he be apprehended as one that has in design the death of some other.

And yet, how many are the arguments of comfort that my thoughts suggest to such Christians, who for the truth's sake

either dread this cross, or feel it. They break forth so on the right hand, and on the left, as that methinks I may say, "Sing O ye banished, cry aloud, for more are the comforts of the desolate, than the comforts of those that sit under the shadow of their own roof." I will not tell you that you have the same sun and moon to shine upon you that kings have; that the stars appear to you in the same greatness and beauty which they do to others; that you enjoy the same common elements that all do. These, and such like topics are to be plentifully found among the *moralists*. But all their *precepts* and *sentences* are like arrows that fall short of the mark. They could never reach that solid contentment they levelled at.

Hear then, ye dejected Christians, what your comforts are, whose crosses are no more than others, and whose supports are far greater. Are you banished from your native country? What other condition do you undergo than Abraham did, the *Father of the Faithful*, and the *Friend of God*, and will you murmur if God deal with you no worse than with his favorite? If you are out of your own land, do you not still tread upon your fathers ground? Is not *the Earth the Lord's, and the fullness of it*? Did never any thrive in a strange soil, and like transplanted trees gain by the change? Have you forgot what God did for Joseph in Egypt, or for Daniel and his associates in their captivity, who like stars when they set in one hemisphere, did rise gloriously in another?

But if still you be impatient, and in dislike with your estate, let me ask you if the best of a wicked man's condition be not worse? Is it not better to hunger and thirst for righteousness sake, than to fare deliciously every day with the rich glutton in the Gospel? Is it not more eligible to be an Israelite in the wilderness, than to be a courtier in Egypt? Can you speak better of your miseries than wicked men can do of their mercies? You may say, blessed *hunger*, blessed *poverty*, blessed *mourning*, blessed *persecutions* and *revilings*; Christ Himself having blessed your afflictions, and also cursed their enjoyments. He has entailed an eternal *woe* on all those things wherein they place their welfare: their *riches*, their *fullness*, their *mirth*, their *applause*,

and *credit* with all men. And He has promised to them that endure temptations a Crown of Life when they are tried.

Be not therefore dismayed, O ye of little faith, who have every bitter thing at present sweetened with promises, and within a little while shall have all the hardships of a desert, turned into the plenty of a heavenly Canaan. And yet methinks some there be who are still unsatisfied, and ask if it be nothing to part with dear relations, and society of friends, and to be cast upon strange faces, and languages, that they understand not? To be at once in great measure both deaf and dumb, not hearing what others say to them, and being also unable to speak the least word to others?

That these are sore evils I shall not make it any part of my task to deny, but yet how many are there who have exposed themselves to all these evils, and have undergone them voluntarily, which you suffer out of constraint? Have not some for curiosity sake, and a thirst of knowledge travelled through vast and dangerous wilderness, and borne, with much patience, the excess of heat and cold? Have not others out of a covetous desire of gain parted with friends and country for many years? May I not then send the *faith-hearted Christian* to learn of the *resolute worldling*, as Solomon does the *sluggard* and the *ant* (see Prov. 6:6ff)? Shall he get a higher estimate upon earthly treasures than you upon heavenly? Shall he outface dangers that you shrink at? Shall he quit parents and children that are pieces of himself, and embrace solitude in foreign regions, and shall you reckon yourself as free among the dead while you do the same thing?

O what advantages you have above him, both to do and suffer! In your solitude, you may say as Christ did in his, **“Yet am I not alone, because the Father is with me”** (John 16:32). In your sorrows, you may glory as Paul did, **“This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world”** (II Cor. 1:12). In the loss and spoil of your estates, you may pray, as Paulinus did,

when the Goths ransacked Nola: “Lord, let not the loss of these things disquiet me, for Thou knowest where I have laid up all my treasures.” In your banishment, you may comfort yourself with the common lot of all believers, who are no other than pilgrims and strangers, while they are at home in the body, and absent from the Lord? I shall add no more but an excellent saying of Basil: “He to whom his native country is only sweet, is too delicate; he to whom every land is his country, is valiant; and he to whom all Earth is a banishment, is truly holy.”

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

The Meaning of the Look

“And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter” (Luke 22:60-61)

I think that look of Christ might seem to say—
 ‘Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
 Which I at last must break my heart upon,
 For all God’s charge to His high angels may
 Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday
 Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run
 Quick to deny me ’neath the morning sun?
 And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
 The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
 For when thy final need is dreariest,
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here;
 My voice to God and angels shall attest,
 Because I KNOW *this man*, let him be clear.’

-- Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

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**Knowledge Worthless
Without God**

"He who pursues any [field] of knowledge, however good and honorable in itself, while he forgets God, is ... emphatically a 'fool'. He may be admired by men, as a very prodigy of science, or philosophy, or literature, and may be adorned with all the titles of human honor, and send down his name to future ages with a halo of the light of this world around it; but in the eye of God, he stands the object of deep and merited condemnation; and, while eulogized and extolled on earth, is pitied and deplored in heaven."

-- *Ralph Wardlaw* (1779-1853)

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