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

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Old Testament Study: Jonah 1:1-2

A Study by John King (1594)

Jonah 1:1-2 – Jonah's Commission, pt. 1

[This continues a study taken from a series of lectures given in 1594 by John King, who became the Bishop of London in 1611.]

¹ Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." (KJV).

The duties of princes, pastors, people, all estates; the nature of fear, force of prayer, wages of disobedience, fruit of repentance, are herein comprised. And as the finers of silver and gold make use not only of the wedge, but even of the smallest foil or rays that their metal casteth, so in this little manual which I have in hand, besides the plenty and store of the deeper matters, there is not the least jot and tittle therein but may minister grace to attentive hearers.

The substance of the chapter presently to be handled and examined, spends itself about two persons: Jonah and the mariners. In the one, opening his commission, transgression, apprehension, execution; in the other, their fear, and consequent behaviour, which I leave to their order. The words already proposed, offer us these particulars to be discussed:

1. First, a *warrant, charge, or commission*: **"Now the word of the Lord came..."**

2. Secondly, the *person charged*: “...to Jonah the son of Amittai...”

3. Thirdly, the *matter or contents* of his commission: **“Arise, and go to Nineveh, that great city...”**

So first, 1. In the *commission*, I refer you to these few and short observations:

(1.) *The nature of the commission*. It is a *word*; that is, a purpose, decree, determination, edict, advised, pronounced, ratified, and not to be frustrated; according to the sentence of the psalm, **“Thy word, LORD, endureth forever in heaven,”** (Ps. 119).

(2.) *The author is the Lord*, the ocean that filled all these earthly springs, who **“spake by the mouth of all the prophets which have been since the world began,”** (Luke 1:70).

(3.) *The direction or suggestion thereof*. It *came*; that is, it was not a phantasy or invention of Jonah, but he had his motion and inspiration thereunto.

The *first* shows the stability of his ordinances. For with God, neither does his word disagree from his intention, because he is truth; nor his deed from his word, because he is power. Hath he spoken, and shall he not perform it?

The *second* shows the majesty and credit of the prophecies. **“For no prophecy of old time came by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”** (2 Peter 1:21).

The *third* declares his ordinary and necessary course in disclosing his will, which is too excellent a knowledge for flesh and blood to attain unto without his revelation. For **“who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor at any time?”** (Rom. 11:34).

1. *The commission*, in general, is most requisite to be weighed, that we may discern the *priests of the sanctuary* from Jeroboam’s, or *false priests*, of whom we read that **“whosoever would, might consecrate himself”** (2 Kings 13:33); *lawful*

ambassadors from *erratic and wandering messengers*, such as run when none has sent them; *stars in the right hand of Christ*, fixed in their stations, from *planets and planers of an uncertain motion*; *shepherds* from *hirelings*, and thieves that steal in by the window; *prophets* from *intruders* (for even the woman Jezebel called herself a prophetess, see Rev. 2); *seers* from *seducers*, enforced to confess from a guilty conscience, as their forerunner sometimes did, of whom Zechariah maketh mention, **“I am no prophet, I am an husbandman,”** (Zech. 13); *Aaron* from *Abiram*; *Simon Peter* from *Simon Magus*; *Paul*, a doctor of the Gentiles, from *Saul*, a persecutor of the Christians; *Cephas* from *Caiaphas*; *Jude* from *Judas*; *Christ* from *anticrist*; *apostles* from *apostates*, *backsliders*, *revolters*, who, though they bear the name of apostles, are found liars (see Rev. 2); and finally, *faithful dispensers* from *merchandisers* of the word of God, and purloiners of his mysteries. Whoever intruded himself with impunity, and without dangerous arrogancy, into this function? The proceeding of God in this case is excellently set down in the Epistle to the Romans, wherein, in chap. 10, as the throne of Solomon was mounted unto by six stairs, so the perfection and consummation of man ariseth by six degrees. The highest and happiest stair is this: **“He that shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved... But how shall they call upon him on whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? or how shall they hear without a preacher? Or how shall they preach except they be sent?”** (Rom. 10:13-15).

A singular and compendious gradation, wherein you have 1, sending; 2, preaching; 3, hearing; 4, believing; 5, invoking; 6, saving. **“For no man taketh this honour unto him, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron”** (Heb. 5:4). The apostle’s rule is universal, and exempts not the lawgiver himself. For **“Christ took not this honour to himself, to be made the high priest, but he that said unto him. Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee”** gave it him (Heb. 5:5). The first question that God moved touching this

ministration is, **“Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?”** (Isa. 6:8). The devil could easily espy the want of commission in the sons of Sceva, when they adjured him by the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached; **“Jesus I acknowledge, and Paul I know; but who are ye?”** (Acts 19:15). Your warrant is not good, your counterfeit charms are not strong enough to remove me. There are no chains of authority, no links of iron to bind the nobles and the princes of the earth, and to restrain devils, but in those tongues which God has armed from above, and enabled to his service.

What was the reason that Micaiah was so confident with Ahab king of Israel (see 1 Kings 22), and Zedekiah the king's prophet, or rather his parasite, who taunted him with insolence, and smote him on the face, that yet, notwithstanding, he neither spared the prophet nor dissembled with the king his final doom? Only this, he had his commission sealed from the Lord, and Zedekiah had none. What other reason made Elisha, a worm of the earth (in comparison), so plain with Jehoram? As in 2 Kings 3:13, **“What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother”** etc.; see there his further protestation. Had he nothing to do with the king, when the king had so much to do with him? Did he not fear the wrath of the lion, who could have said to the basest minister that ate the salt of his court, **“Take his head from his shoulders”**, and he would have taken it? But his commission was his brazen wall to secure him, and that, Jehoshaphat the king of Judah witnessed, saying, in ver. 12, **“The word of the Lord is with him.”**

This is the fortress and rock that Jeremiah stood upon before the priests, prophets, and people of Judah: **“If ye put me to death, ye shall bring innocent blood upon yourselves; for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears”** (Jer. 26:15). Yea, the princes and people upon that ground made his apology: **“This man is not worthy to die, for he hath spoken unto**

us in the name of the Lord our God” (Jer. 26:16). To spare my pains in examples, fearful are the woes, and not milder than wormwood, and the water of gall (for under these terms I find them shadowed, and but shadowed by the prophets), which he denounces in the course of that prophecy against false prophets, that spoke the **“visions of their own hearts,”** and said, “The Lord saith thus and thus; that were not sent, yet ran; were not spoken unto, yet prophesied; that cried, I have dreamed, I have dreamed,” when they were but dreams indeed, see Jer. 23. They are given to understand, that their sweet tongues will bring them a sour recompense, and that the Lord will come against them, for their lies, flatteries, chaff, stealth of his word (as they are termed), and other such impieties. Their cup is tempered by Ezekiel with no less bitterness, as in Ezek. 13, for following their own spirits, playing the foxes, seeing of vanity, divining of lies, building and daubing up walls with untempered mortar. The head and foot of their curse are both full of unhappiness. Their first entertainment is a woe; and their farewell an anathema, a cursed excommunication: **“They shall not be accounted in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writings of the house of Israel”** (Ezek. 13:9).

To end this point; let their commission be well scanned that come from the seminaries of Rome and Rheims, to sow seeds in this field of ours, whether, as Jonah had a word for Nineveh, so these for England and other nations, yea or no; whether from the Lord (for that they pretend, as Ehud did to Eglon, Judges 3), or from Balak of Rome, who hired them to curse the people of God; whether to cry openly against sin, or to lay their mouths in the dust, and to murmur rebellion; whether of zeal to the God of the Hebrews, or to the great idol of the Romans, as they to the great Diana of the Ephesians, to continue their craft, as Demetrius there did, and lest their state should be subverted, see Acts 19; whether to come like prophets with their open faces, or in disguised attire, **“strange apparel”** in regard of their profession (Zeph. 1:8),

a rough garment to deceive with, as the false prophet in Zechariah, in chap. 13; whether their sweet tongues have not the venom of asps under them, and in their colourable and plausible notes of *peace, peace*, there be any peace, either to the weal public, amidst their nefarious and bloody conspiracies, or to the private conscience of any man, in his reconciliation to their unreconciled church, formal and counterfeit absolution of sins, hearing, or rather seeing, histrionical masses, visiting the shrines and relics of the dead, numbering of *pater nosters*, invocation of saints, adoration of images, and a thousand such forgeries; whether they build up the walls of God's house with the well-tempered mortar of his written ordinances, or daub up the walls of their antichristian synagogue with the untempered mortar of their unwritten traditions; whether they come ambassadors from God, and instead of Christ seek a reconciliation between God and us, and not rather to set the mark of the beast in our foreheads, to make us their proselytes, and the children of error as deeply as themselves. If this be the word they bring, a dispensation from a foreign power, to resist the powers that God hath ordained, and instead of planting faith and allegiance, to sow sedition, and not to convert our country to the truth, but to subvert the policy and state thereof, to poison our souls, and to dig graves for our bodies against their expected day, to invade the dominions, alienate the crowns, assault the lives of lawful and natural princes, to blow the trumpet of Sheba in our land, **“Ye have no part in David, nor inheritance in the son of Jesse”** (2 Sam. 20:1), no part in Elizabeth, nor inheritance in the daughter of king Henry, every man to your tents, O England; let them reap the wages of false prophets even to the death, as the law has designed, see Deut. 18; and let that eye want sight that pities them, and that heart be destitute of comfort that cries at their downfall. Alas! for those men. Their bloody and peremptory practices call for greater torture than they usually endure, and deserve that their flesh should be grated, and their bones rent asunder with saws

and harrows of iron (as Rabbah was dealt with, in 2 Sam. 12), for their traitorous and unnatural stratagems.

2. *The person* to whom the commission was directed is Jonah, the son of Amittai, wherein you have, 1, his name, Jonah; 2, his parentage, the son of Amittai; 3, you may add his country from the ninth verse, a Hebrew; 4, his dwelling place, from the 2 Kings 14:25, Gath-hepher (for there was another Gath of the Philistines); 5, the time of his life and prophecy, from the same book, under the reign of Jeroboam the Second, or not far off; 6, the tribe whereof he was, namely, a Zebulonite, for that Gath appertains to the tribe of Zebulon; you have as much of the person as is needful to be known. The opinion of the Hebrews is, and some of our Christian expositors following their steps affirm, that Jonah was son to the widow of Sarepta, and that he is called the son of Amittai, not from a proper person, his father that begat him, but from an event that happened. For after Elias had restored him to life, in 1 Kings 17:17-24, the mother broke forth into this speech, **“Now I perceive that thou art the man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true.”** Therehence, they say, he was named the son of Amittai, that is, the son of truth, by reason of that miracle truly accomplished. Surely the word of the Lord that gave a commission to Jonah to go to Nineveh, gives no commission to us to go to such foreign and unproper interpretations. So long as we hear it but in our own country, as the Queen of the South spoke, of those that are flesh and blood like ourselves, and interpreters, perhaps, not so much of the counsels of God as their own conjectures, we are at liberty to refuse them; where we hear it from the mouth of Solomon, or Jonah, or one that is more than them both, we are ready to give credit. Our bounds are set which we must not pass; we may not turn to the right hand nor to the left, and neither add nor diminish, nor alter anything of God’s testimonies. It is a zealous contention that God maketh in Jeremiah, chap. 44:29, **“They shall know whose word shall stand, mine or theirs.”**

“Who hath instructed the Spirit of the Lord, or was his counsellor, or hath taught him?” (Isa 40). Shall we correct, or rather corrupt, falsify, and deprave the wisdom of God in speaking, who is far wiser than men, who made the mouth and the tongue, opens the lips and instills grace and knowledge unto them? Let it suffice us, that the Spirit of truth, and the very finger of God, in setting down his mind, has eased us of these fruitless and godless troubles, and expressed this prophet to be a Hebrew, and not a Gentile; his dwelling-place to be Gath-hepher, in the possessions of Zebulon, not Sarepta, a city of Sidon (see Luke 4). And as it is the manner of the Scripture, where the prophets are named, there to reckon withal the names of their fathers, as Isaiah the son of Amos, Jeremiah of Hilkiphan, Ezekiel of Buzi, etc., so there is no likelihood to the contrary but the father of Jonah is meant when he is called the son of Amittai. But it is the manner of some to languish about words, and in seeking deeply after nothing, to lose not only their time, travel, and thanks, but their wits also. Such has been the sickness of the allegorists, for the most part, both of the former and latter times (I except not Origen, their prince and original patron), who, not contenting themselves with the literal and genuine sense of the Scripture, but making some mystery of the plainest history that ever was delivered, and darkening the evident purpose of the Holy Ghost with the busy fancies of their own heads, as if one should cast clouds and smoke upon the sunbeams, have left the Scripture in many places no more like itself than Michal’s image in the bed upon a pillow of goat’s hair, see 1 Sam. 19, was like David. How forward have our schoolmen been in this rankness of wit! How have they doted and even died upon superfluous questions; how have they defaced the precious word of God, finer than the gold of Ophir, with the dross of their own inventions, setting a pearl above value in lead, and burying the richest treasure that the world knoweth in their affected obscurities! For, not to speak of their changing the style of the Holy Ghost into such barbarous and

desert terms, as that if the apostles now lived (as Erasmus noteth), they must speak with another spirit, and in another language, to encounter them. How many knots have they made in divinity, subtilties without the circle and compass of the world, and such as Chrysippus never thought upon, to as little purpose as if they had thrown dust in the air or hunted their shadows! They had done more service to the church of God if they had laid their hands (a great number of them) upon their mouths, and kept silence. Rupertus Gallus likens them to one that carries manchet at his back, and feeds upon flint stones; for these rejecting the bread of life, the simple word of God and the power thereof, macerate and starve themselves with frivolous sophistications.

One of their questions, for a test, or rather, as Melchior Cane terms them, their monsters and chimeras, is whether an ass may drink baptism? It is not unlike another in that kind, whether a mouse may eat the body of the Lord? More tolerable a great deal were the questions which Albutius the mooter proposed in a controversy: Why, if a cup fell down, it brakes; if a sponge, it brakes not? Cestius as scornfully censured him: Tomorrow he will declaim why thrushes fly, and gourds fly not? These are the mists of God's judgment upon the hearts of such men, who, having manna from heaven, prefer acorns before it, and leave the bread in their father's house, to eat the husks of beans, and cannot be satisfied with the pure and undefiled word of God converting their souls; but being called out of darkness into a marvelous light, they call themselves out of light into a marvelous darkness again. What is this but to feel for a wall at noontide, as Job speaks? In chap. 5, that is, when the clearest light of the gospel of Christ shineth in the greatest brightness and perfection thereof, to wrap it up in the darkness of such disputations as bring no profit. You see the occasion of my speech, the indiscretion and abuse of those men, who take the Scriptures, as it were, by the neck, and writhe them from the aim and intention of the Holy Ghost.

3. *The substance* of the commission follows, **“Arise, and go to Nineveh, that great city,”** etc. Every word in the charge is weighty and important.

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



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A Classic Study: Job 1:20-22, pt. 1

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

A Study by Joseph Caryl (1644)

Job 1:20-22, pt. 1 - What Job Did, and What Job Said

²⁰ Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, ²¹ And said,

**Naked came I out of my mother's womb,
and naked shall I return thither:
The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;
blessed be the name of the Lord.**

²² In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. (KJV).

These three verses contain the third division of the chapter, as we showed in the analysis of it. We have seen in the first, the character of Job in his prosperous estate, and the description of his prosperity. We have seen his afflictions in the causes, in the time, in the instruments, in the matter, and in the manner of inflicting them. In this third part we have the carriage of Job, how Job took it, how he behaved himself in this sad condition. And likewise, how God took it that Job did so behave himself.

So then, we may note two things in the general out of these three verses:

1. We have the carriage of Job, his behavior.
2. We have the testimony of God concerning his carriage and behavior.

The carriage and behavior of Job is laid down in verses 20 and 21. And concerning his carriage, the text gives us to consider:

1. What Job did.
2. What Job said.

First, What he did, and that is in the 20th verse, and there we find mentioned five distinct actions of Job upon the receiving of the relation of his affliction:

1. *He arose.*
2. *He rent his mantle.*
3. *He shaved his head.*
4. *He fell down upon the ground.*
5. *He worshipped.*

Second, What he said, and that is in the 21st verse: **“And he said, ‘Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked,’”** etc...

His sayings contain two strong and undeniable argumental propositions, and one clear conclusion, flowing naturally from them both, or from either of them; by which he acquits the Lord in his afflicting of him, and also supports and strengthens his own soul under those afflictions.

The testimony of God concerning Job’s carriage is in the 22nd verse. The Lord comes in, as it were like an *umpire* to determine who got the day, which is resolved when he said, **“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”** These words expressly set the laurel of victory upon the head of Job. Satan undertook that Job (if touched) would curse

God; now said God: Look upon him who was touched; see what he has done; examine all his actions that are past; observe what he has spoken; weigh every word that has come out of his mouth in the balance of truth and reason; and when you have done that, tell me whether he has yet cursed me. I pronounce, that in all he has done, in all he has said, *Job has not charged God foolishly*. That, in the general, is the sum of the context, and is the parts of it.

Now in detail, to begin first with what Job did: *his actions*.

“Then Job arose and rent his mantle...”

“Then” – Job stood out the three former assaults unmovably, but when he received the fourth, then his bowels were moved, *And then...*

“...Job arose...” – This was his first action. To *arise* is properly an act of one that sits. He is said to *arise*, who before did *sit* or *lie*. But yet, in Scripture, to *arise* is not always taken so strictly, and neither is it in this place. To *arise* in the language of the Scriptures notes *two things*.

First, the speediness of doing something. When a man does a thing instantly or presently, he is said to *arise* to do it; to *arise* and do it, though he were standing or walking before. This is a Hebraism, *He arose and rent his mantle*, that is, *He presently rent his mantle* upon the hearing of these messages, especially the last. And so you have the word in diverse places, such as Judges 20:18: **“The children of Israel arose and went to the house of the Lord”**, that is, they went presently up to the house of the Lord. Also, in 2 Sam. 14:31: **“Then Joab arose and went to Absalom.”** The meaning is only this, that upon the receiving of that message, he went with speed; he made no delays. And then in Neh. 2:18, when Nehemiah exhorted them to the great work of building the house of the Lord, the people showing their willingness and readiness

expressed it thus, **“Let us rise up and build,”** that is, let us build (as we say) out of hand, speedily.

Secondly, to *arise* implies the courage, constancy and strength of those who undertake or go about a business, they *arise* and do it; they do it with spirit. So here, it may import as much concerning Job in his sufferings. *He arose and rent his mantle*, that is, though he heard all these sad relations, yet his spirit was not overwhelmed; he was not drowned in those sorrows; he did not sink down under them, but he *arose*, and rent his mantle, etc. It is as if he had raised himself up to wrestle with the temptation and the tempter, to wrestle with Satan himself. In this sense, the Lord is said to arise, as in Isa. 33:8-9, where there is that sad description of the land: **“The earth mourneth and languisheth, Lebanon is ashamed...”** etc. **“Now will I rise, saith the Lord, now will I be exalted,”** that is, *now will I come and show myself with a mighty power for the deliverance of my people*. I will be exalted and they shall rejoice. That prayer of the old Church, **“Arise O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered,”** hath the same intent, desiring the Lord to go forth armed with strength for the help of his people and the subduing of their enemies. Thus Job arose, bound with a four-fold cord of affliction: he raised himself up like Samson, though in humility, yet with strength and courage.

And so, it is opposed to the sinking of the spirit under troubles, as you know the spirit of Eli did, as in 1 Sam. 4:18. There was sad tidings brought to Eli concerning the death of his sons and the taking of the Ark. The text says, **“As soon as he heard these things, he fell down backward”**; he had no spirit, no strength left in him; he did not arise and rend his garment, but he sunk down and broke his neck. When Nabal heard of the danger that his churlish and inhospitable answer had almost drawn upon him, in 1 Sam. 25:37, **“His heart died within him, and he became as a stone.”** When all that Job had was dead and gone, his heart lived; yea he was of a raised spirit, not only when he arose, but when he fell upon the ground: for then he worshipped, and worship is the lifting

up of the soul to God: *In the worship of God while the body is upon the knee, the mind is, or ought to be, upon the wing.*

“...and rent his mantle...” – This is the second act. Renting of garments is very often spoken of in Scripture, and we find it especially in these two cases. In case of extreme sorrow, and in case of extreme indignation.

In case of extreme sorrow, and that of two kinds, either in the sorrows of afflictions, or in the sorrows repentance; in both these we find renting the garments.

For the sorrows of outward affliction, so we read frequently of renting garments: When Jacob heard of the death of Joseph, when his sons brought him home the bloody coat, saying (but falsely), *that surely their brother was torn with wild beasts*; he presently *rent his garment*. And when the relation of the death of Saul was brought to David’s care, to express his sorrow, *He took hold of his clothes and rent them, and likewise all the men that were with him*; and so again afterward at the funeral of Abner, *David rent his clothes* and gave order to all the people that were with him to do the like. In great funerals or fatal mournings, it was usual among the Hebrews *to rent their garments*. This also was a frequent custom among the heathen, as the poet describes a mourner in his mixed lamentations for private and public losses; he went with his garments torn, being astonished at the death of his wife and the ruin of the city. Many such instances there are amongst their ancient historians.

Secondly, it was used in token of repentance, when sorrows for sin broke forth and multiplied, as in Josh. 7:6. When Joshua humbled himself upon the defeat, flight and slaughter of the Israelites before Ai, it is said, *he rent his clothes and fell to the earth*. This renting was of their garments in respect of the outward affliction, but withal in token of repentance, for Joshua and the people humbled themselves with fasting. So, when the book of the Law was read to Josiah, and he saw how far they had departed from the rule and word of God, it

is said, *He rent his clothes, and he was afraid, he humbled himself and his heart was tender before God.*

But it may be objected that in Joel 2:13, when we are exhorted to rent the heart, we are stopped from renting the garment: *Rent your hearts and not your garments*, in the case of repentance.

For answer to that I say, the “*not*”: there is not an absolute prohibition of renting the garment; it is not so much a negation, as a direction. *Rent your hearts and not your garments*, that is, *Rent your hearts rather than your garments*, or *Rent your hearts more than your garments*, or *be sure that you rent your hearts whatsoever you do with your garments*. Negations do not always quite deny a thing. For instance, in 2 Cor. 3:6, the Apostle, treating of the pre-eminence of the Gospel in the new dispensation, said, **“Who hath made us able ministers, not of the letter, but of the Spirit.”** “*Not*” there does not deny, as if the ministers of Christ did not speak and publish the letter of the word; for the letter of the word is the vessel wherein the Spirit is contained, and unless we speak the letter to the ear, the Spirit cannot in an ordinary way come into the heart; therefore understand the Apostles meaning thus, *he hath made us able ministers, not of the letter but of the Spirit*, that is, he has made us ministers rather of the spirit than of the letter, or more of the spirit than of the letter, because of the promise of the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, after the ascension of Christ.

A further instance we have in that speech of God, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*. That is, rather mercy than sacrifice. Sacrifice is not rejected, but mercy is preferred. So, *Rent your hearts and not your garments*, that is, rather rent your hearts than your garments. For otherwise you find that not only it was lawful (as in the former places) in times of repentance and sorrow to rend the garments, but they are taxed because they did not repent and rend their garments. The *not* renting the garment is charged as a conviction of an un-rent heart. When the roll of curses that Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah was read before Jehoiakim and courtiers, the king

cut the roll with a pen-knife and cast it into the fire, their impenitence is thus described: **“Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the King nor any of his servants that heard all those words”** (Jer. 36:24); as if it had been said, this was a time that called them aloud to rend their garments, to humble themselves and repent before the Lord, when they heard such words as these (clothed with their own sin and God’s wrath) read unto them, but they did it not; *yet they were not afraid, neither did they rend their garments*. So then, renting of the garment was used as a ceremony of repentance, as a shadow of godly sorrow. It had nothing in itself to move God, only it testified the greatness of their grief, that their hearts did rend as their garments were rent.

Further, renting of the garment was used in case of extreme indignation. Indignation is anger and sorrow boiled up to the height. It is as it were the extract and spirit of them both. And it is stirred especially when the ear of a man is filled with a voice of blasphemy that Rabshakeh had belched out against God, when he heard how he had reproached the *living God*, in saying, *Who is the God of Jerusalem that he should deliver it out of my hand?* (see Isa. 36:13ff). The text says that Hezekiah rent his clothes with indignation; that report filled him with a mixture of grief and anger; he was grieved that the holy name of God was blasphemed, he was angry with the blasphemer: these caused holy indignation, and this the renting of his garments. Thus also when Paul and Barnabas had restored the cripple at Lystra, the superstitious Lystrians would have done sacrifice to them as gods; which when the Apostles Paul and Barnabas heard of, and saw the preparations (oxen and garlands brought to the gates) for that abominable idolatry, *they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people saying, Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with you* (see Acts 14:13ff). They rent their clothes with indignation, being grieved and vexed to see men so besotted, and God so dishonored.

This act of Job in the text, renting his garments, may refer to either of these, it may refer to all these. If it be demanded, why did Job rend his garments? I answer, first, he rent his garments for the greatness of that sorrow that was upon him in regard of his outward affliction. Secondly, he rent his garments to testify his deep humiliation under the hand of God, with repentance for all his sins. Thirdly, he rent his garments, being filled with indignation at those blasphemies which Satan suggested to him. This latter I clear thus: you know it was the main design, the very plot of Satan to provoke Job to blaspheme God, as he said, **“Touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face”** (Job 1:11). He promised this to himself and did undertake with God to bring Job to that height of impatience. If so, then there is no question, but as these messengers of sorrow came to him, so Satan came with them and pointed every message with this or the like poisonous suggestion. *Now see what a master you serve; blaspheme God; why shouldn't you make scruple of thinking, or of speaking evil of him, who has powered out all these evils upon thee. Never stand so much upon his honor, who stands so little upon your comfort.* It is no question but Satan provoked Job in some such manner. He was not wise to promote his own ends, unless he did ply him with temptations to blasphemy. Now Job, being most sensible of these temptations, it being to him (as afterwards to holy David, see Ps. 42:10) as a sword in his bowels, while the enemy said to him, *where is not thy God*, he arises with indignation and soul-abhorrance to these injections, *rending his garments*, etc. That for the second act. The third follows...

“...and shaved his head...” – Shaving of the head was used sometimes to express *sorrow*, sometimes to express *bondage*, and I find it used in Scripture in opposition to both these, in times of joy and liberty.

First, shaving of the head was used as a note of *sorrow*. In Isa. 15:2, the Lord speaking by his prophet of the great affliction that should come upon the Jews, said, **“On all their**

heads shall be baldness, and every beard cut off”; that is, *they shall mourn*, that’s the meaning of it. And in Isa. 22:12, **“In that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness”**; that is, to shaving of themselves or cutting off their hair; the meaning of it in joining baldness and mourning was only this, to show that there should be extreme sorrow and mourning in the land. *The Lord calleth to mourning and baldness*, that is, to an exceeding great mourning, such as those mournings used to be when they shaved their heads. And the prophet puts in this as an aggravation of their sin, that if, when the Lord called for such a mourning as was joined with baldness and shaving the head, that then there was *joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine*. See this more clear, in Jer. 7:29, when the prophet foreshows the great affliction of Jerusalem, he thus bespeaks them, **“Cut off thine hair O Jerusalem and cast it away, and take up a lamentation.”** To add one instance more, in Micah 1:16. In case of their sore affliction, the prophet said, **“Make thee bald and cut thy hair for thy delicate children, enlarge thy baldness as the eagle.”** The meaning of all is, mourn bitterly, or mourn greatly for thy delicate children; thy delicate and sweet children they are destroyed; mourn greatly for them; *enlarge thy baldness as the eagle*. As the *eagle*, because the eagle (as naturalists observe), casts her feathers, and her head is many times quite bald. Therefore, it is said here, *enlarge thy baldness as the eagle*, that is, be exceeding bald; cut off all thy hair in that great mourning. We may illustrate this by a contrary rule given by this prophet Jeremiah, and likewise by Ezekiel, when mourning was forbidden. In Jer. 16:6, he speaks of some that should die and have none to mourn for them. He says, **“They shall not lament for them, nor make themselves bald for them.”** Also, in Ezek. 24:17, **“Make no mourning for the dead.”** What follows? **“Bind the tire of thine head upon thee,”** when they should keep on their hair, their tire, that was an argument that there was no mourning.

Further we find, that the cutting off the hair, the shaving of the head, was a sign of *bondage and reproach*. When David sent messengers to Hanun, Samuel records, that Hanun took the messengers *and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle* (see 2 Sam. 10:4), and the men were exceedingly ashamed. Now, the shame was not only because their beards were half cut off, for if that had been all, they might quickly have cut off the other half and have delivered themselves from the shame; for they were at liberty: but it is therefore said that the men were greatly ashamed, because amongst them it was a mark of shame and slavery to be shaven. Hereupon, David gives order *that they should tarry at Jericho, till their beards were grown*; it was a dishonor to be shaved. And it is noted in Plutarch concerning Demosthenes, that when he had a mind to sit close at his study and would not go abroad, or be interrupted by visits of friends at home, that he would have himself, that so he might be ashamed to go forth or see anybody, but be constrained to keep to his book for two or three months together till his hair was grown again. The bondage and reproach that Nebuchadnezzar brought upon Tyrus is thus described, *Every head was made bald* (see Ezek. 29:18). And Aristotle observes that the hair was a token of liberty. Thus the shaving of the head in Job might be a sign both of his sorrow and great reproach that was come upon him, being one now that was ready to be mocked and made the scorn and by-word of the world, as we see afterward he was, during this affliction.

Yet, it is considerable from Scripture example, that the cutting off the hair, and shaving of the head had not always either of these significations hitherto discussed, but did vary according to the diversity of places and of times. In the book of Genesis, we read that cutting and shaving of the hair, was a token of joy and liberty both together. When Joseph was delivered out of prison, it is said, *that he shaved himself and came to Pharaoh* (see Gen. 41:14). And it is noted concerning Mephibosheth, as a matter of his sorrow for David's absence,

that he let his hair grow. *He trimmed not his beard*, being much troubled at the king's absence (see 2 Sam. 19:24). I confess neither of these instances come home enough to the point: both of these neglecting the care and culture of their bodies in their troubles, now being delivered, prepare themselves by shaving and trimming the hair for the presence of those kings. But it is in some nations, shaving has been a mark of honor. All the Roman emperors were shaved, till Nero. And it was an ancient proverb, *Thou art a slave for thou wearest locks or long hair*.

There is an objection that may be made concerning this act of Job (because afterward it is said, *that in all this Job sinned not*), whether or not Job might shave his head without sin. For you have an express rule to the contrary, in Lev. 19:27, **“You shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.”** And so you have it again in Deut. 14:1, *their heads for the dead*; namely by shaving or cutting off the hair. How is it therefore here that Job shaved himself for the death of his children, and in regard of those great troubles that were upon him?

I answer briefly for that. First, Job lived (as we have cleared when we spoke of the book in general) before that Law was given, which did prohibit the cutting of the hair in that manner.

Secondly, it appears in those places, where those laws are set down, that the Lord did forbid only conformity to the heathens. They must not shave or cut themselves, as the heathen did, who cut their heads round like half globe (as it is observed concerning them), and were wont to dedicate their locks to their idol-gods. It was vain fashion and gross superstition that were forbidden in that law of Moses.

Thirdly, though the Jews were forbidden to shave their heads, as mourning for the death of their friends, yet (in the judgment of learned Junius), the shaving of their heads was not only permitted, but commanded in case of mourning for sin, or in times of solemn repentance and humiliation. He

instances in two places before mentioned. First, the prophet Isaiah reproving the unseasonable mirth and desperate security of the Jews in a time of public trouble and treading down, tells them, *In that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and so baldness, and to girding with sackcloth* (Isa. 22:12). Secondly, there is council given answerable to that reproof by the prophet Micah, in Micah 1:16: **“Make thee bald, and pole thee for thy delicate children, enlarge thy baldness as the eagle, for they are gone into captivity from thee.”**

We will observe something from these two actions, the renting of his garments and the shaving of his head. These refer to the expression of his sorrow for those losses in estate and the death of his children. As the other two actions, his falling upon the ground and worshipping refer to the expression of that homage and honor that he tendered up to God in the midst of these sorrows. From those two acts of sorrow learn we,

First, *that when the hand of God is upon us, it becomes us to be sensible of it, and to be humbled under it.* Job, hearing these sad relations, did not stand stoutly, as if nothing had touched him, but to show that sorrow did even rent his heart, he rent his garments; to show that his affliction touched his spirit, he saved his head. There are two extremes that we are carefully to avoid in times of affliction, and the Apostle cautions all the sons of God against them both in one verse: **“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou are rebuked of him”** (Heb. 12:5). Those are the two extremes, *despising* and *fainting*, when God does correct. He would not have us *despise* his chastening, to say: *I do not regard this; let God take all if he will; if my estate must go, let it go; if my children die, let them die.* This is a *despising of the chastening of the Lord*, and God cannot bear it, that we should bear it thus lightly. There is another extreme, that is, *fainting*. If when goods are taken away, the heart be taken away, and when

children die, then the spirit of the parent dies too. This is *fainting*.

Take heed of these two extremes. Job walks in the middle, in the golden mean between them both. He does not carelessly despise, neither does he unbelievably faint: he rises up and he rents his garments. He would have it known that he fainted not under the stroke, and he would have it known, that he felt the stroke; he was not like a stock or a stone; he would not carry it with a stoical apathy, but with Christian fortitude and magnanimity. Senseless ones are taxed, as in Jer. 5:3: **“Thou hast stricken them, and they have not grieved.”** Such are compared by Solomon to him that lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lies upon the top of a mast, secure and careless in the greatest dangers. **“They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me and I felt it not”** (Prov. 23:34-35). The prophet Hosea reproves the like: **“Strangers have devoured his strength and he knoweth it not, yea gray hairs are here and there upon him and he knoweth it not”** (Hos. 7:9). That is, he is in an afflicted, in a declining condition, and yet he lays it not to heart. A man may out of the greatness of his spirit (but not out of the carelessness of his spirit) say as Luther once did, when things went very ill, *If the world will go thus, let it go thus*. Otherwise, it is a most unbecoming temper to be stricken of God, and not to tremble, at least to take it to heart. When God afflicts us, then we should afflict ourselves and be humbled; when God’s hand is upon us, our hands (in this sense) should be upon ourselves. We must bear our cross upon our backs, we must not make a fire of it to warm our hands. Indeed, the Apostle exhorts to *rejoice in tribulation*, and it is an excellent thing to rejoice in tribulation, but we must not sleight, much less make a sport of tribulation. Rejoicing arises from a holy satisfaction that the soul has in the dealings of God with us. But sleighting arises from an unholy contempt, or at the best, from a stupid insensibleness of God’s dealings with us. The former has in it the height of

wickedness, and the latter has not the least degree of goodness. *It is no virtue to bear what we do not feel.*

Secondly, observe, *that in times of affliction we may express our sorrows by outward gestures, by sorrowful gestures.* Job was not only sorrowful, but he acts sorrowful; he puts himself into mourning postures; he rents his garments; he shaves his head; down he falls upon the ground. It is no hypocrisy to appear what we are; it is hypocrisy to appear what we are not. We use to say, he mourns truly that mourns without a garment, but if a man mourn in truth, a mourning garment is comely. To mourn in our clothes and laugh in ourselves, is both sinful and base. Now Job mourned indeed; the shaving his head and renting his garment was but to keep an outward correspondence with what he was within. Therefore, take heed of censuring those who in great sorrows use sorrowful gestures, striking upon their breasts, tearing their hair or the like. Only let all take heed of excessive and immoderate mourning; mourn not like Rachel, who would receive no comfort; mourn not like the heathen, who have no hope. To be above passions will be our happiness in heaven; to rectify passions is much of our happiness on earth. To be without natural affections is to fall below a man: to steer and manage them is one of the heights of a Christian.

Thirdly, we showed that this renting of his garments might have reference to his repentance, whence note: *That when God affects us with sufferings, we ought to affect ourselves to humble our souls for sin.* Smarting times are good repenting times, and worldly sorrow should get the company of godly sorrow. If we mingle some tears for sin, and for our unkindness to Christ, with the tears of sorrow, then they will refresh us. We get by losses and repair the breaches of our spiritual estates; no question but Job at this time fell a searching of his heart and a trying of his ways, renewing his repentance and assuring of his peace with God. When afflictions cause us to return thus into our own breasts, they have then a sweet influence, a blessed operation upon us.

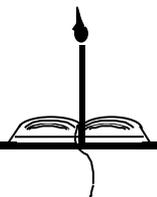
Lastly, observe, *that thoughts of blasphemy against God should be cast off and rejected with the highest indignation.* Job rent his garments, when Satan solicits Job to rent the name of God with reproach and cursings. Thoughts dishonoring God must needs be vexing to every good heart. Nothing touches a godly man, like that which touches God. So much for those two acts, *he rent his garments and he shaved his head.*



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

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New Testament Study: *Romans 2:17-29*



A Study by Scott Sperling

Romans 2:17-24 – The Lack of Moral Leadership

¹⁷ Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; ¹⁸ if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; ¹⁹ if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth – ²¹ you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

In the previous section, Paul discussed the principles of God’s righteous judgment: “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous”

(Rom. 2:12-13). In this section, he continues this thought, with particular emphasis on God's dealing with the Jews.

Paul addresses the Jews directly: **“Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth — you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?”** (Rom. 2:17-21). The Jews had a special relationship with God. God chose to reveal Himself to the Jews, and God entrusted the Jews with his Law. The Jews took pride in this special relationship.

Paul summarizes the advantages that the Jews had:

1. They were called **“Jews”** (vs. 17). “The name *Jew* embraces three significations: confession, praise, and thanksgiving; and by these three things that people was distinguished from all other nations. The Jew alone had been chosen as the confessor of God, while all the rest of the world had abjured His service. The Jew alone was appointed to celebrate His praises, while by others He was blasphemed. The Jew alone was appointed to render thanksgiving to God for multiplied benefits received, while others were passed by” [Haldane, 94].
2. They **“rely on the law”** (vs. 17). The children of Israel had the great privilege of being those to whom God entrusted with His perfect Law. Reliance on that Law was well and good, as long as their reliance included *obedience*. The problem is, the Jews relied on the mere *possession* of the Law. They thought that they were appointed a special place with God because they merely *possessed* the Law, whether or not they actually

obeyed it. “They should rely on the law in living their lives (so Ps 1:2; 19:7-11; 119:9-34). However, it was one thing to center on their *need* for the law, but quite another to center on their *possession* of the law. Their reliance was not so much on their walk with God as it was on the law he gave them, and it gave them a false security. Because of this they felt they were justified in the sight of God and would not have to face judgment” [Osbourne].

3. They **“boast in God”** (vs 17). It is well and good to **“boast in God.”** The Lord spoke through Jeremiah: **“Let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD”** (Jer. 9:24). But this boasting must be done in *humility* towards God, and not as a basis of *contempt* for others. “It is to one’s credit to take pride in a right relationship with God. But here there is an absence of humility that leads them to center on their status rather than on knowing God” [Osbourne]. “To boast or glory in God, or in Christ (see Gal. 6:14), is right, if it proceeds from a sense of our weakness and unworthiness, and a corresponding sense of the goodness of God, as our sure refuge and strength; but it is wrong if it arises from religious bigotry and conceit, which would monopolize the favor of God to the exclusion of others... The false Jewish boasting in God amounted to a boasting in the flesh, against which we are warned, see Gal. 6:18; 2 Cor. 10:15; Phil 3:3” [Lange, 108].
4. They **“know His will”** (vs. 18). God, in His grace, gave the children of Israel, not only His Law, but also guidance, through prophecies and revelation, throughout their history. In this, God showed them great favor. “The Jew had many means of knowing

the will of God. He had the lively oracles, educated teachers to expound it, with a splendid and divinely appointed public service, full of instruction and solemnity, so that it was nearly impossible to live even a short lifetime in Jewry without acquiring a large amount of religious knowledge” [Plumer, 99]. But again, such knowledge should be received with *humility*, and not be used as a basis for *arrogance* and *contempt* for others.

5. They **“approve of what is superior because they are instructed by the law”** (vs. 18). Through the Law, the Jews knew what was **“superior”** (obedience to the Law), and what was destructive (disobedience to the Law). Non-Jews, being without God’s Law, had no objective standard for what is **“superior”**. “The Jews knew the will of God, and, knowing that will, they consequently knew what was contrary to it; that is to say, those things which God does not approve, and which He condemns. For the declaration of what God approves includes, in the way of opposition and negation, those things which He does not approve. From this we learn the perfection of the written law, in opposition to unwritten traditions; for nothing more is needed in order to know the will of God, and to discern what contradicts it” [Haldane, 95]. “The Jew had better laws, better songs, better philosophy, better moral lessons, purer worship than any heathen nation” [Plumer, 99].
6. Because of the special revelation of God to them, they could be **“guides”, “instructors”, and “teachers”** (vss. 19-20). “The Jew was conscious of his superior light. He knew how debased and ignorant were the nations round about. He was confident that he could tell them many things of the greatest importance to all

men” [Plumer, 99]. However, with greater knowledge comes greater responsibility. The sin and disobedience of those who are a **“light for those who are in the dark”** are magnified, because of the potential to lead others astray. “Because the Jew had such privileges, his sin was all the greater: to belong to the true church, to hold the true doctrine, to be able to expound it to others should make us better men; but when these things are joined with unholiness, they but add to our condemnation” [Schaff, 36]. “It was the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, that they did not do as they taught (see Matt. 23:3), but pulled down with their lives, what they built up with their preaching; for who will believe those who do not believe themselves? Examples will govern more than rules. The greatest obstructers of the success of the word, are those whose bad lives contradict their good doctrine” [Henry, 223].

So yes, the Jews had great privileges. But we find that these privileges had no value because of their disobedience to God’s revealed Law: **“You then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?”** (vss. 21-23). The sins noted by Paul here are representative. They sinned against their fellow man (**“stealing”**), their own bodies (**“committing adultery”**), and against God (**“robbing temples”**). Their pride in their special place as God’s chosen people became their downfall, because of the greater responsibility they held by being favored by God. “The sum of the charge here made is that of gross inconsistency between profession and practice, with the aggravation of a wicked life following sufficient knowledge” [Plumer, 100]. As we have all

sinned, so the Jew has too sinned. None of us are without the need of Christ.

Paul summarizes well the damage done of teachers who do not practice what they preach: **“As it is written: ‘God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you’”** (vs. 24). “It matters little what a man’s speculative opinions may be; his practice may do far more to disgrace religion, than his profession does to honor it” [Barnes, in Lange’s, 111]. “While they made a boast of the law, they so disregarded its precepts as to lead the heathen to think and speak evil of that God who gave the law, of whose character they judged by the conduct of his people” [Hodge, 63]. We Christians should take special note of this. “Christians should ever remember that they are the epistles of Jesus Christ, known and read of all men; that God is honoured by their holy living, and that his name is blasphemed when they act wickedly” [Hodge, 67-68].

Romans 2:25-29 – True Circumcision

²⁵ Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. ²⁶ So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? ²⁷ The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

²⁸ A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such

a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.

Paul goes on to describe what it truly is to be one of God's people: **“Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised”** (vs. 25). Circumcision was a rite that physically distinguished the children of Israel from the surrounding nations. Many Jews of the time thought that the mere participation in the rite of circumcision would spare them from any judgment from God [Hodge, 63]. Paul informs them that circumcision does not convey such privileges. Rather, for the Jews, it is merely an *outward sign* of the covenant between God and them. Just as mere possession of the Law by the Jews will not shield them from judgment, so also mere participation in the rite of circumcision will likewise not convey righteousness upon them.

On the contrary, **“if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised”** (vs. 25). “Now he proceeds to strip them of the last refuge to which they usually betook themselves, their illusive trust in the possession of circumcision. This was so great, that some Jews maintained the opinion that the circumcised need not expect and fear the torments of Gehenna” [Philippi, 95]. “According to the apostle, the true idea of a sacrament is not that it is a mystic rite, possessed of inherent efficacy, or conveying grace as a mere *opus operatum*; but that it is a seal and sign, designed to confirm our faith in the validity of the covenant to which it is attached; and, from its significant character, to present and illustrate some great spiritual truth” [Hodge, 67]. Circumcision was an outward rite, in which one, by sacrificing the flesh, “consecrated the participant to membership of the people of God.” It was meant to be accompanied “by the inner consecration of moral holiness” [Meyer, 131]. Without the moral holiness, the rite of circumcision becomes worthless, and the *circumcision* becomes

uncircumcision (as the original Greek of vs. 25 states). “By wrong living, *circumcision* failed of its object and became *uncircumcision*, or exclusion from sonship with Abraham” [Stifler, 42].

Furthermore, since **“God does not show favoritism”** (Rom. 2:11), the privileges of the *circumcised*, can be attained by the *uncircumcised*: **“So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?”** (vss. 26). “If the unholy Jew virtually becomes a Gentile (ver. 25), does not the obedient Gentile virtually become a Jew?” [Schaff, 37]. “The one proposition flows from the other; for if circumcision is in itself nothing, its presence cannot protect the guilty; its absence cannot invalidate the claims of the righteous” [Hodge, 64].

Moreover, the righteous Gentile, though not circumcised, in effect condemns the unrighteous Jew: **“The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker”** (vs. 27). This is an interesting turnabout. This chapter began with Paul speaking directly to those (presumably Jews) who pass judgment on heathen sinners. Here, the uncircumcised who obey the law **“condemn”** those who routinely pass judgment on others. They **“condemn”** them, not in the sense that they will be those appointed as judges over them, but in the sense that their righteous behavior would serve as evidence against the disobedient Jews [Mounce, 73-74].

Paul summarizes the principle: **“A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God”** (vss. 28-29). “He is not a Jew who is only one outwardly, in dress, in profession, and in subjection to ceremonials, and

circumcision is not accomplished with a sharp knife; but he is a Jew who is right within, where only God sees; for circumcision pertains first of all to the heart, a cutting off of man from all evil" [Stifler, 43]. The Old Testament teaches exactly this: **"Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer"** (Deut. 10:16); **"Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved"** (Jer. 4:14). "The basic contrast [pointed out] in these verses is an *inner* vs. *outer* contrast; a contrast between what can be seen with the eye (physical circumcision, Jewish birth) and what only God ultimately sees (the changed heart)" [Moo, 174]. "In other words, the holiness which God approves is in the heart. With him a name is nothing, profession nothing, but the reality is everything... The heart, the spirit, the seat of the principles, affections and motives, is of chief importance. God cares nothing at all for mere show, mere profession, mere rites and appearances as deciding character" [Plumer, 103]. God is not satisfied with mere formalism, with the rote practice of rituals. He wants your religion to reach into and transform the very depths of your being.

"Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God" (vs. 29). "This *praise* is the holy *satisfaction* of God [His being *well-pleased*], as He has so often declared it to the righteous in the Scriptures" [Meyer, 136].



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A Study in History: The Reformation

Introduction to the Protestant Reformation, pt. 3, by Philip Schaff

**“Now the Lord is the Spirit:
and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”**
(2 Cor. 3:17, KJV)

SECTION 5.

The Genius and Aim of the Reformation

The spirit and aim of evangelical Protestantism is best expressed by Paul in his anti-Judaistic Epistle to the Galatians: **“For freedom did Christ set us free; stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage”** (Gal. 5:1). Christian freedom is so inestimable a blessing that no amount of abuse can justify a relapse into a state of spiritual despotism and slavery. But only those who have enjoyed it, can properly appreciate it.

The Reformation was at first a purely religious movement, and furnishes a striking illustration of the all-pervading power of religion in history. It started from the question: What must a man do to be saved? How shall a sinner be justified before God, and attain peace of his troubled conscience? The Reformers were supremely concerned for the salvation of the soul, for the glory of Christ and the triumph of his gospel. They thought much more of the future world than of the present, and made all political, national, and literary interests subordinate and subservient to religion.

Yet they were not monks, but live men in a live age, not

pessimists, but optimists, men of action as well as of thought, earnest, vigorous, hopeful men, free from selfish motives and aims, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, equal to any who had preceded them since the days of the Apostles. From the centre of religion they have influenced every department of human life and activity, and given a powerful impulse to political and civil liberty, to progress in theology, philosophy, science, and literature.

The Reformation removed the obstructions which the papal church had interposed between Christ and the believer. It opened the door to direct union with him, as the only Mediator between God and man, and made his gospel accessible to every reader without the permission of a priest. It was a return to first principles, and for this very reason also a great advance. It was a revival of primitive Christianity, and at the same time a deeper apprehension and application of it than had been known before.

There are three fundamental principles of the Reformation: the supremacy of the *Scriptures* over tradition, the supremacy of *faith* over works, and the supremacy of the Christian *people* over an exclusive priesthood. The first may be called the objective, the second the subjective, the third the social or ecclesiastical principle.

They resolve themselves into the one principle of evangelical freedom, or freedom in Christ. The ultimate aim of evangelical Protestantism is to bring every man into living union with Christ as the only and all-sufficient Lord and Saviour from sin and death.

SECTION 6.

The Authority of the Scriptures

The objective principle of Protestantism maintains that the Bible, as the inspired record of revelation, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice; in opposition to the Roman Catholic

coordination of Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition, as the joint rules of faith.

The teaching of the living church is by no means rejected, but subordinated to the Word of God; while the opposite theory virtually subordinates the Bible to tradition by making the latter the sole interpreter of the former and confining interpretation within the limits of an imaginary *consensus patrum*. In the application of the Bible principle there was considerable difference between the more conservative Lutheran and Anglican Reformation, and the more radical Zwinglian and Calvinistic Reformation; the former contained many post-scriptural and extra-scriptural traditions, usages and institutions, which the latter, in its zeal for primitive purity and simplicity, rejected as useless or dangerous; but all Reformers opposed what they regarded as anti-scriptural doctrines; and all agreed in the principle that the church has no right to impose upon the conscience articles of faith without clear warrant in the Word of God.

Every true progress in church history is conditioned by a new and deeper study of the Scriptures, which has "first, second, third, infinite draughts." While the Humanists went back to the ancient classics and revived the spirit of Greek and Roman paganism, the Reformers went back to the sacred Scriptures in the original languages and revived the spirit of apostolic Christianity. They were fired by an enthusiasm for the gospel, such as had never been known since the days of Paul. Christ rose from the tomb of human traditions and preached again his words of life and power. The Bible, heretofore a book of priests only, was now translated anew and better than ever into the vernacular tongues of Europe, and made a book of the people. Every Christian man could henceforth go to the fountain-head of inspiration, and sit at the feet of the Divine Teacher, without priestly permission and intervention. This achievement of the Reformation was a source of incalculable blessings for all time to come. In a few years Luther's version had more readers among the laity than

ever the Latin Vulgate had among priests; and the Protestant Bible societies circulated more Bibles in one year than were copied during the fifteen centuries before the Reformation.

We must remember, however, that this wonderful progress was only made possible by the previous invention of the art of printing and by the subsequent education of the people. The Catholic Church had preserved the sacred Scriptures through ages of ignorance and barbarism; the Latin Bible was the first gift of the printing press to the world; fourteen or more editions of a German version were printed before 1518; the first two editions of the Greek Testament we owe to the liberality of a Spanish cardinal (Ximenes), and the enterprise of a Dutch scholar in Basel (Erasmus); and the latter furnished the text from which, with the aid of Jerome's Vulgate, the translations of Luther and Tyndale were made.

The Roman church, while recognizing the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible, prefers to control the laity by the teaching priesthood, and allows the reading of the Scriptures in the popular tongues only under certain restrictions and precautions, from fear of abuse and profanation. Pope Innocent III was of the opinion that the Scriptures were too deep for the common people, as they surpassed even the understanding of the wise and learned. Several synods in Gaul, during the thirteenth century, prohibited the reading of the Romanic translation, and ordered the copies to be burnt. Archbishop Berthold, of Mainz, in an edict of January 4th, 1486, threatened with excommunication all who ventured to translate and to circulate translations of sacred books, especially the Bible, without his permission. The Council of Constance (1415), which burnt John Hus and Jerome of Prague, condemned also the writings and the bones of Wycliffe, the first translator of the whole Bible into the English tongue, to the flames; and Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury and chancellor of England, denounced him as that "pestilent wretch of damnable heresy who, as a complement of his wickedness,

invented a new translation of the Scriptures into his mother tongue.” Pope Pius IV (1564), in the conviction that the indiscriminate reading of Bible versions did more harm than good (*plus detrimenti quam utilitatis*), would not allow laymen to read the sacred book except by special permission of a bishop or an inquisitor. Clement VIII (1598) reserved the right to grant this permission to the Congregation of the Index. Gregory XV (1622), and Clement XI (in the Bull *Unigenitus*, 1713), repeated the conditional prohibition. Benedict XIV, one of the liberal popes, extended the permission to read the Word of God in the vernacular to all the faithful, yet with the proviso that the translation be approved in Rome and guarded by explanatory notes from the writings of the fathers and Catholic scholars (1757). This excludes, of course, all Protestant versions, even the very best. They are regarded as corrupt and heretical and have often been committed to the flames in Roman Catholic countries, especially in connection with the counter-Reformation of the Jesuits in Bohemia and elsewhere. The first edition of Tyndale’s New Testament had to be smuggled into England and was publicly burnt by order of Tunstall, bishop of London, in St. Paul’s church-yard near the spot from which Bibles are now sent to all parts of the globe. The Bible societies have been denounced and condemned by modern popes as a “pestilence which perverts the gospel of Christ into a gospel of the devil.” The Papal Syllabus of Pius IX (1864), classes “*Societates Biblicae*” with Socialism, Communism, and Secret Societies, calls them “pests frequently rebuked in the severest terms,” and refers for proof, to several Encyclicals from November 9th, 1846, to August 10th, 1863.

Such fulminations against Protestant Bible societies might be in some measure excused if the popes favored Catholic Bible societies, which would be the best proof of zeal for the spread of the Scriptures. But such institutions do not exist. Fortunately, papal bulls have little effect in modern times, and in spite of official prohibitions and discouragements, there are

zealous advocates of Bible reading among modern Catholics, as there were among the Greek and Latin fathers. Nor have the restrictions of the Council of Trent been able to prevent the progress of Biblical scholarship and exegesis even in the Roman church. *E pur si muove*. The Bible, as well as the earth, moves for all that.

Modern Protestant theology is much more just to ecclesiastical tradition than the Reformers could be in their hot indignation against the prevailing corruptions and against the papal tyranny of their day. The deeper study of ecclesiastical and secular history has dispelled the former ignorance on the “dark ages,” so called, and brought out the merits of the fathers, missionaries, schoolmen, and popes, in the progress of Christian civilization.

But these results do not diminish the supreme value of the sacred Scripture as an ultimate tribunal of appeal in matters of faith, nor the importance of its widest circulation. It is by far the best guide of instruction in holy living and dying. No matter what theory of the mode and extent of inspiration we may hold, the fact of inspiration is plain and attested by the universal consent of Christendom. The Bible is a book of holy men, but just as much a book of God, who made those men witnesses of truth and sure teachers of the way of salvation.

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

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A Study in Wisdom: Proverbs 6:1-19

A Study by Scott Sperling

Proverbs 6:1-19

Vss. 1-5 -

Against Securing Another's Debts

- ¹ My son, if you have put up
security for your neighbor,
if you have shaken hands in pledge
for a stranger,
- ² you have been trapped by what you said,
ensnared by the words of your mouth.
- ³ So do this, my son, to free yourself,
since you have fallen into
your neighbor's hands:
Go—to the point of exhaustion—
and give your neighbor no rest!
- ⁴ Allow no sleep to your eyes,
no slumber to your eyelids.
- ⁵ Free yourself, like a gazelle
from the hand of the hunter,
like a bird from the snare of the fowler.

Solomon, as he teaches his son wisdom, turns to instructions concerning financial well-being, including avoidance of agreements that could bring ruin (vss. 1-5), having a positive work ethic (vss. 6-11), and dealing with others fairly and honestly (vss. 12-19). “No one is prepared for life who has not learned some basic lessons on financial prudence” [Garrett, 97]. “It is the excellency of the word of

God that it teaches us not only divine wisdom for another world, but human prudence for this world, that we may order our affairs with discretion” [Henry, 820]. “So graciously has our God made his book, not only our guide to heaven, but the directory of our common life” [Bridges, 60].

First, Solomon warns, in very strong terms, against securing the debt of a stranger: **“My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth”** (vss. 1-2). Advice against securing the debt of others is a somewhat common theme in the Book of Proverbs (see Prov. 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13). It is quite possible that the prosperity that Solomon’s reign brought to Israel led to opportunities of financial speculation through the expanded commerce and trade with other nations. Unwise financial dealings could bring about financial ruin, and so Solomon gives words of wisdom to his son concerning this.

Specifically here, Solomon warns against entering into a binding agreement with one’s neighbor, promising to pay his debt, should the neighbor be unable to do so. Such an agreement seems to have been somewhat common in Israel. “In ancient Israel, there were several ways to guarantee a loan. The borrower might offer an item of value as collateral (e.g., Deut. 24:6, 10-13; Exod. 22:25-26); pledge fields, houses, and even children (see Neh. 5:1-5); or request that another person, often in exchange for a small fee, serve as guarantor. If one became a guarantor, all of one’s property (and oneself if necessary) was subject to seizure if the debtor failed to repay the loan” [Yoder, 93]. Such an agreement boils down to this: receiving a small benefit in the present, while opening oneself up to the possibility of ruin in the future.

It is a common theme in the book of Proverbs, and in the Bible in general: The foregoing of current pleasures to avoid future regret. In a sense, this sums up the Christian life: foregoing the fleeting pleasures of sin, while looking forward

to a greater reward. Moses is our great example in this, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches: **“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward”** (Heb. 11:24-26). Zophar, in the book of Job, warns us of the fleeting pleasures of sin: **“Surely you know how it has been from of old, ever since mankind was placed on the earth, that the mirth of the wicked is brief, the joy of the godless lasts but a moment”** (Job 20:4-5).

In the case here in Proverbs, part of the impetus of entering into the agreement was quite possibly to show good will toward a **“neighbor”**. But, quite interestingly, later in this verse, the **“neighbor”** is referred to as **“a stranger.”** And this happens in life: we really don’t know someone until we enter into a business relationship with him or her. The perfect **“neighbor”** can become an unknown **“stranger”**, when finances are intertwined with friendship.

Note here, although Solomon is speaking of a business relationship that is entered into between his son and his son’s neighbor, Solomon is not prohibiting acts of charity and generosity, with respect to one’s neighbor. There are times when our neighbors are in need, and it is proper for a Christian to show love, and help one’s neighbor who is in need. Such acts of charity are wise in that they follow our Lord’s commandment to love one another.

But the commandment to love one’s neighbor does not require that we enter into foolish business arrangements, which could possibly ruin us. Solomon views such arrangements as a **“snare”** and a **“trap”** (see vs. 2). As such, he advises his son to do everything he can to extract himself from such a trap: **“So do this, my son, to free yourself, since you have fallen into your neighbor’s hands: Go—**

to the point of exhaustion—and give your neighbor no rest! Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids. Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler” (vss. 3-5). From these admonitions, one can see how dire Solomon considers the situation. His son should act like a trapped “gazelle”, or a “bird” in a snare, both of which desperately use all their energy to achieve freedom. “Forsaking all pride, the youth is to grovel relentlessly—not stopping for sleep (6:4). Like prey caught tightly in a predator’s grip (6:5), he must do whatever is necessary to free himself quickly, even at the risk of pain and injury” [Yoder, 93]. This may seem excessive, but it is not, if one considers the penalties of the time for defaulting on the debt. The creditor could seize all property, including house, land, servants, and even children [Yoder, 94].

Vss. 6-11 - Against Laziness

- 6 **Go to the ant, you sluggard;
consider its ways and be wise!**
- 7 **It has no commander,
no overseer or ruler,**
- 8 **yet it stores its provisions in summer
and gathers its food at harvest.**
- 9 **How long will you lie there, you sluggard?
When will you get up from your sleep?**
- 10 **A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest –**
- 11 **and poverty will come on you like a thief
and scarcity like an armed man.**

Solomon now gives admonitions against laziness, in order to promote in his son a positive work ethic. He uses an example

from the natural world—the ant: **“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest”** (vss. 6-8). God has designed the natural world so that we can learn from it. We can learn from nature, not only of the existence and wisdom of the Creator, but also practical lessons from what we see. “There is, in each creature, some spark of the Divine excellency, testifying silently against our deficiencies” [JFB, 429].

It is somewhat of an embarrassment, though, for man, created in the image of God, to have fallen so far, so as to need instruction by one of the smallest of creatures. Solomon tells the **“sluggard”** to **“consider the ways”** of the ant, who teaches us to go about our business diligently, and to be self-governed and self-directed as we do so. One never sees an ant stand still. Nor is there a taskmaster putting the ant to the whip to get it to work. The ant has an instinctive desire to perform the task at hand, and to complete it. This, we would do well to imitate.

The sluggard’s behavior is directly contrasted to the ant’s: **“How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest — and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man”** (vss. 9-11). The sluggard only considers his present comfort, and sleep, even much sleep, is his defining characteristic. The sluggard ever and always desires just **“a little”** more sleep.

“Man was created for activity; all his powers and faculties were given him to be diligently employed for some good end. And when this law of his nature is violated, then we may ordinarily expect that a just retribution in some form will follow” [Muenscher, 63]. And Solomon presents a dire threat to the sluggard: **“Poverty will come on you like a thief and**

scarcity like an armed man” (vs. 11). **“Poverty”** and **“scarcity”**: the bane of us all.

Let us take a moment, since we are studying God’s great book, which is full of spiritual instruction, as well as practical instruction, to expand this teaching a bit. There are *physical* sluggards, as Solomon has described, but also *spiritual* sluggards, who neglect their *spiritual* duties of prayer, biblical study, and attendance to the worship of God. There are those who “sleep away the opportunities of grace” [Bridges, 61]. Ironically, many people who are the most diligent in their business occupations, are the laziest in their spiritual activities. We need to attend to both, seeking comfortable contentment in our physical life, but the greatest riches of God’s grace in our spiritual life.

Vss. 12-19 – Against Deceitfulness and Malice

- 12 **A troublemaker and a villain,**
 who goes about with a corrupt mouth,
- 13 **who winks maliciously with his eye,**
 signals with his feet
 and motions with his fingers,
- 14 **who plots evil with deceit in his heart –**
 he always stirs up conflict.
- 15 **Therefore disaster will overtake him in an instant;**
 he will suddenly be destroyed –
 without remedy.
- 16 **There are six things the LORD hates,**
 seven that are detestable to him:
- 17 **haughty eyes,**
 a lying tongue,
 hands that shed innocent blood,
- 18 **a heart that devises wicked schemes,**
 feet that are quick to rush into evil,
- 19 **a false witness who pours out lies**

**and a person who stirs up conflict
in the community.**

The previous sections warned against the financial problems that could arise from making poor business decisions, and then from having the poor work ethic that arises from laziness. This section describes someone who is wise in the ways of the world, and diligent at what he does, but who incurs the displeasure of God from his malicious actions, and his deceitfulness.

Solomon describes his maliciousness: **“A troublemaker and a villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth, who winks maliciously with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers, who plots evil with deceit in his heart—he always stirs up conflict. Therefore disaster will overtake him in an instant; he will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy”** (vss. 12-15). Note that the **“troublemaker’s”** whole body takes part in his villainy: mouth, eyes, feet, fingers, heart. His villainy begins, as villainy often does, with his **“corrupt mouth.”** Then, in a two-faced manner, as he is speaking with someone, perhaps making a business deal, he signals accomplices (presumably) with various parts of his body: **“winks maliciously with his eye”**, **“signals with his feet”**, and **“motions with his fingers.”** The **“evil”** he plots comes straight **“from his heart.”** Solomon assures us, that in the end, **“disaster will overtake him in an instant; he will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy”** (vs. 15). The downfall of the troublemaker, the **“disaster”** and **“destruction”**, may not necessarily occur in this life (though it often does). The troublemaker has incurred the displeasure of God, and so he will be punished ultimately.

The next verses describe the troublemaker from God’s point of view: **“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a**

false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community” (vss. 16-19). Solomon uses a rhetorical device to describe God’s hatred of the troublemaker. Solomon says that there are **“six”**, and then **“seven”** things that are detestable to God, with respect to the troublemaker. This rhetorical device is used to denote that there are an indefinite number of these things, **“seven”** of which are noted here. Denoting first *six* then *seven* “is merely a rhetorical way of stating something indefinite, that is, the list is not supposed to be exhaustive... These numerical enumerations appear to have been a popular form of statement for truths that it was desired to memorize.” [Martin, 54]. This rhetorical device is used elsewhere in the book of Proverbs (see Prov. 30:15-31), as well as in other books of the Bible (see Amos 1-2; Mic. 5:5).

Similar to vss. 12-15, five body parts are described. In this case, the eyes, tongue, hands, heart, and feet. First, the LORD hates **“haughty eyes.”** The haughtiness of pride appropriately begins the list of hateful things to the Lord, as pride is something throughout the Bible that God hates (see Isa. 2:11-17; 1 Pet. 5:5-6). Next is **“the lying tongue.”** God is a God of Truth, and so lying is detestable to Him. Then, **“hands that shed innocent blood.”** God is a God of justice, and so will not endure the shedding of **“innocent”** blood. Next then, **“a heart that devises wicked schemes.”** At the center of the seven items detestable to God is the corrupt **“heart,”** which is the center of the evildoer’s wickedness. All his maliciousness emanates from his corrupt **“heart.”** And then, **“feet that are quick to rush into evil.”** Contrasted to the lazy sluggard (see vss. 6-11), the troublemaker is **“quick”** to rush into his evil activity. He displays an enthusiasm to do evil.

The sixth and seventh items hateful to the Lord summarize the evil activity of the whole person: **“...a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.”** In summary, this is someone

full of deceitfulness and malice; someone who is “breathing out lies” (as the original Hebrew indicates), and habitually “stirring up conflict”: this is hateful to God.



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A Sermon: The Soul in Darkness

A Sermon by the Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon
Sermon No. 31 –
The Desire of the Soul in Spiritual Darkness –
Isaiah 26:9

(Preached at the New Park Street Chapel,
London, June 24th, 1855)

“With my soul have I desired thee in the night.”
(Isaiah 26:9, KJV)

NIGHT APPEARS to be a time peculiarly favorable to devotion. Its solemn stillness helps to free the mind from that perpetual din which the cares of the world will bring around it; and the stars looking down from heaven upon us shine as if they would attract us up to God. I know not how you may be affected by the solemnities of midnight, but when I have sat alone musing on the great God and the mighty universe, I have felt that indeed I could worship him; for night seemed to be spread abroad as a very temple for adoration, while the moon walked as high priest, amid the stars, the worshippers, and I myself joined in that silent song which they sang unto God: “Great art thou, O God! great in thy works. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” I find that this sense of the power of midnight not only acts upon religious men, but there is a certain poet, whose

character, perhaps, I could scarcely too much reprobate: a man very far from understanding true religion; one whom I may, I suppose, justly style an infidel a libertine of the worst order, and yet he says concerning night in one of his poems:—

“’Tis midnight on the mountains’ brown,
 The cold round moon shines deeply down;
 Blue roll the waters, blue the sky
 Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
 Bespangled with those isles of light,
 So wildly, spiritually bright;
 Whoever gazed upon them shining,
 And turning to earth without repining,
 Nor wish’d for wings to flee away,
 And mix with their eternal ray.”

Even with the most irreligious person, a man farthest from spiritual thought, it seems that there is some power in the grandeur and stillness of night to draw him up to God. I trust many of us can say, like David, “I have thought upon thee continually, I have mused upon thy name in the night watches, and with desire have I desired thee in the night.” But I leave that thought altogether. I shall not speak of night natural at all, although there may be a great deal of room for poetic thought and expression. I shall address myself to two orders of persons, and shall endeavor to show what I conceive to be the meaning of the text. May God make it useful to you both. First, I shall speak to *confirmed Christians*; and from this text I shall bring one or two remarks to bear upon their case, if they are in darkness. Second, I shall speak to *newly awakened souls*, and try if I can find some of them who can say, “With my soul have I desired thee in the night.”

I. I am about to address this text to the more confirmed believer; and the first fact I shall educe from it—the truth of which I am sure he will very readily admit—is, that **THE CHRISTIAN MAN HAS NOT ALWAYS A BRIGHT SHINING**

SUN: *that he has seasons of darkness and of night.* True, it is written in God's word, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and it is a great truth that religion—the true religion of the living God—is calculated to give a man happiness below as well as bliss above. But, notwithstanding, experience tells us that if the course of the just be "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," yet sometimes *that* light is eclipsed. At certain periods clouds and darkness cover the sun, and he beholds no clear shining of the daylight, but walks in darkness and sees no light.

Now there are many who have rejoiced in the presence of God for a season; they have basked in the sunshine God has been pleased to give them in the earlier stages of their Christian career; they have walked along the "green pastures," by the side of the "still waters," and suddenly—in a month or two—they find that glorious sky is clouded: instead of "green pastures," they have to tread the sandy desert; in the place of "still waters," they find streams brackish to their taste and bitter to their spirits, and they say, "Surely, if I were a child of God this would not happen." Oh! say not so, thou who art walking in darkness. The best of God's saints have their nights; the dearest of his children have to walk through a weary wilderness.

There is not a Christian who has enjoyed perpetual happiness, there is no believer who can always sing a song of joy. It is not every lark that can always carol. It is not every star that can always be seen. And not every Christian is always happy. Perhaps the King of Saints gave you a season of great joy at first because you were a raw recruit and he would not put you into the roughest part of the battle when you had first enlisted. You were a tender plant, and he nursed you in the hot-house till you could stand severe weather. You were a young child, and therefore he wrapped you in furs and clothed you in the softest mantle. But now you have become strong and the case is different. Capuan holidays do not suit Roman soldiers; and they would not agree with Christians. We need

clouds and darkness to exercise our faith, to cut off self-dependence, and make us put more faith in Christ, and less in evidence, less in experience, less in frames and feelings.

The best of God's children—I repeat it again for the comfort of those who are suffering depression of spirits—have their nights. Sometimes it is a night over the whole church at once; and I fear we have very much of that night now. There are times when Zion is under a cloud, when the whole fine gold becomes dim, and the glory of Zion is departed. There are seasons when we do not hear the clear preaching of the word; when the doctrines are withheld; when the glory of the Lord God of Jacob is dim; when his name is not exalted; when the traditions of men are taught, instead of the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. And such a season is that when the whole church is dark. Of course each Christian participates in it. He goes about and weeps, and cries, “O God, how long shall poor Zion be depressed? How long shall her shepherds be ‘dumb dogs that cannot bark?’ Shall her watchmen be always blind? Shall the silver trumpet sound no more? Shall not the voice of the gospel be heard in her streets?” O! there are seasons of darkness to the entire church! God grant we may not have to pass through another! but that, starting from this period, the sun may rise ne'er to set, till, like a sea of glory, the light of brilliance shall spread from pole to pole!

At other times, this darkness over the soul of the Christian rises from *temporal distresses*. He may have had a misfortune as it is called—something has gone wrong in his business, or an enemy has done somewhat against him; death has struck down a favourite child—bereavement has snatched away the darling of his bosom, the crops are blighted; the winds refuse to bear his ships homeward; a vessel strikes upon a rock, another founders, all goes ill with him, and, like a gentle man who called to see me this week, he may be able to say, “Sir, I prospered far more when I was a worldly man than I have done since I have become a Christian: for, since then,

everything has appeared to go wrong with me. I thought," he said, "that religion had the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come." I told him, Yes, it had; and so it should be in the end. But he must remember there was one great legacy which Christ left his people; and I was glad he had come in for a share of it—"In the world ye shall have tribulation; in me ye shall have peace." Yes! you may be troubled about this, you may be saying, "Look at so-and-so: see how he spreads himself like a green bay-tree. He is an extortioner and wicked man, yet everything he does prospers. You may even observe his death, and say, there are no bands in his death. "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men." Ah! beloved! ye are come into the sanctuary of God this morning, and now shall ye understand their end. God hath set them in slippery places, but he casteth them down to destruction. Better to have a Christian's days of sorrow, than a worldling's days of mirth. Better to have a Christian's sorrows than a worldling's joys. Ah! happier to be chained in a dungeon with a Paul than reign in the palace with an Ahab. Better to be a child of God in poverty than a child of Satan in riches. Cheer up, then, thou downcast spirit, if this be thy trial. Remember that many saints have passed through the same; and the best and most eminent believers have had their nights.

"But oh!" says another, "you have not described my night, sir. I have not much amiss in business; and I would not care if I had—but I have a night in my spirit." "O sir," says one, "I have not a single evidence of my Christianity now. I was a child of God, I know; but something tells me that I am none of his now. There was a season when I flattered myself that I knew something about godliness and God; but now I doubt whether I have any part or lot in the matter. Satan suggests that I must dwell in endless flames. I see no hope for me. I am afraid I am an hypocrite. I think I have imposed on the church and upon myself also. I fear I am none of his. When I turn over God's Scriptures there is no promise; when I look

within, corruption is black before me. Then while others are commending me, I am accusing myself of all manner of sin and corruption. I could not have thought that I was half so bad. I am afraid there cannot have been a work of grace in my heart, or else I should not have so many corrupt imaginations, filthy desires, hard thoughts of God; so much pride, so much selfishness and self-will. I am afraid I am none of his." Now, that is the very reason why you are one of his, that you are able to say that: for God's people pass through the night. They have their nights of sorrow. I love to hear a man talk like that. I would not have him do so always. He ought at times to enter into "the liberty where with Christ hath made him free." But I know that frequently bondage will get hold of the spirit, But you say, "Surely no one ever suffers like that." I confess I do myself constantly, and very often there are times when I could not prove my election in Jesus Christ, nor my adoption, though I rejoice that for the most part I can cry,—

"A debtor to mercy alone
Of covenant mercy I sing."

Yet at other seasons I am sure the meanest lamb in Jesu's fold I reckon ten thousand times more in advance than myself and if I might but sit down on the meanest bench in the kingdom of heaven, and did but know I was in, I would barter everything I had, and I do not believe there ever existed a Christian yet, who did not now and then doubt his interest in Jesus. I think, when a man says, "I never doubt," it is quite time for us to doubt him, it is quite time for us to begin to say, "Ah, poor soul, I am afraid you are not on the road at all, for if you were, you would see so many things in yourself, and so much glory in Christ more than you deserve, that you would be so much ashamed of yourself, as even to say, 'It is too good to be true.'"

2. The first part then is fully established by experience, that Christian men very frequently have their nights. But the

second thing here is that *a Christian man's religion will keep its colour in the night*. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night." What a mighty deal of silver-slipper religion we have in this world. Men will follow Christ when every one cries "Hosanna! Hosanna!" The multitude will crowd around the man then, and they will take him by force and make him a king when the sun shines, when the soft wind blows. They are like the plants upon the rock, which sprang up and for a little while were green, but when the sun had risen with fervent heat straightway withered away. Demas and Mr. Hold-the-world, and a great many others, are very pious people in easy times. They will always go with Christ by daylight, and will keep in company so long as fashion gives religion the doubtful benefit of its patronage. But they will not go with him in the night.

There are some goods whose colour you can only see by daylight—and there are many professors the colour of whom you can only see by daylight. If they were in the night of trouble and persecution you would find that there was very little in them. They are good by daylight but they are bad by night. But, beloved, do you not know that the best test of a Christian is the night? The nightingale, if she would sing by day when every goose is cackling, would be reckoned no better a musician than the wren. A Christian if he only remained steadfast by daylight, when every coward is bold, what would he be? There would be no beauty in his courage, no glory in his bravery. But it is because he can sing at night—sing in trouble—sing when he is driven well nigh to despair; it is this which proves his sincerity. It has its glory in the night. The stars are not visible by daylight, but they become apparent when the sun is set. There is full many a Christian whose piety did not burn much when he was in prosperity; but it will be known in adversity. I have marked it in some of my brethren now present, when they were in deep trial not long ago. I had not heard them discourse much about Christ before, but when God's hand had robbed them of their comfort, I

remember that I could discern their religion infinitely better than I could before. Nothing can bring our religion out better than that. Grind the diamond a little and you shall see it glisten. Do but put a trouble on the Christian, and his endurance of it will prove him to be of the true seed of Israel.

3. A third remark from this to the confirmed Christian is, *all that the Christian wants in the night is his God.* “With desire have I desired thee in the night.” By day there are many things that a Christian will desire besides his Lord; but in the night he wants nothing but his God. I cannot understand how it is unless it is to be accounted for by the corruption of our spirit, that when everything goes well with us we are setting our affection first on this object and—then on another, and then on another; and that desire which is insatiable as death and as deep as hell never rests satisfied. We are always wanting something, always desiring a yet beyond. But if you place a Christian in trouble you will find that he does not want gold then—that he does not want carnal honour—then he wants his God. I suppose he is like the sailor, when he sails along smoothly he loves to have fair weather, and wants this and that to amuse himself with on deck. But when the winds blow all that he wants is the haven. He does not desire anything else. The biscuit may be mouldy, but he does not care. The water may be brackish, but he does not care. He does not think of it in the storm. He only thinks about the haven then. It is just so with the Christian, when he is going along smoothly he wants this and that comfort; he is aspiring after this position, or is wanting to obtain this and that elevation. But let him once doubt his interest in Christ—let him once get into some soul-distress and trouble, so that it is very dark—and all he will feel then is, “With desire have I desired thee in the night.”

When the child is put upstairs to bed it may lie while the light is there, and look at the trees that shake against the window, and admire the stars that are coming out; but when it gets dark and the child is still awake it cries for its parent. It

cannot be amused by aught else. So in daylight will the Christian look at anything. He will cast his eyes round on this pleasure and on that! but, when the darkness gathers, it is "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" "O why art thou so far from me and from the word of my roaring?" Then it is,

"Give me Christ or else I die;
These can never satisfy."

4. But now one more remark before I leave my address to confirmed saints. *There are times when all the saints can do is to desire.* We have a vast number of evidences of piety: some are practical, some are experimental, some are doctrinal; and the more evidences a man has of his piety the better, of course. We like a number of signatures, to make a deed more valid, if possible. We like to invest property in a great number of trustees, in order that it may be all the safer, and so we love to have many evidences. Many witnesses will carry our case at the bar better than a few: and so it is well to have many witnesses to testify to our piety. But there are seasons when a Christian cannot get any. He can get scarcely one witness to come and attest his godliness. He asks for good works to come and speak him. But there will be such a cloud of darkness about him, and his good works will appear so black that he will not dare to think of their evidences. He will say, "True, I hope this is the right fruit, I hope I have served God but I dare not plead these works as evidences." He will have lost assurance and with it his enjoyment of communion with God. "I have had that fellowship with him," perhaps he will say, and he will summon that communion to come and be an evidence. But he has forgotten it, and it does not come, and Satan whispers it is a fancy, and the poor evidence of communion has its mouth gagged, so that it cannot speak.

But there is one witness that very seldom is gagged, and one that I trust the people of God can always apply, even in the night; and that is, "I have *desired* thee I have desired thee

in the night.” “Yes, Lord, if I have not believed in thee, I have *desired* thee; and if I have not spent and been spent in thy service, yet one thing I know, and the devil cannot beat me out of it, I have *desired* thee—that I do know—and I have desired thee in the night, too, when no one saw me, when troubles were round about me.”

Now, my beloved, I hope there are many of you here this morning who are strong in faith. You do not, perhaps, want what I have said; but I will advise you to take this cordial, and if you do not want to drink it now, put it up in a small phial, and carry it about with you till you do; you do not know how long it may before you are faint. And as Mr. Greatheart gave Christiana a bottle of wine to take with her that she might drink when she was fatigued, so you take this, and do not laugh at a poor despised believer because he is not so strong as yourself. You may want this yourself someday. I tell you there are times when a Christian will be ready to creep into a mousehole if he might but get into heaven; when he would be glad to throw anything away to get into the smallest crevice to escape from his fears; when the meanest evidence seems more precious than gold; when the very least ray of sunlight is worth all the riches of Peru; and when a dot of comfort is more sweet than a whole heaven of it may have been at other seasons. You may be brought into the same condition, so take this passage with you and have it ready—have it ready to plead at the throne: “With desire have I desired thee in the night.”

II. The second part of my sermon is to be occupied by speaking to **NEWLY AWAKENED SOULS**; and as I have made four remarks to confirmed Christians, I will now endeavor to answer three questions to those who are newly awakened.

The first question they would ask me is this. *How am I to know that my desires are proofs of a work of grace in my soul?* Some of you may say, I think I can go so far as the text—I have desired God; I know I have desired to be saved. I have desired to have an interest in the blood of Jesus, but how am I to know that it is a desire sent of God, and how can I tell whether

it will end in conversion? Hear me, then, while I offer one or two tests.

1. First, you may tell whether your desires are of God by their *constancy*. Many a man when he hears a stirring sermon, has a very strong desire to be saved; but he goes home and forgets it. He is as a man who seeth his face in a glass, goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he is. He returns again: once more the arrow sticks hard in the heart of the King's enemy; he goes home, only to extract the arrow, and his goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew it passeth away. Has it been so with you? Have you had such a desire? Will to-morrow's business take it away? Are you wanting Christ to-day? and will ye despise him to-morrow? Then I am afraid your desires are not of God; they are merely the desires of a naturally awakened conscience, just the stirrings of mere nature, and they will go as far as nature can go, and no farther. But if your desires are constant ones take comfort. How long have they lasted? Have you been desiring Christ this last month or these last three or four months? Have you been seeking him in prayer for a long season? And do you find that you are anxious after Christ on the Monday as well as on the Sunday? Do you desire him in the shop when the intervals of business allow you to do so? Do you seek him in the night—in the solemn loneliness, when no ministers voice breaks on your ear, when no truth is smiting your conscience? Is it but the hectic flush of the consumption that has come upon your cheek? which is not the mark of health. Or is it the real heat of a true desire, which marks a healthy soul? Are you desiring God constantly? I admit there will be variations even to our more sincere desires, but a certain measure of constancy is essential to their real value as evidences of a divine work.

2. Again: you may discern whether they are right or wrong by their *efficacy*. Some persons desire heaven very earnestly, but they do not desire to leave off drunkenness: they desire to be saved, but they do not desire salvation enough to shut their

shops up on Sunday morning; or to bridle their tongues, and leave off speaking ill of their neighbors. They desire salvation; but they do not desire it enough to come sometimes on the week-day to hear the gospel. You may tell the truthfulness of your desires by their efficacy. If your desires lead you into real “works meet for repentance,” then they come from God. Wishes, you know, are nought unless they are carried out. “Many; say unto you, shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able” “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” Seeking will not do; there must be striving. Our prophet here informs us, that whilst he desired God in the night, that desire was very efficacious. For, in the 18th verse, he declares, “In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, we have waited for thee.” This desire made me wait for thy judgments. How many do I hear say I am waiting for God, it is all I do: there I lie at the pool of Bethesda, and one of these days an angel will come and stir the pool. Stop! How do you know you are not deceiving yourself? There is a friend waiting for me to tea: I will step into the room. There is no kettle on the fire: there is not a bit for me to eat. “Sir, we have been waiting for you.” But there is nothing ready in the house! I do not believe them; they could not have been waiting for me, or else they would have been ready. And waiting for God always implies being ready. Says a man, “I am waiting for God.” But he is not ready for God at all: he still keeps on his drunkenness, the house is still unswept; he is as worldly as ever. He is waiting. Yes, but waiting implies being ready; and nobody is waiting that is not ready, You are not waiting for the coach until you have your coat and hat on ready to start, and are looking out at the door for it; and you are not waiting for God, until you are ready to go with God. No man ought to say, I am waiting for God. No, beloved, it is God who is waiting for us generally, rather than any of us waiting for him. No sinner can be beforehand with him. But the prophet waited “in the way of God’s judgments:” that is, waited in the right place—waited in the house of God—waited under the sound of the gospel. And then this

desire led him to seek. “With my spirit within me will I seek thee.” It led him to seek after God. Oh! the poor pitiful desires of some of you are very little good. An old writer says, “Hell is paved with good intentions.” I was not aware that there was any pavement at all—because it has no bottom, but at the same time I believe that the sides of the pit are hung round with good intentions; and men will feel themselves pricked and goaded from side to side with good designs that they once formed but never carried out—children that were strangled at the birth—desires that never were brought into living acts—desires that sprang up like the mushroom in the night, and like the fungus were swept away—like smoke from the chimney, that stopped as soon as the fire had gone out. Oh! brethren, if these are your desires, they are not practical, they do not come of God. But if your desires have made you give up your drunkenness—have compelled you to renounce your theatre-going—have constrained you to seek God with full purpose of heart—have brought you to give up one lust and another—take comfort, you are in the right road, if your desires are practical desires.

3. Again: you can tell these desires by their *urgency*. Ah! you want to be saved some of you, but it must be this day next week. But when the Holy Ghost speaks, he says, “*To-day* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” It must be now or never. “*To-day* give me grace; *to-day* give me mercy; *to-day* give me pardon.” Some of you hope to be saved before you die, before the pit closes on you; you hope Jesus Christ will look down upon you in some years to come. You have not set down how many years, I suppose; but it is always in the distant hazy future. But the true desire is *now*. Does the poor man who stands upon the scaffold with a rope round his neck say, “Pardon me in a year’s time?” No, he is afraid he shall the next minute be launched into eternity. He who feels his danger will cry, “*Now!*” He who wants Christ really, will cry, “*Now!*” He who is spiritually awakened will cry out, “*Now or never!*” What! sinner, will it do to postpone salvation?

Doth thine heart tell thee it will do by-and-bye? What! when the fire is just coming through the boards of thy little chamber? What! when thy ship has struck upon the rock, and is filling? Yes, she is filling, while the fire at the other end is rushing up; and fire and water together are seeking thy destruction. Wilt thou say, "To-morrow?" Why, thou mayest be dead ere to-morrow's sun has risen. To-morrow! where is it? In the devil's calendar, it is not written in any book on earth. To-morrow! It is some fancied islet in the far-off sea that the mariner has never reached. To-morrow! It is the fool's desire: which he never shall gain. Like a will-o'-the-wisp it dances before him, but only lands him in the marshes of distress. To-morrow! There is no such thing. It is God's. If there is such a day, ours it cannot be. Tillotson well remarks:—"To be always intending to live a new life, but never to find time to set about it; this is as if a man should put off eating and drinking, and sleeping, from one day and night to another, till he is starved and destroyed"

But you say, "If I have desired God, why have I not obtained my desire before now? Why has not God granted my request?"

In the first place, *you have hardly a right to ask the question*; for God has a right to grant your petition or not as he pleases; and far be it from man to say to God "What doest thou?" He is a sovereign, and has power to do what he will. But since thine anxiety has dictated the question, let my anxiety attempt to answer it. Perhaps God has not granted thy desire, because he wishes thine own profit thereby. He designs to show thee more of the desperate wickedness of thine heart, that in future thou mayest fear to trust it. He wants thee to see more of the blackness of darkness and of the horrible pit of sin, that like a burnt child thou mayest shun the fire forever. He lets thee go down into the dungeon, that thou mayest prize liberty the better when it comes. And he is keeping thee waiting, moreover, that thy longings may be quickened. He knows that delay will fan the desire, and that if he keeps you waiting it will

not be a loss to you, but will gain you much, because you will see your necessity more clearly, seek him more earnestly, cry more bitterly and your heart will be more in earnest after him. Besides, poor soul, God keeps thee waiting, perhaps in order that he may display the riches of his grace more fully to thee at the last. I believe that some of us who were kept by God a long while before we found him, loved him better perhaps than we should have done if we had received him directly, and we can preach better to others, we can speak more of his loving kindness and tender mercy. John Bunyan could not have written as he did if he had not been dragged about by the devil for many years. Ah! I love that picture of dear old Christian. I know when I first read that book, and saw the old woodcut in it of Christian carrying the burden on his back, I felt so interested for the poor fellow, that I thought I should jump with joy when, after the poor creature had carried his burden so long, he at last got rid of it. Ah! beloved; and God may make you and me carry the burden for a long time till he takes it off that we may leap all the higher with joy when we do get deliverance; for depend upon it, there is no poor penitent who loves mercy so well as he who has been ferrying for it for a season. Perhaps that is the reason why God keeps you waiting.

One more thought here. *Perhaps it has come already.* I think some of you are pardoned and you do not know it. I think some of you are forgiven; though you are expecting something wonderful as a sign which you will never receive. Persons have got the strangest notions in the world about conversion. I have heard persons tell the queerest tales you could imagine about how they were converted; though of course I did not believe them. And I fancy some of you think you will have a kind of electric shock—that a sort of galvanism, or something or other, will pass through you, such as you never had before. Do not be expecting any miracles now. If you will not think you are pardoned till you get a vision, you will have to wait many a year. Some people fancy

they are not pardoned because they have never heard a voice in their ears. I should be very sorry to have my salvation dependent on a text of Scripture applied to my heart; I should be afraid that the devil had applied it, or that it was the wind whistling behind me. I want something more sure than that. But perhaps you are forgiven, and you do not yet know it. God has spoken the tidings of mercy to your spirit, and you have not yet heard it, because you are saying, "It cannot be that." If you could but sit down and think of this:—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," methinks you would find that after all you are not excluded. There is no great need for any of these miraculous things that you are reckoning upon. God may have given them to some of his people, but he has never promised them. Perhaps, then, the question may be answered by saying, "The pardon is there, but you do not know it." Oh! May God speak loudly in your soul, that you may know really and certainly that he has forgiven you!

But there is one more serious enquiry: and it is, "*Will God grant my desire at last?*" Yes, poor soul, verily he will. It is quite impossible that you should have desired God and should be lost, if you have desired him with the desire I have described. For I will suppose that you should go down into the chambers of the lost with the desire still in your spirit: when you entered within the gates you would have to say, "I desired mercy of God, and he would not give it me: I sought grace at the hands of Jesus, and he would not give it." You know what would be said at once. Satan would be so pleased. "Ah!" he would say, "here is a sinner that perished praying: God has not kept his promise, he said, 'Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved:' "and here is one that did it, and he is lost!" Ah! how they would howl for joy in hell! They would sing a blasphemous song against the Almighty God—that one poor desiring soul should be there! I tell you one thing: I have heard many wicked things in my life—I have heard many men swear

and blaspheme God, till I have trembled, but there is one thing I never did hear a man say yet, and I think God would scarcely permit any man to perpetrate such a lie, I never heard even a drunken man say, "I sincerely sought God with full purpose of heart, and yet he has not heard me, and will not answer me, but has cast me away." I scarcely think it possible, although I know that men can be infinitely wicked, that any man could utter such an abominable falsehood as that. At any rate, I can say I never heard it; and I believe there are some of you who can say, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I never seen one penitent sinner who could say, in despair, I am not saved. I have sought God and he will not hear me, he has cast me away from his face and will not give me mercy;" and, I think, as long as you live you will not meet a case. Then why should *you* be the first? Why, poor penitent, shouldst thou be the first? Dost thou think thou art a chosen mark for all the arrows of the Almighty? Hath he set thee for a butt against which he will direct all the thunderbolts of his vengeance? Art thou to be the first instance in which mercy fails? Art thou to be the one who shall first out-do the infinity of love? Oh! say not so. Despair is mad; but for one instant gather up thy reason thou despairing one. Would God wish to see thee damned? Hath he not said, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but would rather that he should turn to me and live." Do you think it would be a pleasure to the Almighty to have your blood? Oh! far be it from you to conceive it. Do you not think that he loves to pardon? Hath he not said himself he delighteth in mercy? And is it not written, "As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." What advantage would it be to God to destroy your souls? Would it not be more to his honour to save you? Ah, assuredly; because you would sing his praise in heaven, would you not? Yes, but recollect, the best argument I can use with you is this: Do you suppose that God would give his Son to die for sinners, and yet would not

save sinners? It is written in the Scriptures, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” and you are a sinner; you feel that you are a sinner; you know it. Then he came to save you? Only believe that. As a poor penitent you have a right to believe it.

If you were a Pharisee you would not have that right; but as a penitent, humble, contrite soul, you have a right to believe in Jesus. The Pharisee has none for it is never written that he came to save the righteous; and if he believed he did he would believe a lie; but every man who is a sinner, every man who lays claim to that title, has a right also to believe that Christ died for him; and not only so but it is the truth. He came into the world for a certain purpose and what he came for he will do. He came into the world to save sinners, and now it is written “Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” When, last Friday, I had the honour of preaching to many thousand persons in the open air, such an assembly as I never dreamed of seeing and such a vast number as I could scarcely have fancied would have met for any religious purpose, I noticed a most singularly powerful echo, constantly taking up the last words of my sentences and sending them back, as if some great giant voice had spoken to confirm what I had said. When I had repeated the words, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” echo said, “Saved!” and when I proceeded, “He that believeth not shall be damned,” I heard the echo gently say “Damned!” Methinks this morning I hear that echo: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;” and the saints above cry, “Saved!” Hark! how they sing before the throne! Hark! how your glorified parents and your immortalized relatives, cry, “Saved!” Hear ye not the echo, as it echoes from the blue sky of heavens—“Saved!” And, oh! doleful thought, when I utter those words, “He that believeth not shall be damned,” there comes up that dread word—“Damned!” from the place where there are “hollow groans, and sullen moans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts.” God grant

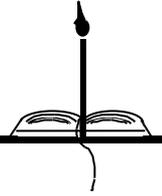
that you may never know what it is to be damned! God give you to believe now; for, “to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”



This sermon can be found in the book *Spurgeon's Sermons*, Vol. I (The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit). A PDF eBook of this volume is available free of charge at:

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

A Meditation: The Traveler



A Meditation: Going Abroad, by James Meikle (1730-1799)

*[James Meikle was a surgeon's mate on a British Man-o'-War Ship.
These are meditations that he wrote before and during that voyage.]*

What a load of business presses me on every hand when about to leave my native country! I must state and clear with all my creditors and debtors before I go! In addition to this, when I am about my ordinary business on land, a little pocket-money will defray my charges; but it is not so when *going abroad*. I must have bills of exchange for a considerable sum and changes of apparel agreeable to that part of the world to which I am bound.

Now, if I am thus busied, thus anxious and concerned, about my going from one part to another of this terrestrial globe, with what justice will all this care, anxiety, and concern be increased when I must commence my journey to eternity, and set out for the other world? This is an event that unavoidably awaits me; and who can tell how soon? Of what folly would I prove myself possessed, should I propose to go so far without a farthing? But with much greater madness would I be intoxicated, should I launch into eternity without an interest in the heavenly treasure. To be poor in any part of this world, begets contempt among the men of the world, but poverty in the world of spirits is an eternal shame, and an irretrievable loss.

Again, would I not blush to go with tattered clothes and clouted shoes, to a part of the world where it is fashionable to be finely dressed? How, then, shall I appear without the white raiment of a Saviour's righteousness in the presence of God, where angels walk in robes of innocence, and saints in brodered garments? When the marriage of the Lamb shall be come, and his bride shall have made herself ready, if found without the wedding-garment, with what confusion of face shall I be covered, and with what anguish cast into outer darkness!

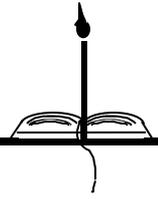
How am I hurried at the last in setting out, notwithstanding I have been so long proposing, and so long preparing for, this voyage! Yea, an express arrives, that the ship is ready to sail, and I am taken, as it were, unawares, though for some time I have been expecting such a message. Then, since I have this momentous, this interesting voyage into the world of spirits before me, let my daily study be to set all my grand concerns in order, that when *death* the *transport* comes, I may have nothing to do but set my foot aboard, and be wafted over to the land of rest. Again, though looking for death daily, yet I, and all my friends, may be surprised at last.

Now, in my earthly travels, of friends and acquaintances I take a long farewell; but at death I bid the whole world an eternal *adieu*.



This article is taken from: Meikle, James. *The Traveller*. Edinburgh: J. Pillians & Son, 1811. A PDF file of this book can be downloaded, free of charge, at <http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

Postscript



The Constant Ministry of God's Word

“The grace of God, in the heart of man, is a tender plant in a strange unkindly soil; and therefore cannot well prosper and grow without much care and pains, and that of a skillful hand, and one which hath the art of cherishing it: for this end hath God given the constant ministry of the word to his church, not only for the first work of conversion, but also for confirming and increasing his grace in the hearts of his children.”

-- *Robert Leighton (1611-1684)*

Related Bible Verse:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Note: The work from which the above quote was taken, *Practical Commentary on 1st Peter*, by Robert Leighton, is available as a PDF eBook at the Classic Christian Library, free of charge at:

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

