

# Scripture Studies

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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. 2

*[This continues a study taken from a series of lectures given in 1594 by John King, who became the Bishop of London from 1611 to 1621.]*

**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).

3. The substance of Jonah's commission followeth, "**Arise, and go to Nineveh, that great city,**" etc. Every word in the charge is weighty and important.

*Arise.* In effect, the same commandment which was given to Jeremiah, "**Truss up thy loins, arise, and speak to them**" (Jer. 1); the same which to Ezekiel, "**Son of man, stand upon thy feet**" (Ezek. 2); that is, set thyself in a readiness for a chargeable service; sit not in thy chair; lie not upon thy couch; say not to thy soul, *Take thine ease*; Arise! It craveth the preparation and forwardness, not only of the body, but also of the mind and spirit of Jonah.

*Go.* When thou art up, keep not thy tabernacle; stand not in the market-place, nor in the gates of Jerusalem, nor in the courts of the Lord's house; but gird up thy reins, put thy sandals about thy feet, take thy staff in thine hand; thou hast a journey and voyage to be undertaken. *Go.*

*To Nineveh.* Not to thine own country, where thou wast born and bred, and art familiarly acquainted, linked with thy kindred and friends, and hast often prophesied, but to a foreign nation,

whose language will be riddles unto thee, to the children of Asshur, the rod and scourge of Israel. *Go to Nineveh.*

*To Nineveh, a city,* etc. No hamlet nor private village, but a place of frequency and concourse, proud of her walls and bulwarks, plentifully flowing with wealth, her people multiplied as the sands of the river; and the more populous it is, the more to be feared and suspected, if thy message please them not. The first that ever built a city was Cain (see Gen. 4); and it is noted by some divines, that his purpose therein was to environ himself with human strength, the better to avoid the curse of God.

*A great city.* Large and spacious, which had multiplied her merchants above the stars of heaven, and her princes as grasshoppers (see Nah. 3); the emperor's court, the golden head of the picture, the lady of the earth, the seat of the monarch, the mother city and head of the whole land.

*Cry.* When thou art come to Nineveh, keep not silence, smother not the fire within thy bones, make not thy head a fountain of tears to weep in secret for the sins of that nation, write not the burden in tables, whisper not in their ears, neither speak in thy usual and accustomed strength of speech, but cry; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, charm the deafest adder in Nineveh, let thy voice be heard in their streets, and thy sound upon the tops of their houses.

*Against it.* Thou mightest have thought it sufficient to have cried within the city of Nineveh; it would have drawn the wonder of the people upon thee, to have seen a matter so insolent and seldom used; but thou must cry *against it*, even denounce my vengeance, and preach fire and brimstone upon their heads if they repent not.

*For their wickedness,* etc. But the reason shall be handled in the proper place thereof.

For brevity's sake, I will reduce the whole unto three heads.

1. The place which the prophet is sent unto. *Arise and go to Nineveh.*

2. What he is to do in Nineveh. *Cry against it.*

3. For what cause. *For their wickedness is come up before me.*

So for 1. *Arise and go*. These two former words, differing somewhat in degree, the one calling up Jonah, as it were from sleep, *Arise*; the other setting him forward in his way, *Go*; and the one haply belonging to the inward, the other to the outward man. As they import a dullness and security in us, without God's instigation and furtherance, so they require a forwardness and sedulity of every servant he hath, in his several callings. Our life is a warfare upon the earth, saith Job (see Job 7), the condition whereof is still to be exercised. Jacob the patriarch, after his long experience of a hundred and thirty wearisome winters, called it **"a pilgrimage of few and evil days"** (Gen. 47), therefore no rest should be taken in it. They that account it a pastime show that their heart is ashes, and their hope more vile than the earth we walk upon. We must **"awake from sleep, and stand up from the dead,"** (for idleness is a very grave unto us), that **"Christ may give us light"** (Eph. 5:14). We are called into a vineyard, some one or other vocation of life, and Christianity, the universal vineyard, is common to us all. Shall we stand to see and to be seen, as in a marketplace, and do nothing? Are we now to learn that the penny of eternal bliss is reserved for workmen? And the difference between the hiring of God and the devil is, that God requireth the labour before he payeth the wages; the devil payeth the wages beforehand, that so he may dull our edge unto labour, and nurse us in idleness, for pains to come.

When we hear the messengers of God return with these unwelcome tidings unto him, **"We have gone through the whole world, and, behold, it sitteth still, and is at rest,"** (Zech. 1), can we be ignorant what echo resounds unto it? For **"when they shall say, 'Peace and safety,' then shall come upon them sudden destruction, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"** (1 Thess. 5:3). Have we not read that idleness and security was one of the sins that overthrew Sodom and her daughters? That although themselves slept and snorted in pleasure, yet their damnation slept not? And what else is an idle man, but a city without defense, which, when

the enemy of the soul hath destroyed, he saith, as that other enemy in Ezekiel, **“I will go up to the land that hath no walled towers; I will go to them that are at rest, and dwell in safety, which dwell all without walls, and have neither bars nor gates”** (Ezek. 38:11). The fodder, the whip, and the burden belong to the ass; meat, correction, and work unto thy servant: send him to labor that he grow not idle, for idleness bringeth much evil. Happy is that man that ordereth his servant according to that counsel; I mean, that saith unto his flesh, *Arise*, and it ariseth; *Go*, and it goeth; as the centurion in the Gospel said to his soldier, *Do this*, and he did it.

Augustus, the emperor, hearing that a gentleman of Rome, notwithstanding a great burden of debt wherewith he was oppressed, slept quietly, and took his ease, desired to buy the pallet that he lodged upon; his servants marveling thereat, he gave them this answer, that it seemed unto him some wonderful bed, and worth the buying, whereon a man could sleep that was so deeply indebted. Surely if we consider with ourselves the duty and debt we owe to God and man, to our country, to our family, to home-born, to strangers, that is, both to Israel and to Nineveh, and most especially to those of the household of faith; that as it was the law of God before the law, that we should **“eat our bread in the sweat of our face”** (Gen. 3), so it is the law of the gospel also, that **“he that laboureth not should not eat”** (2 Thess. 3); that the blessed Son of God ate his bread, not only in the sweat, but in the blood, of his brows; rather he ate not, but it was his **“meat to do his Father’s will, and to finish his work”** (John 4); that even in the state of innocency, Adam was put into the garden to dress it (see Gen. 2); that albeit all labourers are not chosen, yet none are chosen but labourers; that the fig-tree was blasted by the breath of God’s own lips with an everlasting curse, because it bare but leaves; and the axe of heavy displeasure is **“laid unto the root of every tree”** that is barren of good fruits, and if it be once dead in natural vegetation, it shall be twice dead in spiritual malediction, and plucked up by the root; it would make us vow with ourselves,

“I will not suffer mine eyelids to slumber, nor the temples of my head to take any rest” until I have finished that charge whereunto I am appointed.

Jacob’s apology to Laban may be a mirror to us all, not to neglect our accounts to a higher master than ever Laban was: **“These twenty years have I been in thy house; I was in the day consumed with heat, and with frost in the night, and the sleep departed from mine eyes”** (Gen. 31); so industrious was Jacob to discharge the duties of his place, and careful to make his reckoning straight with his master upon the earth. But I speak of a heavier reckoning, to a heavier lord, that will ask an account of every idle word, much more of an idle habit; and therefore let them foresee that heat, and that frost to come, those restless eyes, the hire of their fore-passed drowsiness, for days, for nights, for everlasting generations, that are ever framing an excuse, **“It is either too hot or cold that I cannot work; there is a lion in the street, or a bear in the way”** (Prov. 26), that I dare not go forth; that being called to an office, and having their tasks laid forth unto them, say not with Samuel at the call of the Lord, **“Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth”** (1 Sam. 3), but in a stubborn and perverse vein, *Speak and command Lord, and appoint my order wherein I shall walk, but I neither bear thy voice, neither shall my heart go after thy commandments.* **“I passed by the field of the slothful,”** saith Solomon in Prov. 24, **“and by the vineyard of the man destitute of understanding, and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof.”** Peruse the rest of that scripture. The wise king beheld, and considered it well, and received instruction by it, that a little sleep brought a great deal of poverty, and a little slumber a great deal of necessity. And surely as the field of the slothful is covered with nettles and thorns, so shall his body be overgrown with infirmities, his mind with vices, his conscience shall want a good testimony to itself, and his soul shall be empty of that hope hereafter which might have rejoiced it. With that, I end this point.

The command to Jonah, *Arise and go to Nineveh*, giveth a

warning to us all, for we have all a Nineveh to go unto. Magistrates, arise and go to the gate, to execute God's judgments. Ministers, arise and go to the gospel, to do the works of evangelists. People, arise and go to your trades, to eat the labours of your hands; eye, to thy seeing; foot, to thy walking; Peter, to thy nets; Paul, to thy tents; merchant, to thy shipping; smith, to thy anvil; potter, to thy wheel; women, to your wherms and spindles; let not your candle go out, that your works may praise you in the gates. Your vocations of life are God's sanctions; he ordained them to mankind, he blesseth them presently at his audit, he will crown them, if, when he calleth for an account of your fore-passed stewardships, you be able to say, in the uprightness of your soul, **"I have run my race;"** and as the master of the house assigned me, so by his grace and assistance, I have fulfilled my office.

But why to Nineveh? Nineveh of the Gentiles, uncircumcised Nineveh; Nineveh of the Assyrians, imperious, insolent, intolerable Nineveh; Nineveh swollen with pride, and her eyes standing out of her head with fatness; Nineveh settled upon her lees not less than a thousand three hundred years; Nineveh infamous for idolatry with Nisroch, her abomination (see 2 Kings 19); Nineveh with idleness so unnaturally effeminated, and her joints dissolved under Sardanapalus, as some conceive, their thirty-eighth monarch, who sat and span amongst women; that as it was the wonder and by-word of the earth, so the heavens above could not but abhor it.

Four reasons are alleged, why Jonah was sent to Nineveh: first, God will not smite a city or town without warning, according to the rule of his own law, that no city be destroyed before peace hath been offered unto it (see Deut. 20). The woman of Abel in her wisdom objected this law unto Joab, when he had cast up a mound against Abel, where she dwelt: **"They spake in old time, and said, 'They should ask of Abel;' and thus have they continued"** (2 Sam. 20:18); that is, first, they should call a parley and open their griefs, before they used hostility against it. The sword of the Lord assuredly is ever

drawn and burnished, his bow bent, his arrows prepared, his instruments of death made ready, his cup mingled; yet he seldom poureth down his plagues, but there is a shower of mercy before them, to make his people take heed. *Pax domine huic*, peace be unto this house, Luke 10:5, was sounded to every door where the apostles entered; but if that house were not worthy of peace and benediction, it returned back unto them. Virtues were wrought in Chorazin and Bethsaida, before the woe took hold upon them. Noah was sent to the old world, Lot to Sodom, Moses and Aaron to the Egyptians, prophets from time to time to the children of Israel, John Baptist, and Christ and the apostles, together with signs in the host of heaven, tokens in the elements, to Jerusalem, before it was destroyed. Chrysostom, upon the first to Timothy, giveth the reason hereof, that God, by threatening plagues, showeth us how to avoid plagues, and feareth us with hell beforehand, that we may learn to eschew it. And it was his usual speech (as he there confesseth) that the commination of hell fire doth no less commend the providence of God towards man, than the promise of his kingdom; the terror of the one, and sweetness of the other, working together, like oil and wine, to make man wise to his salvation. Nineveh had not stood a longer time, if Jonah had not said before, 'Nineveh shall be overthrown,' the message of their overthrow, overthrew the message; the prophecy fell, and the city fell not, because her fall was prophesied. "O new and admirable thing!" saith he in a homily to the people of Antioch, the denunciation of death hath brought forth life, the sentence of destruction hath made a nullity in the sentence, etc. It was a snare, it became their fortress; it was their gulf, it became their tower of defence; they heard that their houses should fall, and they forsook not their houses, but themselves, and their ancient wicked ways.

Secondly, He sendeth him to Nineveh, to make the conversion thereof, as it were, of his first-fruits, a figure and type of the conversion of other the Gentiles, and to shew to the people afar off (far from the seat of Judea, and farther from the

covenant), that the days drew on, wherein they should be called by the names of sons and daughters, though they were now strangers. And as ten men in Nineveh took hold of the skirt of one Jonah, a Hebrew, and said. **“We will go with thee, for we now hear that God is with you”** (Zech. 8), so ten and ten millions of men, out of all languages, should join themselves to the Jews in the worship of that Lord whom they adored. A glimpse of this overspreading light had now and then opened itself in some singular persons, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel: as in Melchisedec king of Salem; Naaman the Syrian; Job in the land of Uz; in Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth, inserted into the pedigree of Christ (see Matt. 1); this to show, amongst other reasons, that as he came of the Gentiles, so for the Gentiles too; and that **“the waters of life”** (as Zechariah termeth them in chap. 14) **“should flow from Jerusalem”** (farther than to the river of Tigris, whereon Nineveh stood), **“half of them towards the east sea, and half of them towards the uttermost sea,”** that both ends of the earth might be watered therewith.

Thirdly, He sendeth him to Nineveh, as he sent Joseph into Egypt, to provide a remedy against a mischief not far off; Joseph to prepare bread for his father’s house in the famine; Jonah to prepare a place for the Lord’s exiles in the captivity. This carefulness of their well-doing herein appeareth unto us, in a charge given to Moab in the prophecy of Isaiah: **“Hide them that are chased out; bewray not him that is fled; let my banished dwell with thee, Moab; be thou their covert from the face of the destroyer”** (Isa. 16:3-4). The time was to come when the sons of Jacob should go captives into Assyria, righteous and unrighteous, clean and unclean, those whom he tendered as the apple of his own eye, with their ungrateful and ungracious brethren; yet such was his provident foresight towards his little remnant, growing as thin among the rest as olive berries upon the tree after the vintage, a berry here and there in the outmost boughs, that though they bear their part of thralldom in a strange land, yet they should meet with some of

mild and tractable spirits, whose hearts had been mollified before by the preaching of Jonah.

Lastly, He sendeth him to Nineveh (which I rather fasten upon), to provoke his people of the Jews, with those that were not a people, to upbraid their contempt, defy their frowardness, and to show that his soul loatheth, abhorreth, abominateth their incorrigible rebellions; whom he had girt to himself, as a girdle to one's reins, and married in everlasting kindness; to whom he had risen early, and stretched out his hand all the day long, and cried upon them all, **“Hearken, O Israel, and I will protest unto thee, Thou shalt be my people, and I will be thy God;”** whom he had chidden or not chidden, with so fatherly a spirit, and such obstesting protestations, that they seem to be angry without anger, **“As I live, I would not your deaths;”** **“Why will ye die, house of Israel? Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?”** Lastly, to whom he had appealed, though men of unequal judgments, yet not so far from equality as to condemn his ways: **“Wherein have I grieved thee? Testify against me;”** these he giveth to understand, that, at the preaching of one prophet,—when they had precept upon precept,—a stranger among strangers, a man of an unknown tongue, the whole people of Nineveh, though heathenish and idolatrous, should be won to repentance. **“Arise, Jonah, go to Nineveh;”** sanctify a people unto me, where I had no people; fetch me sons and daughters from far; let the barren bear children, and let the married be barren. I have been served with the sins of Israel for a long time, I am weary of their backsliding; let them henceforth lie and rot in their iniquity, *go thou to Nineveh.*

Many the like angry and opprobrious comparisons hath the mouth of the Lord uttered with much indignity in other places: In the eighteenth of Jeremiah, **“Ask now amongst the heathen. Who hath heard such things? The virgin of Israel hath done very filthily;”** strumpets and brothels had done but their kind, but in the virgin of Israel who would have thought it? In the first of Hosea, **“Go, take thee a wife of fornication;”** the meaning of the type is this, I will find more faithfulness in a

land inured to whoredoms, than one which I tenderly loved as mine own wife. Christ in the Gospel justifieth this collection against the evil and adulterous generation of that time: **“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here”** (Matt. 12). And in the same evangelist, he rateth them in parables, for despising the doctrine of John: **“Publicans and harlots shall go before you into the kingdom of God, for they believed him; and ye, though ye saw it, were not moved to repentance”** (Matt. 21). The argument briefly thus standeth: the people of Nineveh shall condemn the people of Israel, for they will repent at the preaching of one Jonah; the others repent not at the preaching of many hundreds of prophets.

It is a curse of all curses, the very bottom of the vial, and dregs of the vengeance of God, when prophets are willed to relinquish their accustomed flocks, and their message is translated to foreigners and strangers; the dust of whose feet but shaken against a city or town, or the lap of their garment emptied, the least remembrance, I mean, and watchword in the world, between God and his servants, that here or there they have been, delivered their errand in his name, and were not accepted, shall witness (with a witness) their disobedience in the day of his visitation. So the disciples of Christ were willed to proclaim in every city of the earth, where they were not received, even in the streets and thoroughfares thereof, **“The very dust of your city which cleaveth unto us, we wipe off against you: notwithstanding, know this, that the kingdom of God was come near unto you”** (Luke 10).

You see the scourge of those places from which the disciples are enforced to go for want of entertainment; the kingdom of God goeth with them. And if that kingdom be once gone, their joy goeth with it; all the empires and dominions in the world subdued, all sceptres and crowns heaped together, cannot bless them. Paul and Barnabas, in Acts 13, observed the direction of their master to the Jews at Antioch, both in gesture and speech;

for they first shook off the dust of their feet against those that despised them, and then went to Iconium; but they had told them before their going (which, if they had any sense, was as the wounding of penknives and razors unto their hearts), **“It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you, because the law must come out of Zion, and the gospel begin at Jerusalem; but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.”** Gospel and everlasting life, you hear, are joined together. And therefore the judgment of God was sharper against them there pronounced, than if they had brought them tidings, such as these: “Behold, the Romans are come to take away your kingdom, to fire your towns, rinate your houses, ravish your wives and daughters, to dash your infants against the stones in the streets, to pull your eyes from out your heads, and your bowels from out your bodies.” Behold, we turn to the Gentiles, wild, unnatural, and neglected branches; and herein behold the full measure of your miseries, behold the dispersion and dissipation of your persons upon the face of the earth, behold the desolation and waste of your country, behold the detestation of your names, the hissing and clapping at your downfall amongst all nations. The loss of the word of God hath lost you credit, liberty, peace, prosperity, salvation, both in your own days and in the days of your children’s children. In the eighteenth of the Acts, when the Jews at Corinth resisted and blasphemed the doctrine of Paul, **“testifying unto them, that Jesus was that Christ,”** he shook his raiment as before, and loosed his tongue with much boldness against them: **“Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean; from henceforth I will go to the Gentiles.”** As if he had said, I found you the children of death, and so I leave you; grow in your filthiness and unrighteousness till you have fulfilled the measure of your forefathers; for mine own part, I wash my hands in innocency, I can free my soul in the sight of God, I was careful to apply my cure to the hurts of Corinth, but you were not healed.

Lastly, at Rome, in the last of the Acts, he made an open proclamation to the unbelieving Jews, **“Be it known unto you that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they shall hear it.”** And so be it known unto us (my brethren) that the meaning of the Holy Ghost in these terms of promulgation, know (in Luke 10) and be it known (in Acts 20), was to make these despisers of Antioch, Corinth, and Rome, examples to all posterity, especially to us, on whom the ends of the world are come, and with the end of the world an end of all goodness, that if we take not warning hereby, as we plough the like disobedience, so we shall reap the like wretchedness.

If ever the like transgression be found in this land of ours (I will sooner wish it a wilderness for serpents and dragons to dwell in) that as Jordan went back and turned his course, so the gospel go back and turn his passage; and as it was said to a prophet in Israel, **“Arise, and go to Nineveh,”** so it be said to the prophets in England, *Arise, and go into India, Turkey, or Barbary,* and there prophesy, and there eat your bread; I will then say that judgment hath both begun and made an end with us, and that our case is more desperate than if the ground of this island had opened her jaws, and in one common grave buried all her inhabitants. If ever the like transgression be found in this city of yours (I will sooner wish it pools of water, and all the stones of your building thrown down into emptiness), that as the brutish people of the Gadarenes esteemed of their swine, so you of the pleasure of sin for a season, more than Christ Jesus, and even hunt him from your coasts, as they did; and as it was said unto a prophet in Israel, *Arise, and go to Nineveh,* so to the prophets amongst you. *Arise, and go the borders,* where theft and revenge are held for current law, and all the streams of blood which Christ shed upon the tree, cannot beg redemption for one injury done unto them; *go,* carry your tidings of peace to those unpeaceable, uncivil, lawless, and graceless persons; then were your honour gone. And though the gravel of your river that bringeth in merchandise unto you, were turned into pearls, and every shower of rain from the clouds above were a shower

of silver and gold into your houses, yet then were you cast from the favour of God, your sons and your daughters accursed, the sin of their fathers not to be forgotten, nor the iniquity of the mothers to be done away, whilst your name and memory should continue.

The prophets are yet in Israel, long may they prophesy in Israel; the pearl is yet in our field, foreign merchants have not bought it from us; the gospel is yet amongst us, oh always may it flourish, and spread like a palm-tree, amidst our tabernacles; the kingdom of God is now not far off: neither in heaven above, that we need climb up; neither in the earth beneath, that we need dig low; neither beyond the sea, that we need go over for it; neither in those mists and obscurities, wherein former ages had involved it. We have the sound thereof daily in our ears, the books in our houses and hands, the letter walking through our lips. Oh that we wanted not the power of the gospel in our consciences, the life and manifestation of it in our lives. May the Lord make a happy and an inseparable conjunction between all these, and grant that his law and our obedience may always meet together, his gospel and our fruits kiss each other, his truth and our righteousness, his blessings and our thankfulness, never be found asunder! Let him say of England, even for ever and ever, as sometimes he said of Zion, *Here will I dwell, I have chosen England for my habitation* (see Ps. 68); let him confirm that blessing of the psalm upon us: *The Lord gave the word, great was the company of the preachers*. And let him make those preachers and hearers, hearers and doers, doers and perseverers, good teachers, good learners, good livers, everlasting companions within our borders. So shall our land be blessed with all both heavenly and earthly increase, and God, even our own God, shall never repent that he bestowed such blessing upon us. Amen.

*[This study will continue in the next issue.]*



This article is taken from:

King, John (Bishop of London). *Lectures Upon Jonah*. Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864 (originally published c. 1600).

A PDF file of this book can be downloaded, free of charge, at:

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



## *A Classic Study: Job 1:20-22, pt. 2*

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

### A Study by Joseph Caryl (1644)

#### Job 1:20-22, pt. 2 - What Job Did, and What Job Said

**<sup>20</sup> Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, <sup>21</sup> 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.**

**<sup>22</sup> In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. (KJV).**

The other two acts are: 1. *He falleth upon the ground.* 2. *He worshippeth.*

The *original words* do both signify a *bowing to the ground*; *He fell upon the ground and bowed*, so some translate it, you shall see the reason by and by. *He fell upon the ground and worshipped*, that is, *He fell upon the ground to worship.* To fall upon the ground is a gesture of worship, and not only is it a posture of worship when the worshipper mourns, but it is likewise a posture of worship when the worshipper rejoices. Great joy, as well as great sorrow transports a man in his next actions. It is said, in Matt. 2:10-11, that the *wise men* when they found Christ, *rejoiced with exceeding great joy*, and presently, *they fell down and worshipped*

*him*. Neither is this posture peculiar to worship in times or upon occasions of extraordinary joy and sorrow (unless in the degree of it) for the ordinary invitation was, **“O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker”** (Ps. 95:6). I said in the degree, for to fall down, is more than to bow down. Falling down in worship proceeds not only from sorrow, but from joy, when the heart is filled with joy, then we fall down and worship. And it is probably observed that the ancient Prophets and holy men, the servants of God were called *Nephalim* (from *Naphal*, which is the original word of the text), *Cadentes*, or *Prostrantes*, that is, *prostraters* or *fallers*, because in their worship they usually fell down upon the earth to humble themselves before God. And because adoration was so commonly made by *falling to the ground*, by *bowing the head*, by *bowing the knee*, by *bowing the whole body*, therefore the same original word which Hebrews use for *worshipping* doth properly signify *to bow down the body*. And that phrase *to bow the body*, as it is often joined with *worshipping*; to sometime to bow the body, put alone, signifies *to worship*, as in 2 Kings 5:18: **“When I bow myself in the house of Rimmon...”** i.e., *When I worship...* So likewise the Greek word to *worship* has the same sense in it, for that word signifies (as a learned writer observes upon it) *to bow after the manner of dogs that crouch at the feet of their Masters for favor, or for fear*. So, in *worship* the people of God *crouch down* and *abase themselves at God’s feet*, as not worthy in themselves to eat the *crumbs* under his *table*.

Yet we are not to look upon this as if it were the only true and acceptable worship-gesture; for we shall find in scripture that there were other worship-gestures with which God was well pleased. Some have worshipped God standing, some sitting, some walking, all these are worship-postures. For standing we find it at the dedication of the Temple, in 1 Kings 8:22: **“Solomon stood before the Altar of the Lord, and made that prayer.”** For sitting, we have 2 Sam. 2:18. When Nathan brought that message unto David concerning the

building of the house of God, that it should be deferred till his sons time. The text says that **“David went in and sat before the Lord and said, ‘Who am I, O Lord?’** And in the end, he says, **“Therefore have I found in my heart to pray this prayer unto thee.”** We also find walking in prayer: **“Isaac went out into the field to pray”** (Gen. 24:63). He walked and prayed; we translate it *to meditate*, but in the margin of your books, you find it to pray, as being nearer the Hebrew. So that walking and sitting and standing are likewise praying gestures or postures of holy worship, but chiefly that posture of bowing down the body or bending the knee is the worship posture; so it follows in the text.

**“...He fell upon the ground and worshipped...”**

**“...and worshipped”** – To worship is to give to anyone *the honor due unto him*: So the rendering unto God that *love*, and *fear*, that *service*, that *honor* which is due unto him is the *worshipping of God*, that’s the scripture definition: **“Give unto the Lord the honor due unto his name”** (Ps. 29:2). Then follows by way of exposition, **“Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,”** that is, **“in his holy Temple, in his beautiful Sanctuary,”** or, *in the comely honor of his Sanctuary*. So that *worship* is the tendering of honor to the Lord, in a way honorable to him, namely according to his own will and laws of worship: which is intimated by coming to *worship him in his beautiful Sanctuary*, where all things about the service of God were exactly prescribed by God. And then there was *beauty* or *comely honor* in the *Sanctuary*, when all things were ordered there by the rule of his prescription; varying and departing from which would have filled that holy place with darkness and deformity, notwithstanding all the outward luster and beauty had been preserved.

The worship of God is two-fold: there is *internal worship* and there is *external worship*. *Internal worship* is to *love God*, to *fear God*, and to *trust upon him*. There are acts of *inward worship*. These are the sum of our duty and God’s honor contained in

the first commandment: And so you may understand worship in the text. *Job fell down and worshipped*, that is, presently upon those reports, he put forth an act of love and holy fear, acts of dependence and holy trust upon God, in his Spirit, saying to this effect within himself. *Lord, though all this has come upon me, yet I will not depart from thee, or deal falsely in thy Covenant. I know thou art still the same Jehovah, true, holy, gracious, faithful, all-sufficient; and therefore behold me prostrate before thee, and resolving, still to love thee, still to fear thee, still to trust thee. Thou art my God still and my portion forever. Though I had nothing left in the world that I could call mine, yet thou Lord alone art enough. Yet thou alone art All.* Such doubtless was the language of Job's heart, and these were mighty actings of *inward worship*.

Then likewise there is *external worship*, which is the sum of the second commandment, and it is nothing else but the serving of the Lord according to his own ordinances and institution in those several ways wherein God will be honored and served. This is outward worship, and as we apply ourselves to it, so we are reckoned to worship God. Job worshipped God outwardly by *falling to the ground*, by *powering out supplications*, and by *speaking good words of God* (as we read afterward), words tending to his own abasement and the honor of God, clearly and fully acquitting and justifying the Lord in all those works of his providence and dispensations towards him.

This is worship both internal and external. Internal worship is the chief, but God requires both: and there is a necessity of joining both together, that God may have honor in the world. Internal worship is complete in itself, and pleasing to God without the external. The external may be complete in itself, but is never pleasing to God without the internal. Internal worship pleases God most, but external honors God most: for by this God is known, and his glory held forth in the world. External worship is God's name. Hence the Temple was called *the place where God put his Name*, meaning *his worship*, by which *God is known*, as a man by his

name. *They that worship God must worship him in Spirit and in Truth: In Spirit*, that is with inward love and fear, reverence and sincerity. *In Truth*, that is, according to the true rule prescribed in his word. *Spirit* respects the inward power; *Truth*, the outward form. The former strikes at hypocrisy; the latter strikes at idolatry. The one opposes the inventions of our heads; the other the looseness of our hearts in worship.

Observe further, that it is only said, **“Job fell down and worshipped”**; nothing is said of the object to whom he did direct his worship, or whom he did worship. The object is not expressed but understood, or presupposed. And indeed worship is a thing so proper and peculiar to God, that when we name worship, we need to understand that God is the object. For nothing but God, or that which we make a god, is or can be worshipped. Either he is God whom we worship, or (as much as in us lies) we make him one. Whatsoever creature shares in this honor, this honor (*ipso facto*) sets it up above, and makes it more than a creature.

The very heathens thought everything below a God, below worship. Therefore, there needed not be an expression of the object; when the text says, **“Job worshipped”**, that implies his worship was directed to God, yet there is a kind of worship which is due to creatures.

There is a civil worship mentioned in Scripture, as well as divine worship. Civil worship may be given to men. And there is a two-fold civil worship (spoken of in Scripture). There is a *civil worship of duty*, and there is a *civil worship of courtesy*. That of duty is from inferiors to their superiors, from children to their parents, from servants to their masters, from subjects to kings and magistrates. These gods must have civil worship. As in Gen. 48:11, when Joseph came into the presence of Jacob his father, **“He bowed down to the ground.”** This was a civil worship and a worship of duty from an inferior to a superior. And it is said of the brethren of Judah, in Gen. 49:8, when Jacob on his death-bed blessed the twelve tribes: **“Thy brethren shall worship thee”** or **“bow down to thee.”** It is

the same word used here in this text. Judah's honor was to wield the scepter, the *government was laid upon his shoulders*; now he being the chief magistrate, all the rest of the tribes, all his brothers must worship him or give civil honor unto him.

Secondly, there is likewise *a worship of courtesy*, which is from equals, when on equal will bow to another, or when a superior (as sometimes in courtesy he will) bows down or worships his inferior: as it is noted concerning Abraham, that when he came before the men of the country of Heth, he *bowed himself*. Now, Abraham was the superior; he was a prince and a great man; yet coming before the men of the country, *he bowed himself*, and it is the same word.

So then this civil worship may lawfully be given unto men. But as for divine worship, that is only proper and peculiarly given to God; that glory he will not give to graven images, man or angel, and there we must not. Hence, we find that when Cornelius and John did act their civil worship a little too far, they were presently taken off for fear they should entrench upon the divine worship. Civil worship when it is excessive and goes too far is sinful, as in Acts 10:25. Luke relates that as soon as Peter came in, **“Cornelius met him and fell at his feet and worshipped him.”** The worship was to Peter, for we are not to think that Cornelius was so grossly ignorant as to take Peter for a god, and give him divine worship; but the meaning of it is, that he fell down at his feet and gave an honor and respect beyond what he ought to have done; he was excessive in it. Therefore, Peter takes him off, **“Stand up”** (said he) **“I myself also am a man,”** that is, *I am a man as you are, though being an apostle gives me such respect as becomes a minister of Christ, take heed that you give me no more than belongs to a man.* So also, the angel in Rev. 22:8: **“When John falleth down at his feet, and worshippeth”**, he takes him up, **“See thou do it not,”** said he, **“for I am thy fellow servant.”** This is too much for man; **“worship God,”** as it is in the end of the verse; such worship belongs properly and peculiarly to God.

So much for the opening of these two latter actions of Job in reference to God. We shall now give you some observations: **“He fell down upon the ground and worshipped.”** You see how Job divides himself and his affections in this time of his affliction: part he bestowed upon his children and servants, and losses; they shall have his sorrow and tears; **“He rent his mantle and shaved his head;”** but they shall not have all. God shall have the better part: his love; his fear; his trust; his body to bow to him, and his soul to worship him.

Learn from hence: *That a godly man will not let nature work alone; he mixes and tempers acts of grace with acts of nature.*

We must not *sorrow as those that are without hope* (said the Apostle in 1 Thess. 4:13); qualify sorrow with hope; these mixed do well. A man must not sorrow for outward things, as though we had nothing else to do, but to sorrow, he must remember that he has a God to worship and honor. Job bestows somewhat upon his children, but more upon his God; while his body fell to the earth, his heart was raised up to heaven: **“He fell down and worshipped.”**

Secondly observe, *That afflictions send the people of God home to God; afflictions draw a godly man nearer to God.* Then *Job fell down and worshipped.* Afflictions are a great advantage to the servants of God; for when the world frowns most, then they beg most for the smiles of God; when the world is strange to them, and will not look on them, then they get more familiarity and closer communion with God; they seek his face. Wicked men in their afflictions, in their sorrows, are either quite drowned in and overwhelmed with them, so that there is nothing but sorrow; or else, they go out to help and relieve themselves with worldly refreshment; trouble drives them to sin; it may be as low as hell to seek relief. The more poor they are, the more wicked they are; *such are not poor as Job, though they are as poor as Job.* Job’s poverty sent him to God, rich in mercy. **“He fell down and worshipped.”**

Thirdly learn, *That the people of God turn all their afflictions into prayers or into praises.* When God is striking, then Job is praying; when God is afflicting, then Job falls to worshipping. *Grace makes every condition work glory to God, as God makes every condition work good to them who have grace.*

Fourthly, *Job falls down and worships,* observe here: *That it becomes us to worship God in a humble manner.* Though God (as we showed before) may be worshipped in another posture, yet we should rather choose that posture which is most humble, and may lay our bodies as low as our souls, if it may be. There were some lately among us, who cried aloud, as great patrons for humble postures in worship: and all were censured for a stiff neck and an elephant's knee, who refused to bow with them, or to bow their way. I may well add their way, for God's way of bowing was neither questioned nor refused; all their humility in bowing went but one way. They must bow towards the east, and towards the altar, at least, if not to it. Some of their stomachs, I believe, would have digested that before this time, especially being a little helped with a distinction.

Lastly, we may here observe, *That divine worship is to God alone.* Papists have worship for creatures, and they have a distinction for it, but no Scripture for it. They tell us of *Latria*, which is they say worship proper only to God, and their *Dulia*, which is for saints, and the their *Hyperdulia*, which is for the Virgin Mary and for the sign of the cross. Thus they make vain distinctions which God and the scripture make not. Vain distinctions are good enough to maintain vain superstitions. They that invent a worship, must invent a doctrine to maintain it by. Some perhaps may stumble at that text in Rev. 3:9, where this promise is made to the church of Philadelphia: **“Behold I will make them of the Synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.”** May not worship then be given to a creature?

*Answer 1.* This worship may be taken for civil worship; namely, for that submission which the enemies of the Church, shall be forced by the power of Christ to make to her, as was promised by the prophet in Isa. 60:14: **“The sons also of them that afflicted thee, shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet.”**

*Answer 2.* If this be divine worship, then worshipping at the feet of the Church, notes worshipping in the Church, not worshipping of the Church. The worship is not terminated in the Church, but in Christ, who dwells and rules in the Church, who is both head and husband of the Church. These enemies being convinced of the presence of Christ in his Church shall worship him. Thus, David prophesies of Christ, speaking in his own person: **“Thou hast made me the head of the heathen, a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As some as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me”** (Ps. 18:43-44). That of the Apostle will more illustrate this sense, who speaking of the great benefit of prophesying in a known tongue, concludes his discourse thus: **“If all prophecy and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth”** (1 Cor. 14:24-25). The worship then is not given to the Church, but to God, who in such ordinances, or other acts of his power and goodness, is evidently revealed as present in the Church.

So much for the actions or gestures of Job; *what he did*. **“He rent his mantle and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped.”**

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## *New Testament Study: Romans 3:1-18*



A Study by Scott Sperling  
Romans 3:1-8 – Refutations

<sup>1</sup> What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? <sup>2</sup> Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.

<sup>3</sup> What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? <sup>4</sup> Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written:

"So that you may be proved right  
when you speak  
and prevail when you judge."

<sup>5</sup> But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) <sup>6</sup> Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?

<sup>7</sup> Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" <sup>8</sup> Why not say – as some slanderously claim that we say – "Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just!

In the previous chapter, as part of his effort to show us that everyone universally needs the salvation that Christ provides, Paul established that the Jews, the chosen people of

God, are not exempt from the judgment resulting from their sin. In this section, Paul imagines some objections that the Jews might have to his argument. Paul states the objections in the form of questions, and then answers them. As we'll see, he uses this same rhetorical style many times in the Epistle to the Romans. It is a style common to philosophical writings of the time, and so, possibly familiar to his readers. In this case, given that the objections are ones that the Jews might have in response to chapter 2, we can even imagine this exchange as one between Paul the Jew and Paul the Christian. As a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (see Phil. 3:5), Paul well knew what objections the Jews might have had to his arguments.

Natural questions, for the Jews, that would follow the previous chapter, which speaks of the susceptibility of Jewish sinners to the punishment of God, would be: **"What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?"** (vs. 1). Many Jews at that time believed that their position as the *chosen people of God* automatically qualified them for entrance into paradise after their death. They felt that they would be exempt from God's punishment, because they were Jews and not Gentiles. This is the **"advantage"** that they were expecting, by being God's chosen people. They were basing their assurance of salvation on their *cultural* identity as Jews, and yet, Paul said that they would be judged under the same criteria as the Gentiles. "It was a thing generally granted, that the elect people must have an advantage over the Gentiles... Will the people whom God has elected and marked with the seal of this election be treated exactly like the rest of the world?" [Godet, 220].

Paul's answer to the Jews is that, yes, they had great advantages, but that these advantages did not extend to *automatic salvation*. Paul lists here, what he calls, the greatest advantage: **"Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God"** (vs. 2). The primary advantage of the Jews is that they were given, and entrusted with, **"the very words of God."** They were told

explicitly, through God's word – **“the very words”** of God Himself – what pleases and displeases Him, and so they had a great advantage over the Gentiles in living a life of obedience to God. They had the *light* of God's word, whereas the Gentiles lived in *darkness*. “The door is open to the Gentiles as well as the Jews; but the Jews have a fairer way up to this door, by reason of their church privileges, which are not to be undervalued” [Henry, 224]. “The chief reference here is to the written word of God as we have it in the Old Testament. Think how much is here included—the history of creation, of the fall, of the deluge, of the dispersion, of the call and trials of Abraham, of the history of his descendants, of the exodus from Egypt; the law; the records of kings good and bad; the best proverbs; the sublimest songs; predictions respecting the course of events to the end of the world; and all these abounding in precepts, promises, warnings and encouragements of the most weighty character” [Plumer, 110].

Just as the children of Israel were entrusted with the **“very words of God”** as documented in the Old Testament, so now the Christian Church is entrusted with the **“very words of God”** concerning the life, teachings, mission, and sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. We the Christian Church are **“entrusted”** with these **“words of God”** in every bit the same way that the children of Israel were, and more so, because we were also given the Great Commission of preaching, teaching, and discipling people throughout all the earth of the great salvation that we have in Christ Jesus. “God's word is committed to us; use it aright, support it, propagate it” [Heubner, in Lange's, 126].

Paul raises some more questions that a Jew might ask, in objection to what Paul wrote: **“What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness?”** (vs. 3). The objector is referring to the promises that God has made to His chosen people. If some of God's people are **“unfaithful”**, and so receive the

punishment of God, doesn't this (so the objector asks) **"nullify God's faithfulness?"**

Paul answers this forcefully: **"Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: 'So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge'"** (vs. 4). The promises made to the Jews were conditional on their faith and obedience, even from the very beginning. God Himself stated: **"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him"** (Gen. 18:18-19). Later, when God gave the Law to His people, the blessings on the children of Israel were, again, explicitly stated to be conditional upon their obedience to the Law: **"If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over"** (Lev. 26:23-24; see also the entire chapter of Lev. 26). The belief that the Jews in Paul's time had that they would be saved unconditionally was wrong.

And so, God's punishment on the **"unfaithful"** Jews, far from nullifying God's faithfulness, on the contrary, *proves* God's faithfulness to His word: God promised Israel that He would punish their disobedience, and so He is being faithful to His word by punishing their disobedience. Just as Paul has affirmed (also quoting words of David from Psalm 51): **"Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: 'So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge'"** (vs. 4). Even if **"every human being"** proves unfaithful to God's word, yet **"God is true"**, and keeps His word: whether in bringing punishment on the disobedient, or by blessing those who seek to be obedient. Nothing man can do will **"nullify"**, or tarnish

in any way, **“God’s faithfulness.”** “Provoking this discussion is the Jewish tendency to interpret God’s covenant faithfulness solely in terms of his [promises of salvation]. Paul meets that conception with a broader and deeper view of God’s faithfulness — his faithfulness to remain true to his character and to *all* his words: the promises of cursing for disobedience as well as blessing for obedience” [Moo, 180]. “God’s faithfulness is not affected by the unbelief of his own people. Some persons argue against the Bible because of the unbelief of those who profess to regard it as their guide. They argue against Christianity because of the inconsistencies of its professors. The argument is false. Christianity is to be judged by its own teachings and spirit, and not by the imperfect way in which even its professors have received and practised them. Christianity is the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, combined with the influence of his death upon the cross. No inconsistency of professing followers can ever mar the beauty and sinlessness of that perfect Example” [*Pulpit*, 89].

Paul’s hypothetical objector takes the previous objection a bit further, in his next objection: **“But if our unrighteousness brings out God’s righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument)”** (vs. 5). This is the argument of a person seeking to make excuses for sinning. The objector is, in effect, saying: “Because I sin, God (by comparison) looks to be all the more righteous. So, isn’t this a good thing?” It’s an absurd argument, on its face. It’s the argument of a person who is cleverly using words to (in effect) make *black* equal *white*. It’s, as Paul states, a cleverly devised **“human argument”**, an argument made from a flawed human perspective, not a godly perspective. Paul warned, when writing to Timothy, about those who cleverly use words to twist the meaning of simple doctrine: **“Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen”** (2 Tim. 2:14). And

then a bit later: **“Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels”** (2 Tim. 2:23). We should be careful with our use of words, and rather than using words cleverly to make silly arguments, use words simply, in order to communicate the truth. As Paul exhorts: **“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth”** (2 Tim. 2:15).

As for the objector’s argument that our sin, somehow, **“brings out God’s righteousness more clearly”**: this is wrong. On the contrary, since we are ambassadors of God on this earth, when we sin, it denigrates the character of God. When the people of God sin, the world sees God as condoning the sin. This tarnishes the sense of God’s righteousness in the eyes of the world. This sin of God’s people, far from **“bringing out God’s righteousness”**, rather hides God’s righteousness. “Unbelieving hearts will gladly take any occasion to quarrel with the equity of God’s proceedings, and to condemn him that is most just” [Henry, 225].

Paul summarily rejects the objection: **“Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?”** (vs. 6). He chooses not to answer the absurd argument in philosophical detail, but to merely to defer to God’s well-deserved role, as Creator of the Universe, as judge of the world. God is just, holy, righteous, and pure. God’s actions define righteousness. He is the only one who is able to **“judge the world.”** If there is a **“human argument”** that impugns God’s perfect justice, then the **“human argument”** is wrong (as we have shown to be the case for this objection). Paul does not waste his own words on proving that the clever use of words by the objector is flawed. Paul simply appeals to the fact that God is a righteous judge. “St. Paul and his readers alike held as axiomatic the belief that God would judge the world. But the

objection just urged was inconsistent with that belief, and therefore must fall to the ground” [Sanday-Headlam, 73].

The objector, however, presses on. He states the same argument, in a slightly different way: **“Someone might argue, ‘If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?’”** (vs. 7). “The former objection is repeated and prosecuted, for proud hearts will hardly be beaten out of their refuge of lies, but will hold fast the deceit” [Henry, 225].

Paul rightfully boils this objection down to a *“the-ends-justify-the-means”* argument: **“Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—‘Let us do evil that good may result?’”** (vs. 8). Sin is evil, no matter what the result. If by the grace of God, some good comes as a result of a person’s sin, this does not excuse the sin. The sinner still stands **“condemned as a sinner”**, even if there is a “good” by-product of the sin. God is righteous, and just, so all sin is condemned.

Jesus’ death is a perfect example of this principle. His atoning death has brought salvation to billions of people, yet that did not excuse those who put Him to death. That was a sin for which they will be judged on judgment day. Paul emphatically rebuts those who argue that *“the ends justify the means.”* For those who sin in order to bring about a “good” result, Paul says: **“Their condemnation is just!”** (vs. 8). “A doctrine directly leading to immoral results cannot belong to the gospel Paul is setting forth” [Schaff, 41].

## Romans 3:9-18 – Universal Unrighteousness

**<sup>9</sup> What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. <sup>10</sup> As it is written:**

**“There is no one righteous, not even one;**

- <sup>11</sup> **there is no one who understands;  
there is no one who seeks God.**
- <sup>12</sup> **All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one."**
- <sup>13</sup> **"Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues practice deceit."  
"The poison of vipers is on their lips."**
- <sup>14</sup> **"Their mouths are full of  
cursing and bitterness."**
- <sup>15</sup> **"Their feet are swift to shed blood;  
<sup>16</sup> ruin and misery mark their ways,  
<sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they do not know."**
- <sup>18</sup> **"There is no fear of God before their eyes."**

Paul now draws the argument that he started in Romans 1:18 to a close, with a conclusion that summarizes the universal sinfulness of all people. He writes: **"What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all!"** (vs. 9a). Regarding being under the threat of judgment for sin, no one has an **"advantage"**. "The pagan, rejecting the revelation of God in nature and pursuing a lifestyle that was both idolatrous and degrading, was deserving of the wrath of God (Rom 1:18–32). The Jews, who had the law but failed to put it into practice, received no benefit from their privileged position (Rom 2:1–3). What does all this imply?" [Mounce, 76]. "However men may differ among themselves as to individual character, as to outward circumstances, religious or social, when they appear at the bar of God, all appear on the same level. All are sinners, and being sinners, are exposed to condemnation" [Hodge, 86]. "The Jew had failed to keep the law which had been given him, as the Gentile had failed to keep the law which had been given him; and [so] both therefore were equally dependent on the mercy of God,

incapable of being justified and saved by their works” [Barnes]. All, without exception, need a Savior.

Paul supports this with multiple testimonies from the Old Testament: **“For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.’ ‘Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.’ ‘The poison of vipers is on their lips.’ ‘Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.’ ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.’ ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes’”** (vss. 9b-18). “Hitherto Paul has used arguments to convince men of sin. Now he begins to appeal to *authority*” [Bengel, 237]. “Paul follows here a common rabbinical practice of stringing passages together like pearls... By linking passages of similar import, he drives home his point that Scripture consistently stresses the fact that we are sinners all” [Morris, 200]. “Paul, in making his quotations, gives us some from the Psalms (5:9, 10:7, 14:1-3, 36:1, 140:3), some from Proverbs (1:16), some from the Prophet Isaiah (59:7); but the sad chorus is in perfect unison about human guilt and its accompanying depravity” [Pulpit, 104]. In making these quotations, Paul is showing that “he broached no new doctrine, but used language perfectly consistent with that of the Old Testament Scriptures” [Wardlaw, 203].

Paul masterfully reworks the quotes from the Old Testament, while keeping the meaning of the original, into a new poetic passage of Scripture. He begins with universal statements concerning the sin of all, leaving no one out. Notice the words he cites: **“...no one... not even one... no one... no one... All... together... no one... not even one”** (vss. 10-12).

Paul goes on to write of sins of the tongue, these sins being so prevalent: **“deceitful tongues”**, **“poisonous lips”**, **“cursing mouths”** (vss. 13-14). “God provided us with the gift of communication so that we may honor and praise our Creator. We tend to take the gift and place it in the service of our own sinful nature” [Mounce, 80].

Paul next speaks of the sinful *actions* of men: **“shedding blood”**, causing **“ruin and misery”**, rejecting **“peace”** (vss. 15-17). “Every page of history attests the truth of this awful charge... The most savage animals do not destroy so many of their own species to appease their hunger, as man destroys of his fellows, to satiate his ambition, his revenge, or cupidity” [Haldane, 120].

Paul concludes with a statement of the cause of all human sin: **“There is no fear of God before their eyes”** (vs. 18). This is the root of all sin: the lack of a **“fear of God.”** “The fear of God is here put for all practical religion, which consists in an awe-ful and serious regard to the word and will of God, as our rule, to the honour and glory of God as our end.” [Henry, 226]. “The fear of God is an essential element in rightly swaying the hearts of men,” [Plumer, 124].

And so, we as sinners are doomed, before a righteous and holy God. Is there *any* way that we can be reconciled to God? Before a righteous and holy God, the sinfulness of man should only result in universal doom. But we also have a loving God, who has Himself provided a way, even within the constraints of His righteous character, to be reconciled to Him, and to live an eternity in peace. This way to peace with God is through faith and acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf, as our Savior. Having proven the universal need of a Savior, Paul will next go on to describes the means by which we may attain the righteousness necessary to be reconciled our holy God.

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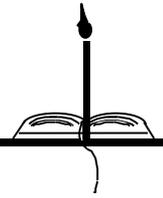
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<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

# *A Study in History: The Reformation*



## Introduction to the Protestant Reformation, pt. 4, 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 7. *Justification by Faith*

The subjective principle of Protestantism is the doctrine of justification and salvation by faith in Christ; as distinct from the doctrine of justification by faith *and* works, or salvation by grace *and* human merit. Luther's formula is *sola fide* (“faith alone”). Calvin goes further back to God's *eternal election*, as the ultimate ground of salvation and comfort in life and in death. But Luther and Calvin meant substantially the same thing, and agree in the more general proposition of *salvation by free grace through living faith in Christ* (Acts 4:12), in opposition to any Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian compromise which divides the work and merit between God and man. And this is the very soul of evangelical Protestantism.

Luther assigned to his *solifidian* doctrine of justification the central position in the Christian system, declared it to be the article of the standing or falling (Lutheran) church, and was unwilling to yield an inch from it, though heaven and earth should collapse. This exaggeration is due to his personal experience during his convent life. The central article of the Christian faith on which the church is built, is not any specific

dogma of the Protestant, or Roman, or Greek church, but the broader and deeper truth held by all, namely, the divine-human personality and atoning work of Christ, the Lord and Saviour. This was the confession of Peter, the first creed of Christendom.

The Protestant doctrine of justification differs from the Roman Catholic, as defined (very circumspectly) by the Council of Trent, chiefly in two points. Justification is conceived as a declaratory and judicial act of God, in distinction from sanctification, which is a gradual growth; and faith is conceived as a fiducial act of the heart and will, in distinction from theoretical belief and blind submission to the church. The Reformers derived their idea from Paul, the Romanists appealed chiefly to James (in chap. 2:17-26); but Paul suggests the solution of the apparent contradiction by his sentence, that **“in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but *faith working through love*”** (Gal. 5:6).

Faith, in the biblical and evangelical sense, is a vital force which engages all the powers of man, and apprehends and appropriates the very life of Christ and all his benefits. It is the child of grace and the mother of good works. It is the pioneer of all great thoughts and deeds. By faith Abraham became the father of nations; by faith Moses became the liberator and legislator of Israel; by faith the Galilean fishermen became fishers of men and by faith the noble army of martyrs endured tortures and triumphed in death; without faith in the risen Saviour the church could not have been founded. Faith is a saving power. It unites us to Christ. Whosoever believeth in Christ **“hath eternal life”** (John 3:16). **“We believe,”** said Peter at the Council of Jerusalem, **“that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ”** (Acts 15:11), like the Gentiles who come to Christ by faith without the works and ceremonies of the law. **“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved,”** was Paul’s answer to the question of the jailor: **“What must I do**

**to be saved?”** (Acts 16:30-31).

Protestantism does by no means despise or neglect good works or favor antinomian license; it only subordinates them to faith, and measures their value by quality rather than quantity. They are not the condition, but the necessary evidence of justification; they are not the root, but the fruits of the tree. The same faith which justifies, does also sanctify. It is ever **“working through love”** (Gal. 5:6). Luther is often charged with indifference to good works, but very unjustly. His occasional unguarded utterances must be understood in connection with his whole teaching and character. “Faith,” in his own forcible language which expresses his true view, “faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, and it is impossible that it should not do good without ceasing; it does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is put, it has done them already, and is always engaged in doing them; you may as well separate burning and shining from fire, as works from faith.”

The Lutheran doctrine of Christian freedom and justification by faith alone, like that of St. Paul on which it was based, was made the cloak of excesses by carnal men who wickedly reasoned, **“Let us continue in sin that grace may abound”** (Rom. 6:1), and who abused their **“freedom for an occasion to the flesh”** (Gal. 5:13). All such consequences the apostle cut off at the outset by an indignant **“God forbid.”**

The fact is undeniable, that the Reformation in Germany was accompanied and followed by antinomian tendencies and a degeneracy of public morals. It rests not only on the hostile testimonies of Romanists and separatists, but Luther and Melancthon themselves often bitterly complained in their later years of the abuse of the liberty of the gospel and the sad state of morals in Wittenberg and throughout Saxony.

But we should remember, first, that the degeneracy of morals, especially the increase of extravagance, and luxury with its attending vices, had begun in Catholic times in consequence of discoveries and inventions, the enlargement

of commerce and wealth. Nor was it near as bad as the state of things which Luther had witnessed at Rome in 1510, under Pope Julius II, not to speak of the more wicked reign of Pope Alexander VI. Secondly, the degeneracy was not due so much to a particular doctrine, as to the confusion which necessarily followed the overthrow of the ecclesiastical order and discipline, and to the fact that the Lutheran Reformers allowed the government of the church too easily to pass from the bishops into the hands of secular rulers. Thirdly, the degeneracy was only temporary during the transition from the abolition of the old to the establishment of the new order of things. Fourthly, the disorder was confined to Germany. The Swiss Reformers, from the start, laid greater stress on discipline than the Lutheran Reformers, and organized the new church on a more solid basis. Calvin introduced a state of moral purity and rigor in Geneva such as had never been known before in the Christian church. The Huguenots of France, the Calvinists of Holland, the Puritans of England and New England, and the Presbyterians of Scotland are distinguished for their strict principles and habits. An impartial comparison of Protestant countries and nations with Roman Catholic, in regard to the present state of public and private morals and general culture, is eminently favorable to the Reformation.

#### SECTION 8.

##### *The Priesthood of the Laity*

The social or ecclesiastical principle of Protestantism is the general priesthood of believers, in distinction from the special priesthood which stands mediating between Christ and the laity.

The Roman church is an exclusive hierarchy, and assigns to the laity the position of passive obedience. The bishops are the teaching and ruling church; they alone constitute a council

or synod, and have the exclusive power of legislation and administration. Laymen have no voice in spiritual matters, they cannot even read the Bible without the permission of the priest, who holds the keys of heaven and hell.

In the New Testament every believer is called a saint, a priest, and a king. "All Christians," says Luther, "are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them, save of office alone. As St. Paul says, we are all one body, though each member does its own work, to serve the others. This is because we have one baptism, one gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism, gospel and faith, these alone make spiritual and Christian people." And again: "It is faith that makes men priests, faith that unites them to Christ, and gives them the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whereby they become filled with all holy grace and heavenly power. The inward anointing—this oil, better than any that ever came from the horn of bishop or pope—gives them not the name only, but the nature, the purity, the power of priests; and this anointing have all they received who are believers in Christ."

This principle, consistently carried out, raises the laity to active co-operation in the government and administration of the church; it gives them a voice and vote in the election of the pastor; it makes every member of the congregation useful, according to his peculiar gift, for the general good. This principle is the source of religious and civil liberty which flourishes most in Protestant countries. Religious liberty is the mother of civil liberty. The universal priesthood of Christians leads legitimately to the universal kingship of free, self-governing citizens, whether under a monarchy or under a republic.

The good effect of this principle showed itself in the spread of Bible knowledge among the laity, in popular hymnody and congregational singing, in the institution of lay-eldership, and in the pious zeal of the magistrates for moral reform and general education.

But it was also shamefully perverted and abused by the

secular rulers who seized the control of religion, made themselves bishops and popes in their dominion, robbed the churches and convents, and often defied all discipline by their own immoral conduct. Philip of Hesse, and Henry VIII of England, are conspicuous examples of Protestant popes who disgraced the cause of the Reformation. Erastianism and Territorialism, whose motto is "*cujus regio, ejus religio*" (literally, "whose region, his religion", implying that one's religion is determined by the king's/governor's/leader's religion), are perversions rather than legitimate developments of lay-priesthood. The true development lies in the direction of general education, in congregational self-support and self-government, and in the intelligent co-operation of the laity with the ministry in all good works, at home and abroad. In this respect the Protestants of England, Scotland, and North America, are ahead of the Protestants on the Continent of Europe. The Roman church is a church of priests and has the grandest temples of worship; the Lutheran church is a church of theologians and has the most learning and the finest hymns; the Reformed church is a church of the Christian people and has the best preachers and congregations.

*[This study will continue in the next issue.]*



This study is taken from: Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VI. A PDF file of this book can be downloaded, free of charge, at:

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

# *A Study of Christ: Christ in the Old Testament*



## Christ in the Old Testament, pt. 1 by Scott Sperling

*[Here we begin a series that deals with references to Christ, to the Christian life, to Christian doctrine, etc., as found in the Old Testament writings. A goal of these studies is to convince ourselves that the Bible is one unified book: a single book, with unified themes, and a consistent Theology.]*

### The Creation and the Trinity – Gen. 1:26-27

**<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”**

**<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.**

As far as I can tell, the first reference to Christ in the Bible, subtle though it may be, is found here in Gen. 1:26-27. In vs. 26, there is a conspicuous use of plural pronouns, translated in English as “...us...”, “...our...”, and “...our...”. The best explanation of the use of these pronouns here is that they are referring to a *plurality of persons in the God-head* (as John Calvin terms it). This is a foreshadowing of the Christian concept of the *Trinity*, that is, that God is one unified being,

consisting of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We know that the plural pronouns (“**us/our/our**”) cannot be referring to multiple gods, because we are taught many places in the Bible that there is only one true God. For instance, God Himself instructed Moses (see Deut. 6:1) to teach the children of Israel: **“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one”** (Deut. 6:4). And God Himself testified through Isaiah: **“This is what the Lord says— Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God”** (Isa. 44:6). And so, the “**us/our/our**” in Gen. 1:26 cannot be referring to multiple gods. The Bible would never testify to such a thing.

The most prevalent explanation among conservative commentators of this peculiar use of plural pronouns (the “**us/our/our**”) is, as stated above, that they are referring to the *plurality of persons in the God-head*, a subtle reference to the Trinity. There have been attempts at explaining the plural pronouns in other ways, but these alternate explanations have problems, and none of them have garnered popular support among commentators and scholars. Here are some attempted alternate explanations:

1. *God is speaking to angels* – This is an explanation given by some Jewish scholars [see Lange, 173]. But this explanation does not hold up because that would imply that man is made in the image of angels (God said, **“Let us make man in our image...”**). There is no indication in the Bible that we are made in the image of angels. Moreover, there is also no indication in the Bible that the angels are involved in any way in the creation of man.
2. *God is speaking to the earth* – This explanation stems from the language used in the creation of

vegetation (vs. 11), and animals (vs. 24), where it says, “...**Let the land produce...**” But again, this is not a satisfactory explanation of the use of the plural pronouns, because man is not made in the “**image**” of the earth.

3. *God is using the plural as a way of enhancing His majesty* – This is what we would call “using the royal ‘we’”, just as some monarchs in history would refer to themselves with the plural pronoun “we”. But this explanation is an anachronism. There is no evidence, either in the Bible or elsewhere, that a plural pronoun was used in this way. Also, linguistically, the Hebrew use here would not support that the pronoun enhances the majesty of the speaker (see Lange, 173).

And so, by far the best explanation of the use of the plural pronouns here, especially given the revelation that we have of Jesus Christ as the deific Son of God, is that the three persons of the Trinity are taking counsel in the important act of creating *man* in the image of God. Other commentators are in agreement:

- “Only a *plurality of persons* can justify the phrase. Hence we are forced to conclude that the plural pronoun indicates a *plurality of persons* or *hypostases* in the Divine Being” [Murphy, 63].
- “This form of expression conveys the idea of *counsel* and *agreement*—and suggests that the work was done in wisdom and love. It is not at all inappropriate language when we know that there are three Persons in the Godhead... And though this plural form of the verb is not, in itself, reason sufficient for the doctrine of the Trinity, yet, taken with other and more direct passages, it is strongly confirmatory of it” [Jacobus, 77].

- “We may not affirm that a Trinity of Persons, or even a Plurality of Persons, in the Godhead, could have been concluded *a priori* from such a passage as this; but what we are authorized to assert, *a posteriori*, is,—that since **‘spiritual things are to be compared with spiritual’** (1 Cor. 2:13), and Scripture is to be interpreted from itself, and since the doctrine of the Trinity has been clearly revealed in other parts of Holy Scripture, especially in the New Testament; and since all Christians are baptized into a belief of that doctrine, and it is the received doctrine of the Church of Christ, therefore the true interpretation of this passage of Scripture is that which has been stated above, and which is sanctioned by the universal consent of the greatest Teachers of the Church, both in ancient and later days” [Wordsworth, 8].
- “The ancient Christians with one mind see in these words of God that plurality in the Divine unity, which was more fully revealed, when God sent His only begotten Son into the world, and when the only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, declared Him to mankind” [Cook, 35].
- “The three Persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consult about [the creation of man], and concur in it, because man, when he was made, was to be dedicated and devoted to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. *Into* that great name we are with good reason baptized, for *to* that great name, we owe our being” [Henry, 6].

It makes sense that the Trinity should be referenced in the creation narrative, because the Bible testifies that all three persons of the Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) took part in creating the heavens and the earth. The Holy

Spirit is mentioned early on in the creation narrative: **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and *the Spirit of God* was hovering over the waters”** (Gen. 1:1-2). The hovering presence of the Spirit of God, seems to suggest that He’s involved as the *acting agent* in the creation. So when God says, *Let there be light*, we may infer that it is the Spirit of God who puts into effect *the light*.

We are told explicitly that the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, was involved in the creation. **“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and *through whom also he made the universe*”** (Heb. 1:1-2). And John tells us, concerning Christ as *the Word*: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. *Through him all things were made*; without him nothing was made that has been made”** (John 1:1-3). And Paul teaches: **“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him”** (Col. 1:15-16). Paul also speaks of both the Father’s and the Son’s involvement in the creation: **“For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, *from whom all things came* and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through whom all things came* and through whom we live”** (1 Cor. 8:5-6). So, given that all three persons of the Trinity were involved in the creation, it is natural that we would find a reference to them in the creation narrative.

When one realizes that the plural pronouns (the “**us/our/our**” in Gen. 1:26-27) refer to the *plurality of persons* of which God consists, one might find also subtle indications that there are exactly *three* persons. Note that there are three plural pronouns used in verse 26: “...**us... our... our...**” Note also, in verse 27, the creation poem contains a *triple* parallelism:

**“So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.”**

Now, admittedly, these subtle references to the *three-ness* of the Trinity are not definitive for doctrinal purposes, but such literary subtleties, which are often found in the Bible, speak to *my* spirit of the inspiration of the Bible. When reading and studying literature and poetry, literary scholars naturally look for the use of literary devices, such as symbolism and foreshadowing, in literary works, because they know that literary authors do such things. So, if in a literary work, there is a theme revealed late in the work of the *three-ness* of some aspect of the main character (say, three peculiar talents, or three ways the character shows love to another character, or some such thing), a literary scholar, if he or she found a subtle reference to *three-ness* early in the work, would naturally conclude that the author was foreshadowing the *three-ness* that was to be revealed later in the work.

Now, we who believe in the Divine inspiration of the Bible, believe that each word in the Bible is Divinely inspired. We also believe that the Bible contains a single communication, a unified work that reveals the works, the person, and the plan of God. So, if when we reach the end of reading the Bible, we find that we can discern the doctrine of the Trinity, that God consists of three persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), then we should not be surprised to see subtle references to the Trinity found throughout the

Bible, just as a literary scholar would not be surprised to find such things in a literary work. The literary scholar knows that literary authors, as part of expressing their art, use literary devices such as symbolism and foreshadowing. Why then should we be surprised that the Creator of all things, even the concepts of art and literature, would use these same literary devices in His great work of literature, the Holy Bible?

If we accept that there are literary hints to the nature of God as consisting of three persons, then we would not be surprised to find other subtle hints to the Trinity in other parts of the Bible. For instance, the very worship of God by angels contains a *triple* affirmation of His holiness: **“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory”** (Isa. 6:3), and also in the book of Revelation, **“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come”** (Rev. 4:8). Then also, the God-sanctioned blessing upon His people, as given to Moses, is a *three-fold* blessing: **“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:**

**The Lord bless you  
and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace”** (Num. 6:22-26).

Another subtle indication of the *plurality of persons in the God-head* in the Old Testament, one which is not obvious to English readers, is the word used to designate the True and Living God in the original Hebrew. By far most references to *God* in the Old Testament (more than 2300 references) use the word *Elohim*, which actually is a plural form (as designated by the suffix *-im*) of the word *God* (the singular form is *Eloha*). When the word *Elohim* occurs and is referring to God,

interestingly, singular verbs and adjectives accompany the word. And so you have, in each and every sentence that uses the word *Elohim*, an illustration (as it were) of the doctrine of the Trinity: you have God expressed as a *plurality of persons* through the use of the plural word *Elohim*, and then God expressed as a *unity*, as *one God*, through the use of singular forms of verbs and adjectives describing God. “[T]he plural of the Hebrew form is generally employed to denote the one God. The singular form, when applied to the true God, is naturally suggested by the prominent thought of his being the only one. The plural, when so applied, is generally accompanied with singular conjuncts, and conveys the predominant conception of a plurality in the one God,—a plurality which must be perfectly consistent with his being the only possible one of his kind... [I]t indicates such a plurality in the only one God as makes his nature complete and creation possible. Such a plurality in unity must have dawned upon the mind of Adam. It is afterwards, we conceive, definitely revealed in the doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost” [Murphy, 27].

Of course, in the New Testament, there are less subtle references to the Trinity, as the doctrine of the Trinity is fleshed out. At Christ’s baptism, we have the voice of the Father, the Son being baptized, and the Holy Spirit descending upon Him: **“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’”** (Matt. 3:16-17). After this, it’s natural and proper that we are commanded to baptize by referencing the Trinity: **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”** (Matt. 28:19-20). In the Epistles, there are many references juxtaposing the three

persons of the Trinity. For instance, just as in Num. 6, where there is a subtle reference to the Trinity in the three-fold blessing (as referenced above in Num. 6:22-26), so Paul explicitly references the three persons of the Trinity in his blessing on the Corinthians: **“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”** (2 Cor. 13:14). And Peter describes the work of all three persons of the Trinity in the life of believers: **“[You] have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood”** (1 Peter 1:2). So then, throughout the Bible, we have a progressive revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity, beginning in Genesis 1:26 with the plural pronouns, the **“us/our/our”**, and continuing all the way through the book of Revelation, making clear to us that God consists of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

One might ask, besides the subtle literary references to the Trinity in the Old Testament, do we actually find the three persons of the Trinity at work in the Old Testament? I would say, “Yes! Certainly!” In order to recognize the manifestations of the three persons of the Trinity in the Old Testament, it is helpful to review the roles of each of them:

- *God the Father* – He has the *authoritative* role, with the Son and the Holy Spirit (and indeed, all creatures) submitting to His will (see John 6:38; 14:31; Gal. 4:4-6; et. al.). He also has the role of *loving Father*, lovingly adopting believers as his own, to be **“heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ”** (Rom. 8:17; also Matt. 6:9).
- *Jesus the Son* – He has the role of the *mediator* between God and man. He is God *incarnate*, in human form, so that we can see Him, and speak to Him. He is the

**“image of the invisible God”** (Col. 1:15; see also 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3).

- *The Holy Spirit* – He is the invisible force of God, the *influential* aspect of God, *indwelling* us, and *guiding* us to carry out God’s will. We see many times in the Bible, God sending out His Spirit to put His will into *action*.

Knowing these roles, we can see more clearly manifestations of each person of the Trinity in the Old Testament. We certainly see God the Father, the *authoritative* aspect of God, in the Old Testament: God creating the heavens and the earth; God authoritatively giving His Law to man; God performing miraculous wonders on behalf of His people, demonstrating His full authority over all aspects of His creation; God as the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God; the all-seeing and all-knowing God.

And we can easily find the Holy Spirit at work in the Old Testament, for He is often named **“the Spirit of God.”** There are many places in the Old Testament where the Spirit of God is sent out in His *influential* role, to *indwell* and *guide* God’s people to carry out the will of God the Father. Whereas in New Testament times, the Holy Spirit was given to the Church at Pentecost, and so indwells every believer, in Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit was (shall we say) doled out selectively. For instance, God filled a man named Bezalel with the Holy Spirit to give him special understanding when working on furnishings of the Tabernacle: **“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills — to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts’”** (Ex. 31:1-5). Likewise, the Holy Spirit came upon Saul, just before he became king, to give him the gift of

prophecy, for a time: **“As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day. When he and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he joined in their prophesying. When all those who had formerly known him saw him prophesying with the prophets, they asked each other, ‘What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?’”** (1 Sam. 10:9-11). The Holy Spirit comes upon many other people in the Old Testament, in a similar way (see Num. 11:26; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; and many other places).

The second person of the Trinity, the Son, Jesus Christ, can also be found in the Old Testament. There is a bit of difficulty in discerning appearances of the Son in the Old Testament, because He is not known by the name Jesus, nor given the title Christ, in the Old Testament (“Jesus” was the name given Him by Joseph, at the advice of a visiting angel, when Jesus came to earth as the son of Mary, see Matt. 1:21; “Christ” is His title as the *anointed one*, which was His mission as Messiah when He came to earth as the son of Mary). In the Old Testament, we can discern appearances by the Son by remembering his role as *mediator*, as God *incarnate*, as the *image of God* to man. And so, when we see God appear to people in the form of a man, we can infer (because of His role) that this is the second person of the Trinity, the Son Jesus Christ, who is appearing to man. In support of this view, the great German scholar E. W. Hengstenberg wrote, in his classic work entitled “Christology in the Old Testament,” that there is a “hidden” God (which is God in the fullness of His glory), and a “revealed” God, who is Christ, “the Son, or the Logos” (or the **“Word”**, as John put it; the revealed God to man), and that these two are connected by a “oneness of nature.” Hengstenberg goes on to say that the Son, or the Word, “has been the Mediator in all God’s relations to the world;—[and] at all times, and even before He became man in Christ, has

been the light of the world.” In other words, wherever we find God revealing Himself in bodily form to man, this is the Word, the revealed side of God (so to speak). This is Christ, before He was known as Christ.

Such appearances occur many times in the Old Testament. For many of these appearances, the Son is given the name **“the angel of the LORD”**. “[The term] is found 33 times [in the Old Testament], and plainly designates the Angel of the Covenant – the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity... – the Mediator in all the relations of God to the world, who appeared to men under the Old Testament, and directed the whole visible theocracy... The title is employed to denote Jehovah as manifested in visible, personal form among men” [Jacobus, 277]. The first appearance in the Old Testament under that name was to Hagar, Sarah’s maid-servant. The Son appeared to her as **“the angel of the LORD”** to comfort her: **“The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, ‘Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?’ ‘I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,’ she answered. Then the angel of the Lord told her, ‘Go back to your mistress and submit to her.’ The angel added, ‘I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.’”** (Gen. 16:7-10). Note that **“the angel of the Lord”** said that He Himself would **“increase [Hagar’s] descendants”**, which implies a power that only God would have (not an ordinary angel). A bit later, Hagar herself acknowledged that this was an appearance of God to her: **“She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’”** (Gen. 16:13).

For another example, when Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice Isaac, it is **“the angel of the LORD,”** Jesus Christ Himself, who stayed Abraham’s hand to stop the sacrifice: **“Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay**

his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. ‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’” (Gen. 22:10-12). We know that this was an appearance of God to Abraham, because **“the angel of the LORD”** said, **“...you have not withheld from *me* your son.”** The **“me”** is God, because Abraham was sacrificing his son to God.

There are many other appearances of Christ as **“the angel of the LORD”**, and also other appearances of Christ (God incarnate) where this particular name is not used. God willing, we will cover many of these appearances in this series of studies. We have certainly seen enough here, though, to declare that, indeed, we do find the three persons of the Trinity in the Old Testament. Their roles are consistent throughout the Bible, Old and New Testament, giving support to the fact that we are studying, in the Old and New Testaments, one unified book, one unified revelation of the word of God to man.



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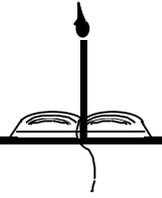
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# *A Sermon: Unstaggering Faith*



A Sermon by the Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon

Sermon No. 733 –  
Unstaggering Faith –  
Romans 4:19-21

(Preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,  
London, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1867)

**“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.”** (Romans 4:19-21, KJV)

*[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — James 1]*

IT WAS GOD’S PURPOSE that Abraham should be a surpassingly excellent example of the power of faith. He was to be “the father of the faithful,” the mirror, pattern and paragon of faith. He was ordained to be the supreme believer of the patriarchal age, the serene and venerable leader of the noble army of believers in Jehovah, the faithful and true God. In order to produce so eminent a character, it was necessary that Abraham’s faith should be exercised in a special and unequalled manner. The power of his faith could not be known except by putting it to the severest tests. To this end, among other trials of his faith, God gave him a promise that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed, and

yet for many a year he remained without an heir. The promise, when originally given, startled Abraham, but he did not doubt it. We read that he laughed, laughed with holy joy at the thought of so great and unexpected a blessing. It also startled his wife Sarah; she did, however, doubt it—and when she laughed it was the laugh of disbelief.

The fulfillment of the promise was long delayed. Abraham waited with patience, sojourning as a stranger in a strange land, having respect unto the covenant which the Lord had made with him and with his unborn seed. Not a shadow of doubt crossed the mind of the holy patriarch, he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, and though he came to be 100 years old, and his wife Sarah was almost equally as advanced in years, he did not listen to the voice of carnal reason, but maintained his confidence in God. Doubtless he had well weighed the natural impossibilities which laid in the way, but he overlooked the whole, and being fully persuaded that if God had promised him a son the son would certainly be born, he entertained a holy confidence, and left the matter of time in the hands of the sovereign ruler.

His faith triumphed in all its conflicts. Had it not been that Sarah and Abraham were both at such an advanced age there would have been no credit to them in believing the promise of God, but the more difficult, the more impossible the fulfillment of the promise seemed to be, the more wonderful was Abraham's faith, that he still held to it that what God had promised He was able to perform. If I may so say, there was in Abraham's case a double death to stand in the way of the promise, not one difficulty in itself insuperable, but two, two absolute impossibilities; and yet, though one impossibility might have been enough to stagger any man, the two together could not cause his faith to waver. He considered not the natural impediments; he allowed them no space in the account, they seemed to be less than nothing in the presence of the truth and power of the Almighty God. The Most High God had given a promise, and that fact

overrode 10,000 adverse arguments. His was that noble confidence of which we sing—

“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,  
And looks to that alone;  
Laughs at impossibilities  
And cries, ‘It shall be done!’”

By such unquestioning confidence Abraham brought glory to God. It glorifies God greatly for His servants to trust Him; they then become witnesses to His faithfulness, just as His works in creation are witnesses of His power and wisdom. Abraham was a noble instance of the power which the truthfulness of God exerts over the human mind, when under all discouragements he still “believed God.” His heart said of the living God, “He cannot lie; He will perform His promise.” While glorifying God, Abraham reaped a present consolation to himself, and in the end he had the joy of receiving the promise. His early laugh of joy was remembered and commemorated in his son Isaac, that child of promise, whose name was “laughter.” The patriarch himself became one of the most honored of men, for it is written, “He who honors Me I will honor.”

Brothers and sisters, this is the point to which I want to bring you, that if God intends to make you or me, any one of us, or all of us together, to be distinguishing exhibitors of the divine grace of faith, we must expect to be passed through very much the same trials as Abraham. With regard to the object upon which our faith is exercised, it is most probable that we shall be made to feel our own weakness and even our personal death; we shall be brought very low, even into an utter self-despair; we shall be made to see that the mercy we are seeking of God is a thing impossible with man; it is very probable that difficulties will rise before us till they are enough to overwhelm us, not only one range of mountainous impossibilities, but another will be seen towering up behind

the first, till we are pressed beyond measure, and led to an utter despair of the matter as considered in ourselves. At such a crisis, if God the Holy Spirit is working with mighty power in us we shall still believe that the divine promise will be fulfilled; we shall not entertain a doubt concerning the promise; we shall remember that it remains with God to find ways and means and not with ourselves; we shall cast the burden of fulfilling the promise upon Him with whom it naturally rests. Go on, then, in steady, holy, confident joy, looking for the end of our faith and patiently pleading until we reach it. The Lord will honor and comfort us in so doing, and in the end He will grant us the desire of our hearts, for none who trust in Him shall ever be confounded, world without end! Let us this morning firmly lay hold upon this general principle, that God will empty us of self completely before He will accomplish any great thing by us, thus removing from us every pretext for claiming the glory for ourselves; but at such seasons of humiliation it is our privilege to exercise unabated faith, for the fulfillment of the promise is not imperiled, but rather may be looked upon as drawing near. May the Holy Spirit guide us while we endeavor to apply the general principle to distinct cases.

First, we shall view it in application *to the individual worker for Christ*; then, secondly, we shall take it *in connection with the church associated for Christian service*; thirdly, we shall apply it briefly to the case of *a pleader wrestling with God in prayer*; and, fourthly, we shall show its bearing upon the case of *a seeker*, showing that he also will have to feel his own natural death and utter helplessness, and then faith will find all necessary grace stored up in the promise-Giving God.

**I. To the individual worker** we have a message.

I trust I address many brothers and sisters who have wholly consecrated themselves to the service of God, and have been for months or years perseveringly toiling in the Redeemer's cause. Now, it is probable, very probable indeed, that you are more than ever conscious of your own spiritual

weakness. "Oh," you say, "if God intends to bless souls, I cannot see how they can be blessed through me. If sinners are to be converted, I feel myself to be the most unfit and unworthy instrument to be used by God in the whole world. If He shall be pleased to smile upon the endeavors of some evangelist, or a pastor, or a zealous Christian, I shall be very grateful, and not at all surprised; but if He should ever bless me it will be a most astonishing thing, I would scarcely be able to believe my own eyes." Such a lowly sense of our own unfitness is common even at the beginning of real Christian labor, and arises from the unexpected and novel difficulties with which we are surrounded. We are then unused to Christian labor, and whether we have to speak in public or to plead with individual sinners we do not feel at home with the work at first, and are oppressed with a sense of weakness. We have not gone this way before, and being quite new at the work, Satan whispers, "You are a poor creature to pretend to serve God. Go back to your retirement, and leave this service to better men." Dear friends, who are thus tempted, take comfort from the word this morning. It is necessary to any great blessing that you should feel your weakness, and see death written upon all carnal strength; this is a part of your preparation for great usefulness; you must be made to feel early in the work, if you are to have an early blessing, that all the glory must be of God; your fancied excellence must fade away, and you yourself must become in your own esteem as feeble as a little child.

I think, however, that a sense of weakness grows on the Christian worker. To continue in harness year after year is not without its wear and tear; our spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak, and faintness in pursuing reveals to us that our own strength is perfect weakness. Personally, I feel my own spiritual inability much more strongly than I did when I began to preach the gospel. There was a novelty and an excitement then about the exercise which gave a degree of counterfeit facility in it; but now it comes almost every day in the week,

twice each day, and this constant utterance, the proclamation of the same gospel, finds out the weak joints in our armor. One is not weary of it, thank God, but still there is a languor which creeps over us, and the old novelty and flash which apparently helped us is now gone, and we feel much more vividly than at first that without the energy of the Holy Spirit we can do nothing, absolutely nothing. You experienced Sunday school teachers, and you parents seeking the conversion of your children are, I doubt not, much more conscious now that all your strength must come from above than you once were. You held as a sort of orthodox creed that you were nothing, but now you feel that you are less than nothing; the more earnest your labors for the Lord, the clearer will be your sense of your own nothingness.

There are times when a lack of success or a withering of our cherished hopes will help to make us feel most keenly how barren and unfruitful we are until the Lord endows us with His Spirit. Those whom we thought to be converted turn out to be merely the subjects of transient excitement, those who stood long, and for years appeared to honor the cross of Christ, turn aside and pierce us through with many sorrows, and then we cry out, "Woe is me! How shall I speak any more in the name of the Lord?" Like Moses, we would have the Lord send by whomever He would send, but not by us; or like Elijah, we hide ourselves for fear, and say "Let me die, I am no better than my fathers." I suppose there is no successful worker who is quite free from times of deep depression, times when his fears make him say, "Surely I took up this work myself through presumption, I ran without being called; I have willfully thrust myself into a position where I am subject to great danger and great toil, without having the strength which is required for the place." At such moments, it only needs another push from Satan, a little withdrawing of God's hand, to make us like Jonah go down to Joppa, and see if we can find a ship to take us away to Tarshish, that we may no longer bear the burden of the Lord. My brother, my sister, I

am not sorry if you are passing through this fiery ordeal. If your strength is dried up like a potsherd, if your strength is shriveled like a skin-bottle that has been hanging up in the smoke, if you feel as though your personal power was altogether paralyzed, I do not regret it, for know you not that it is in your weakness God will show His own strength, and when there is an end of you there will be a beginning of Him? When you are brought to feel, "Neither have I any strength, nor know I what to do," then will you lift up your eyes to the strong One, from whom comes all your true help, and then will His mighty arm be made bare.

In laying down the general principle drawn from the text we observed that there existed a double difficulty, and that even this did not abate Abraham's confidence. It may be that a sense of our own unworthiness is not our only discouragement, but that our sphere of Christian effort is remarkably unpromising. You did not know, my dear friend, when you commenced your evangelistic efforts, how hard the human heart was. You were like young Melancthon—you thought you could easily conquer the human heart, but you now discover that old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. You had heard of other brothers who preached or taught without success, and you said to yourselves, "There must be something very wrong in them or in their teaching, I will not fall into their errors; I at least will be wise and discreet; my methods shall be more Christ-like, more suitable, and more effective; I shall surely win souls." But now you find that hearts with you are as hard as hearts with other men. In that little Sunday school class of yours the boys are still obstinate, the girls still frivolous. You had not reckoned upon this. You accepted it as matter of doctrine that they were depraved, but you supposed that under your treatment that depravity would soon disappear. You are disappointed, for the children seem even worse than others. The more you try to influence their hearts the less you succeed, and the more earnest your endeavors to bring them to Jesus, the more it seems the sin

that dwells in them is provoked. It is possible that you are called to labor where the prejudices of the people are against the gospel, where the temptations and habits and ways of thought are all dead against the chance of success. We constantly meet with brothers who say, "I could prosper anywhere else, but I cannot succeed where I now am." Perhaps they complain, "It is a population of working men," and this they look upon as a dreadful evil, whereas I believe that no class will better reward the labors of the earnest preacher of the gospel. Or else they say, "They are all rich people, and I cannot get at them," whereas where there is a will there is a way. Or the neighborhood is subject to the influence of some established church, or all taken up with other congregations; there is sure to be found difficulty, and Christian work never does

The fact is, to save a soul is the work of Deity, to turn the human will towards holiness is the work of Omnipotence; and unless you and I have made up our minds to that, we had better go back to retirement and meditation, for we are not ready for labor. You tell me your particular sphere is one in which you can do nothing; I am glad to hear it. Such is mine; such is the true position of every Christian worker; he is called by God to do impossibilities; he is but a worm, and yet he is to thresh the mountains and beat them small. Will he do it? Yes, that he will, if his faith is equal to the work. If God but enables him to call in divine Strength, the absence of human strength will be gain to him, and the difficulties and impossibilities will only be as a platform upon which God shall be uplifted, and God's strength the better displayed. Settle it in your heart, my dear friend, that there is great labor to be accomplished if souls are to be won; and in that class, or that tract distributing, that hamlet, that preaching station, there is a work quite out of your reach, and if you do not enlist the power of a heavenly arm, you will come back and say, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nothing." It is well for you to know it. Here are you without power, and

the work cannot help you, will not help you, it will bring every obstacle to impede you. You without strength and the work more than human, see your position and be prepared for it.

Yet the godly worker has that which sustains him, for he has a promise from God. Abraham had received a promise. "In you and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Grasping this with a tight hold, he knew the difficulties and weighed them; but having done so, he put them away as not worth considering. God had said it, and that was enough for him. To him the promise of God was as good as the fulfillment. Just as in trade you often consider some men's bills to be as good as cash, so in this case God's promise was as good to Abraham as the fulfillment itself. Now, brother, if you and I are to be successful in our work for God, we too must get hold of a promise. I think I hear you say, "If I heard a heavenly voice saying to me, 'Go and labor, and I will give you success,' I should doubt no more. If I could have a special revelation, just as Abraham had to him, personally, that would alter the case; but I have not received such a special promise, and am therefore full of fear." Now, observe, God gives His promises in many ways. Sometimes He gives them to individuals, at other times to classes of character; and which is the better of the two? I think you should prefer the second. Suppose God had given to you personally a promise, your unbelief would say, "Ah, it is all fancy; it was not the Lord, it was only a dream." But now God has been pleased to give the revelation, in your case, to character. Shall I quote it? Here it is: "He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Now is not that yourself? Your name is not there, but your *character* is, for you have gone forth, you have wept, and you have carried forth precious seed! The Lord declares that such an one shall doubtless come again rejoicing!

Now, although your name is not in the book absolutely, it is there virtually, and the promise is just as sure to you. If any man of honor were to issue a promise that all persons

appearing at his door at such an hour should receive relief, if he did not give relief to all who appeared, he would be quite as guilty of breach of promise as though he had picked out all the persons by name and given them the promise. The promise is not affected by the absence of the name if the character is there described. I will give you another promise of God: "My word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing where I sent it." Have you delivered God's word, my dear friend? There is the question. If you have, then God declares it shall not return unto Him void; it shall prosper in the thing where He sent it; and that promise is quite as good as though your particular initials had been affixed to it, or it had been spoken to you by the voice of an angel in the visions of the night! A promise, however given is equally binding upon a man of honor, and a promise from God, no matter how delivered, is sure of fulfillment; all you have to do is to lay hold upon it. I have gone forth weeping, and I have sown precious seed, therefore God says I shall come again rejoicing, bringing my sheaves with me. I cannot create the sheaves, and the sheaves as yet do not appear in the field, but I shall have them, for what God has promised He is able also to perform. The thing is to get a promise distinctly and clearly before your mind's eye, and then to defy all discouragements. Oh my brothers, may you be so weak that you may be as dead, and yet at the same time may you be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, because your faith has made the omnipotence of God to be at your command.

Abraham having his full conviction that God would fulfill His own promise, was happy about it, cheerful, rejoicing, comforted, feeling as content to wait as he would have been to receive the blessing at once. He was always full of sacred joy, and thus always glorified God; for those who saw the holy patriarch's serenity of mind naturally inquired who was his God, and when they heard of the Most High they glorified the God of Abraham. In due season the promise came, and the

patriarchal tent was glad with a gladness which never left it. Abraham spoke well of his God, and his God dealt well with him. I want you, Christian workers, to seek as before God to tread in the steps of Abraham. While fully aware that you are powerless in yourselves, rest upon the promise of God; go to your work counting no risks, making no calculations, but believing that where God's promise is concerned, the bare suspicion of failure is not to be endured. Perhaps next to Abraham there was not, in the olden times, a man of more childlike faith than Samson. One weeps over his many infirmities, but one admires the marvelous simplicity of his dependence upon God. When a thousand foes are in array against him he never calculates; he is all alone, unarmed and bound with cords; he snaps his bonds, and seizing the jawbone of an ass, he flies at the hosts of the armed men as if he had a thousand helpers, and they but an equal match for him, and heaps upon heaps he dashes them down till he cries, "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men." He was a man who, if God had said, "Shoulder the world like Atlas," would have carried it as readily as he did the gates of Gaza. He had no thought but of God's power and he was reckless of danger when he felt that God was with him. See him in that memorable death-deed, see him taking hold of the pillars after he had been left of God, blind, and shut up in prison all those dreary months; he has even now enough confidence in God to believe that He will help him at the last! Depend upon it, brothers and sisters it is great faith that can believe in God after times of desertion. But look! He puts his hands upon those ponderous pillars; he prays, and then he tugs and strains; down, down they come, and Israel's God is avenged upon Israel's foe!

That is the kind of spirit I should like to get into my own soul; a spirit conscious that it can do nothing alone, conscious that the work is beyond human possibility, but equally clear that it can do everything that through God there is nothing

beyond the range of its capacity.

**II.** Dear friends, members of this church, I need your earnest attention while I try to show the bearing of this upon **THIS CHURCH AND EVERY CHURCH IN A SIMILAR CONDITION.**

We have set our hearts upon a thorough revival of religion in our midst. Some of my brothers associated with me in the deaconship and eldership have made this a matter of constant prayer to God, that we may see this year greater things than we have ever seen, and there are many in the membership of the same mind who have besieged the throne of God with constant applications. It will be, as a preparation for the work which God will work among us, a very blessed thing for us as a church to feel how utterly powerless we are in this matter. God has blessed us these 13 years; we have enjoyed continued prosperity; we have scarcely known what to do with the blessing God has given us. Truly in our case He has fulfilled the promise, "I will pour out My blessing upon you so that you shall not have room to receive it." But I fear that our temptation is to lean upon an arm of flesh, to suppose there is some power in the ministry, or in our organization, or in the zeal which has characterized us. Brothers and sisters, let us divest ourselves of all that pride, that detestable, abominable, soul-weakening vice, which is as evil and as hurtful to us as it is abominable to God. We can no more save a soul than make a world, and as to causing a genuine revival by our own efforts, we might as well talk of whirling the stars from their sphere! Poor helpless worms we are in this matter. If God helps us we can pray, but without His aid our prayer will be mockery. If God helps us we can preach, but apart from Him our preaching is but a weary tale told without power or energy. You must each of you ask the Lord to take you down into the depths of your own nothingness, and reveal to you your utter unworthiness to be used in His work. Try to get a deeply humiliating sense of your own weakness. As a church we want to be kept low before the Lord. Why

what are we as a church? There are some sad sinners among us, who are such clever hypocrites that we cannot find them out, and there are others who walk so ill that we fear they are tares among the wheat. The best of us are far from being as good as we should be. We have all grave accusations to bring against ourselves. If the Lord Jesus were to write on the ground here and say, "He that is without fault among you, let him throw the first stone at lukewarm Christians," I do not know who is the oldest and whether he would try to go out first, but I should follow very closely at his heels. We are all verily guilty before the Lord; we have not done as we ought, nor as we might—we are unworthy that He should use us, and if He should write, "Ichabod," in letters of fire over this Tabernacle, and leave this house to be desolate as Shiloh was of old, He might well do it and none could blame Him. Let us all confess this.

Next, there is not only difficulty in ourselves but difficulty in the work. We want to see all these people converted to God, and truly some of our hearers are hopeless enough, for I have been preaching to them for 10 or 12 years and they are not a whit the better but the worse for it—they have grown gospel-hardened. My voice used to startle you once, and the honest truth of God made you feel, but it is not so now. You are as used to my voice as the miller to the click of his mill; you are made ready for the uttermost wrath of God, for there is no place that can prepare a man for Hell so readily as the place of rejected invitations and neglected admonitions. Yet, dear hearers, we desire to see you converted, and by the grace of God we hope to see it. But what can *we* do? The preacher can do nothing, for he has done his best to bring you to Christ and has failed, and all that any of our most earnest friends can suggest will fail also. The work is impossible with us, but do we therefore give up the attempt? No, for is it not written, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain"? We cannot seek God's face in vain, and if this church continues to prey as it has done an answer of peace must be

given us. We do not know how the promise is to be fulfilled, but we believe it will be fulfilled, and we leave it with our God. There is another promise, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." Christ must see of His soul's travail, must see of it in this place too. We expect to see men, women, and children converted in this place, and to hear multitudes of sinners crying, "What must I do to be saved?" We have God's promise for it; *we* cannot do it, but *He* can. What shall we do? Why, just in joyous confidence continue steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Go again to our knees in prayer, feeling that the result is not haphazard. Jesus pleads His wounds, and cannot be denied. The Lord cannot draw back from His Word. He must do according to His people's desires when He Himself writes those desires upon their hearts, and when they have grown into earnest striving, and wrestling, and mounted into believing expectations, they must be fulfilled. If we can only get a dozen men and women among you really humbled before God to feel your own emptiness, and yet to believe the promise, I expect to see within the next few months a blessing of such an extent as we have never received before. God send this, and His be the glory!

**III.** For a minute—if there had been time I would have liked to apply this principle **TO EVERY PLEADING SOUL** that is wrestling with God in prayer, but as I have not the time I will dismiss it in these words. Dear friends, if your heart has been set upon any special object in prayer, if you have an express promise for it (and mark, that is indispensable), you must not be staggered if the objective of your desire seems farther off now than when you first began to pray. If even after months of supplication the thing should seem more difficult now of attainment than ever it was, wait at the mercy seat in the full persuasion that although God may take His time, and that time may not be your time, yet He must and will redeem His promise when the fullness of time has come. If you have prayed for the salvation of your child, or husband,

or friend, and that person has grown worse instead of better, do not cease praying. If that dear little one has become more obstinate, and that husband even more profane, still God must be held to His word; and if you have the faith to challenge His attributes of faithfulness and power, assuredly He never did and never will let your prayers fall fruitless to the ground; and I repeat the word that you may be sure to carry that away with you, let not the fact that the answer seems farther off than ever be any discouragement to you. Remember that to trust God in the light is nothing—but to trust Him in the dark—that is faith. To rest upon God when everything witnesses with God is nothing, but to believe God when everything gives Him the lie—that is faith. To believe that all shall go well when outward providences blow softly is any fool's play, but to believe that it *must* and *shall* be well when storms and tempests are round about you, and you are blown farther and farther from the harbor of your desire—this is a work of divine grace. By this shall you know whether you are a child of God or not— by seeing whether you can exercise faith in the power of prayer when all things forbid you to hope.

**IV.** I desire to spend the last five minutes in addressing **THE SEEKER**. Surely among this throng there must be some of you who long to be saved. If so, it is likely that since you have begun to seek salvation, instead of being happier you are far more miserable. You imagined at one time that you could believe in Jesus whenever you liked, that you could become a Christian at your own will at any moment; and now you wake up to find that the will is present with you, but how to perform that which you desire you find not. You desire to break the chains of sin, but those sins were far easier to bind than to loose. You want to come to Jesus with a broken heart, but your heart refuses to break. You long to trust Jesus, but your unbelief is so mighty that you cannot see His cross—you cannot look with the look which makes a sinner live. Will you think me cruel if I say I am glad to find you in this poverty-

stricken state, for I believe that in your case you must *know* your own powerlessness, you *must* be brought to feel that as far as salvation is concerned you are dead, utterly dead. Every sinner must learn that he is by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and that the work of salvation is a work impossible to him—it is high above out of his reach. I want you to know that more and more, and if it should drive you to a thorough self-despair, none will be more thankful than I shall be, for despair is the nearest way to faith in our philosophy. Self-despair throws a man upon his God; he feels that he can do nothing and he turns to one who can do all things.

Now, friend, if you are as I have said convinced of your nothingness, the next thing is, can you find a promise? There is one I pray the Lord to give you this morning: “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Have you called upon the name of the Lord? That is to say, have you cried to Him, “God be merciful to me a sinner”? Well, if you have not, I pray you do it now. If you so call, you must be saved. True, you cannot save yourself; I am glad you know that; but what *you* cannot do, in that you are weak through the flesh, God will do, for there is His promise, “Whoever comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Now, will you come? If so, you cannot be cast out. “Whoever believes on Him is not condemned.” Do you believe on the Lord Jesus? Do you take Him now to be your Savior? If you do, your personal lack of power shall be no hindrance. You have no power whatever, but there is none needed in you. When Christ raised the dead he did not rake among the ashes to find a lingering spark of vitality, but He said, “Live.” And if you are as dead as Lazarus of whom Martha said, “Lord, by this time he stinks,” the voice of mercy can yet make you live. Can you believe this? If you can believe in Jesus you shall be saved! If you can believe that Jehovah Jesus, the Son of God, can save you, and if you can rest upon His merits, though in you there is no grain of merit, though in you there is no vestige of power or spiritual strength, this shall not stand in your way; and though your sins are as

damnable as those of Satan, and your iniquity of heart as deep as Hell itself, yet if you can trust in Jesus to save you, difficulty vanishes before the merit of His blood.

I know you say, "If I felt happy I could trust Christ. If I felt tender, if I felt holy." No, friend, you would not be trusting *Christ*, you would be trusting your *feelings*, and your *tenderness* would be your confidence. But now you have no feeling of tenderness or holiness that can recommend you to God. Come then as you are, wretched, undone, self-condemned, and self-abhorred; come and cast yourself upon the mercy of God as He reveals Himself in the bleeding body of His dear Son, and if you can do this you will glorify God. "Oh," you say, "how could such a poor soul as I am ever bring glory to God?" Sinner, I say it is in your power, if God enables you, to bring more glory to God in a certain sense than the living saint can, for the living saint only believes that God can keep him alive, but for you under a pressing sense of guilt still to believe that Jesus can give you perfect liberty and save you—oh, this glorifies Him! There is not an angel before the throne of God who can believe such great things of God as you can. An angel has no sin. He cannot, therefore, believe that Jesus can put away his sin, but you can. "If you believe in Jesus, though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." If you do God the honor to believe that He can do what He has said; if you rest in Jesus, you shall have the comfort, He shall have the glory, and your soul shall have the salvation. Emptied of self you have no life, no strength, and no goodness; in fact you have nothing to recommend you, but come as you are and the Lord will bless you and give you the desire of your heart, and unto Him be the glory. Amen.

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

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## *A Meditation: The Traveller*

### A Meditation: On Taking Farewell, 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.]*

Everything beneath the sun has vanity and vexation engraven on it; and it is fit it should be so, lest men, possessing what they aspire after, should forget themselves. So we see, we feel, that pleasure is interwoven with pain, sweet with sour, joy with sorrow, riches with anxiety and cares, greatness with torment, health with disease, and life with death.

When I took farewell of my friends to see other nations, and rise into a more universal knowledge of the world and men (trifles that please an aspiring mind), yet how were all my fine prospects more than balanced to think, that I might never see my native land again, the land of liberty and light, the *Hephzibah of God!* What if I should drop into the unfathomed deeps of the ocean, and be a prey to the finny tribe? But, abstracting from these gloomy forethoughts, how was joy turned into a flow of friendly sorrow! Can I yet forget the affectionate *grasp* of hand, the melting *tear*, the parting *kiss*, and kindly *look*, as if it might have been the last, and all from friends so near and dear?

Yet this must be; I must either forbear going abroad, or take farewell of all my friends; and who knows if ever I shall see them again, till in another world, where the nearest ties are

loosed, and the dearest relation dissolved, unless a spiritual relation unite our souls to him, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, a family that shall never scatter or be dispersed through the ages of eternity!

The highest wisdom of the traveller, then, is to get himself made a member of the heavenly family. Thus, when the frail family, of which he is a mortal member, must be divided, parted, and spread abroad, some in death, some in distant lands, he shall never be cast out of the celestial family, nor denied the high privileges thereof, but may cry to God, Abba, Father, and shall find Him not far off, even when roaring oceans interrupt the natural father's passionate care, and bound the tender mother's melting flow of affection. Without such a relation we are orphans, though we had the best of fathers, and the kindest of mothers; we are friendless, though we had the most sympathising sisters, and obliging brothers; destitute, amidst our numerous, rich, and munificent relations; and more desolate than the pelican of the wilderness, or the midnight owl, though crowded with visitants, and among a world of acquaintances.

But, blessed with it, no tongue can tell our happiness. Our heavenly Father, who knows our need, is ever at our hand; His power and promptitude to do us good exceed the natural father, excel the kindly mother; His mercy outshines the sympathising sisters, and His bounty the obliging brother; His promises are better than all our relations, His providence than our richest friends; and His presence than a world of acquaintance, or the levee of kings. In such a situation, the deserts of Arabia shall please, like the places where we were born and brought up. May this, then, be my case, and I am happy in my peregrinations, and joyful in my journeys.

This article is taken from: Meikle, James. *The Traveller: or, Meditations on Various Subjects Written on Board a Man of War*. Edinburgh: J. Pillans & Sons, 1811. A PDF file of this book can be downloaded, free of charge, at <http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



# Postscript

## Christianity for All Mankind

“There has been a religion of Egypt – of Greece – of Rome, and even of Judea. Christianity is the only religion of Mankind. It has for its origin in man – Sin; and this is a character that appertains not merely to one race, but which is the inheritance of all mankind. Hence, as meeting the highest necessities of our common nature, the Gospel is received as from God, at once by the most barbarous nations, and the most civilized communities... It sanctifies, ennobles, and raises them to a holy oneness, by the new and living principle it communicates to them.”

-- *Merle D'Aubigne (1794-1872)*

### Related Bible Verse:

**“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus”** (Romans 3:23-24)

Note: The work from which the above quote was taken, *The History of the Reformation*, Vol. 3, by Merle D'Aubigne, is available as a PDF eBook at the Classic Christian Library, free of charge at:

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

