

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 1:2

A Study by John King (1594)

Jonah 1:2, pt. 1 – The City of Nineveh

[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).

NOT TO TROUBLE YOU with longer repetition, we inquired in the former exercise of these three points: 1. The place which Jonah was sent unto; 2. His business there; 3. The cause. Touching the place, we proposed four reasons why God sent him to Nineveh: 1. To keep his manner and use of foretelling the plague before he inflicts it; 2. To set up a standard of hope to the rest of the Gentiles, that they also should partake the goodness of God; 3. To prevent his people with mercy, and to take up favor in Assyria for them beforehand, against the time of their banishment; 4. To shame and confound the house of Israel, with the singular repentance of a strange people.

Nineveh is further beautified in my text by two epithets or additions, the one describing the nature or kind of the place, ‘**a city;**’ the other, the quantity and amplex thereof, ‘**a great city.**’ The inference from both these must needs be this, that because it was *a city*, and *a great city*, it was therefore stately for wealthiness, glorious for buildings, well peopled, tedious to be gone through, perilous to be threatened, where the prophet was likely to find in all states of men, princes, councilors, courtiers,

merchants, commoners, mighty contradiction. The greatness of Nineveh is more plentifully set down in the third of this prophecy, where it is termed, **“a great and an excellent city, of three days’ journey”** (see Jonah 3:3). It had an ancient testimony long before in Genesis 10:11, for thus Moses wrote that **“Asshur came from the land of Shinar, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah.”**

At length, he singles out Nineveh from the rest, and sets a special mark of pre-eminence upon it, **“This is a great city;”** which honour, by the judgment of the most learned, though standing in the last place, belongeth to the first of the four cities, namely, to Nineveh. Others imagined, but their conjecture is without ground, that the whole four cities were closed up within the same walls, and made but one of an unusual bigness. Some ascribe the building of Nineveh to Ninus, the son of Belus, of whom it took its name, to be called either Ninus, as we read in Pliny, or, after the manner of the Hebrews, Nineveh. They conceive it thus, that when Nimrod had built Babylon, Ninus, disdainful of his government, went into the fields of Asshur, and there erected a city after his own name, between the rivers Lycus and Tybris. Others suppose that the affinity betwixt these names, deceived profane writers touching the author thereof, and that it took the name Nineveh because it was beautiful or pleasant. Others hold opinion that Asshur and Ninus are but one and the same person; and lastly, to conclude, the judgment of some learned people is, that neither Asshur, nor Ninus, but Nimrod himself, was the founder of it. But by the confession of all, both sacred and gentile histories, the city was very spacious, having four hundred and eighty furlongs in circuit, when Babylon had fewer almost by an hundred, and as afterwards it grew in wealth and magnificence, so they write, it was much enlarged. Raphael Volateranus affirms that it was eight years in building, and not by fewer at once than ten thousand workmen. There was no city since, by the estimation of Diodorus Siculus, that had like compass of ground, or

stateliness of walls, the height whereof was not less than an hundred feet, the breadth sufficiently capable to have received three carts on a row, and they were furnished and adorned besides with one thousand five hundred turrets. The Holy Ghost, no doubt, had a double purpose in giving this glorious title of distinction to Nineveh: the one in respect of Jonah, the other of Nineveh itself.

I. In respect of Jonah, it was the meaning of God to try and arm his prophet beforehand with commemoration of the greatest difficulties, that by naming the worst at the first unto him, he might prove his obedience, whether he felt himself disposed to hold out, and so settle his thoughts in some sort in declaring the costs of the building before he undertook it, lest afterwards, when he came and found the danger of the place beyond his expectation, he might complain of God, as we read in Jeremiah 20, **“I am deceived, Lord, and thou hast deceived me”** (Jer. 20:7). Thus he dealt with Abraham his servant in Genesis 22, about the offering up of his son, whose faith and obedience he sounded before, by aggravating in his ears every circumstance of the action, that Abraham might forecast with himself whether the infirmity of his nature were able to brook it, for it is written there that **“God did prove Abraham.”** The proof was thus: Abraham, take (1) thy son; (2) thine only son; (3) Isaac thy son; (4) whom thou lovest; take him (5) thyself; take him (6) now presently; (7) get thee into the land of Moriah; (8) there offer him; offer him (9) for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I shall show thee. The weight of every word is enough to bruise him in pieces, and make him sink down under the burden of that charge. (1) Take thy son, not thy bondman, nor beast, nor any common thing, that belongs to thee; (2) thine only son, the only begotten of the free woman; (3) not Ishmael, but Isaac thy son, to whom thy promises are established; (4) Isaac whom thou lovest, as tender and dear unto thee as the bowels of thine own breast; (5) take him in thine own person, even thou, the father of the child, turn not over the execution to any other man; (6) take him without

delay, I give thee no time to deliberate, nor day nor hour to confer with thyself, and to comfort thy broken heart about the loss of thy beloved; (7) get thee into the land of Moriah, which will ask the travel of three days, so long will I hold and suspend thy soul in bitterness; (8) leave not thy son in Moriah as an orphan without his father, to sojourn in a strange country; offer him in sacrifice, commit slaughter upon his flesh; (9) lastly, when thou hast slain him, thou shalt burn him in the fire, and consume him to ashes; thou shalt not spare thy son for my sake, neither quick nor dead.

So, likewise, when he sent Ezekiel to the rebels of Israel, he gave him this provision, in Ezekiel 2: **“Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel”** (Ezek. 2:3). What are they? I will not dissemble with thee, they are **“a rebellious nation, they and their fathers before them unto this day, children hard of face and stiff-hearted... Thou shalt say unto them. ‘Thus saith the Lord God,’... but surely they will not hear, neither will they cease, for they are rebels, and thorns, and scorpions”** (Ezek. 2:3-6). I have now unfolded the conditions of thy charge; if thou findest thy courage sufficient to endure the gainsaying of rebels, the pricking and rending of thorns, tearing the ears with contumely, and the name of thy maker with blasphemous speech, the hissing and stinging of pestilent scorpions, then go to the children of Israel; if not, thou art unmeet for this business. As if a prophet of our days should be sent to Constantinople, and have his instruction given him at his setting forth, that it is a portly and insolent city, the seat of the great Turk, the heart of the empire, a cage of all uncleanness, an enemy to the name of Christians, warring continually against the saints, a scorner of our crucified Redeemer, a worshipper of the false prophet Mahomet, with other such like cold encouragements, feeling his pulses, as it were, and examining his spirit, whether it hath a power to fight with these dangers.

It was some comfort, no doubt, amongst the discomforts to come, that our Saviour taught his disciples before their going abroad: In Matt. 10, **“Behold I send you as lambs among**

wolves;... they will deliver you up to the councils, and scourge you in their synagogues: and you shall be brought to the governors and kings for my sake, in witness to them and to the Gentiles” (Matt. 10:16-18). In the 16th of John, he plainly professes his meaning, in these kind of predictions, **“These things have I said unto you that ye should not be offended. They shall excommunicate you: yea, the time shall come, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he doth God service. But these things have I told you, that when the hour shall come you may re-remember that I told you of them”** (John 16:1-4). The foreknowledge of dangers ensuing gave invincible constancy and resolution to Paul, as appears in his excellent oration made at Miletum, in Acts 20:22, **“Behold I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, and know not what things shall come unto me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bands and afflictions stay for me.”** Hereupon he composes his heart to patience, and calls all his forces home to himself to resist those afflictions: **“But I pass not at all, neither is my life dear unto me,”** etc. And when Agabus at Caesarea, in chap. 21, had taken the girdle off Paul, and bound his own hands and feet, saying from the mouth of the Holy Ghost, **“So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle,”** when his friends would have held him back from going to Jerusalem, he answered boldly, and said, **“What do ye, weeping and breaking mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus”** (Acts 21:13). Peter persuades the dispersed saints, dwelling here and there, to patience in troubles, by an argument drawn from the knowledge and experience thereof before had, in 1 Peter 4:12, **“Dearly beloved,”** saith he, **“think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is among you to prove you, as though some new thing was come unto you;”** as if he had said, *This fire is ancient and well known; you have long seen the smoke thereof, and therefore the breaking forth of the flames should not so greatly astonish you.* His own practice was not inferior to his advice; for

upon that presage which his master gave in the last of John, **“When thou art old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee,”** etc., he took his occasion to use more diligence in his calling, knowing, as himself speaketh, in 2 Peter 1, that **“the time was at hand, when he must lay down his tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus Christ had shewed him.”**

Thus much on the behalf of Jonah, that if the greatness of the city were any terror unto him, he might not complain that he was taken at unawares, suddenly called, and improvidently thrust forth, but with alacrity of mind set his shoulder to the work, and settle his confidence in the greatness of that God from whom he was commanded. It is a direction to us all, whatsoever our service be wherein God shall employ us, whether in church or in commonwealth, whether we sit upon the thrones of David for execution of judgment, or in the chair of Moses for exposition of the law, which are the most cumbersome charges upon the earth, the very heat and burden of the day, if I may so term them, not to remit our labours, and with the sons of Ephraim, being armed and bearing bows, to turn our backs in the day of battle. But though we be crossed with a thousand afflictions, and have just cause to cry out, as Moses in his government. Num. 11:2, **“Why hast thou vexed thy servant?”** yet persist and go forward in our pains, addressing our souls to contentment and quietness. This was I called unto; I cannot plead ignorance, neither had I reason to expect less; travail, vexation, anguish of spirit were given me for my lot and my portion to drink, when I first entered into these affairs.

II. Touching the place, when we hear it commended for a great city, shall we infer hereupon, therefore privileged to carelessness, haughtiness, oppression, wickedness, which are the worms and moths, for the most part, that breed of greatness? Therefore may Nineveh sin with impunity, and say, I am the queen of the earth, who shall control me? Therefore must sins set up a monarchy also in Nineveh? Must prophets go to Bethel,

and prophesy in our corners, because Nineveh is the king's court, and cannot bear the words of prophets? Can the mightiness of her state, singularity of her government, climbing of her walls, aspiring of her towers, multitude of her people, make her secure against the wrath of the Lord of hosts? Or can the bars of her gates keep out his judgments? Alas, what is the greatness of Nineveh compared with the greatness of the Lord?

The lands of Alcibiades, in the map of the whole world, were less than a center, and small tittle, they could not be espied; all the islands of the sea are as a little dust, in the sight of the Almighty, and the nations **“as the drop of a well-bucket,”** (Isa. 11). What is the number and the height of thy proud turrets? Though they hold the earth in awe, they cannot threaten heaven, and the closer they press to the seat of God, the nearer they lie to his lightning. The challenge of God to the selfsame city, is notably set down in the prophecy of Nahum, in Nahum 3:8, **“Art thou better than No, which was full of people, that lay in the rivers, and had the waters round about it, whose ditch was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and there was no end; Put and Lubim were her helpers. Yet was she carried away, and went into captivity: her young children were broken in pieces at the head of all the streets: and they cast lots for her noble men, and all her mighty men were bound in chains.”** The reason holds by equality: the strength and puissance of No was abased, and thy might shall be cast down. It was afterward accomplished upon Nineveh, because **“she was full of blood, full of lies and robbery, a mistress of witchcrafts, her multitude was slain, and the dead bodies were many, there was no end of her carcasses, and they even stumbled as they went upon her corpses.”** Mercurius Trismegistus sometimes spoke to Asclepius of Egypt after this sort. *Art thou ignorant, Asclepius, that Egypt is the image of heaven?* etc.—And if we shall speak more truly, our land is the temple of the whole world;—and yet the time shall come when Egypt shall be forsaken, and that land which was the seat of the

Godhead shall be deprived of religion, and left destitute of the presence of the gods.

It is written of Tyrus, in Isaiah 23, that she was **“rich with the seed of Nilus, that brought her abundance; the harvest of the river were her revenues, and she was a mart of the nations,”** etc. Yet the Lord triumphs and makes disport at her overthrow: **“Is this that glorious city of yours, whose antiquity is of ancient days?... , who hath decreed this against Tyrus? She that crowned men, whose merchants are princes, and her chapmen the nobles of the world? The Lord of hosts hath decreed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring to contempt all the honourable in the earth.”** **“It is fallen, it is fallen,”** (saith the angel in the Revelation, chap. 18), **“Babylon the great city”** (having the same title of greatness that Nineveh hath in this place), **“and is become the habitation of devils, and the hole of all foul spirits, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird,”** though she had said in her heart, **“I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and shall see no mourning.”** That everlasting city of Rome, *the eternal city*, as Ammianus Marcellinus called her, shall see the day when the eternity of her name, and the immortality of her soul wherewith she is quickened, I mean the supremacy of her prelates above emperors and princes, shall be taken from her; and as Babylon before mentioned has left her the inheritance of her name, so it shall leave her the inheritance of her destruction also, and she shall become as other presumptuous cities, “a dwelling for hedgehogs, an habitation for owls and vultures; thorns shall grow in her palaces, and nettles in her strongholds.” The lamentations of Jeremiah touching the ruin of Jerusalem, sometimes **“the perfection of beauty, and the joy of the whole earth,”** (Lam. 2), as near unto God as the signet upon his right hand, yet afterwards destroyed as a lodge in a garden, that is made but for one night, if they can pass by the ears of any man and leave not lamentation and passion behind them, I will say that his heart is harder than the nether millstone. How were her gates sunk to the ground, her bars broken, the stones

of her sanctuary scattered in the corners of every street, her mountain of Sion so desolate, that the very foxes run upon it, whose strength was such before, **“that the kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would never have believed that the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem”** (chap. 4).

I now conclude. Greatness of sins will shake the foundations of the greatest cities upon the earth; if their heads stood amongst the stars, iniquity would bring them down into dust and rubble. Multitude of offenses will minish and consume multitudes of men, that although the streets were sown with the seed of man, yet they shall be so scarce that a child may tell them: yea, the desolation shall be so great, that none shall remain to say to his friend, **“Leave thy fatherless children behind thee, and I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me”** (Jer. 49).

The days can speak, and the multitude of years can teach wisdom; ask your fathers, and they can report to you, that grass has grown in the streets of your cities for want of passengers, and a man has been as precious as the gold of Ophir, as rare almost to be found as if the ground of your city had been the moors and wastes where no man dwells. One would have wished a friend more than the treasures of the east, to have kept him company, relieved his necessity, to have taken some pains with his widow and orphans, to have closed his eyes at the time of his death, to have seen him laid forth for burial, and his bones but brought to the grave in peace. The arm of the Lord is not shortened; he that smote you once can smite you the second time; he can visit the sons as well as the fathers; he is a God, both in the mountains and in the valleys, in the former and later ages; he is able again to measure the ground of your city with a line of vanity, pull down your houses into the dust of the earth, and turn the glory of your dwellings into ploughed fields; only the fear of his name is your safest refuge, righteousness shall be a stronger bulwark to you than if you were walled with brass; mercy, and judgment, and truth, and sobriety, and sanctimony

of life shall stand with your enemies in the gate, and repel the vengeance of God in the highest strength thereof.

[This study will continue in the next issue.]



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A Classic Study: Job 1:21-22, pt. 1

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

A Study by Joseph Caryl (1644)

Job 1:21-22, pt. 1 - Naked I Came, Naked I Return

**²¹ Naked came I out of my mother's womb,
and naked shall I return thither:
The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away;
blessed be the name of the LORD.**

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

Words are or ought to be the interpreters of the heart, and the comment of our actions. This speech of Job does indeed interpret his heart and expound the meaning of his former actions. This speech (I say) of Job is the true comment of his own actions; for some seeing Job *renting his garments* and *shaving his head*, and *casting himself down upon the ground*, they might not know the meaning of all this; they could not read his heart in these strange behaviors; they might not understand what his intentions were; probably they might judge that he was enraged and mad, that he was distracted or drunk with sorrow: that he was either desperate or impatient, at the report of those losses. Therefore now, to confute all such surmises, he speaks forth, the words of truth and soberness. And by what he said, sets so fair and true a gloss upon his actions, as might

then render them, not only rational and ingenuous, but holy and gracious in the eyes of all men, as they were before in the eyes of God, who knew his heart.

Satan was now, like the servants of Benhadad before Ahab, watching for words. He had done his business and now he was trying how it would work, what the event and issue would be; he hearkened when some irreverent speech should come from the mouth of Job; he looked presently that he should blaspheme God: he could not but smile surely, when he saw him renting his garments and shaving his head and falling down on the ground. *O now it works. I shall hear him blaspheme and curse God presently.* He that is thus distempered in the carriage of the other members of his body, will not surely be able long to rule (that unruly piece) his tongue. One undutiful or dishonorable word cast upon God, would have been music to Satan's ear and joy to his heart. He would have caught it up as nimbly as the men before spoken of did, brother Benhadad from the mouth of Ahab. But how blank looked Satan; how was he clothed with shame at the fall of those words from Job, *Naked came I out of...* etc.

What David spoke concerning the words of his enemies—**“Their words were smoother than butter, but war was in their heart, they were sweeter than honey and softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords”** (Ps. 55:21)—we may speak of these words of Job considered in reference to Satan, and in reference to God. These words of Job in reference to God were as sweet as honey, as smooth as butter. For this breath had nothing in it, but meekness and patience, humility and holiness, in all which God delights; but in reference to Satan they were a drawn swords, as poisoned arrows; Satan was hardly ever so smitten before, as he was by these words of Job. There is no word in this sentence, but gave Satan the lie, and refuted all his slander. And in the close, Job gives him the deepest stab of all, it was a dagger at the very heart of the devil, when he heard him say, **“Blessed be the name of the LORD.”** No words could be uttered upon

the longest study, more cross to Satan's expectation, or more answerable to the former testimony of God; and therefore the Lord crowns all, both his actions and his speeches with a new testimony, **"In all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly."**

So much for Job's words in general. I shall now examine them distinctly in the parts.

Some conceive that Job at that time spoke out his mind more largely, but that the Holy Ghost in the penning of this story did gather and sum up the strength of all his speech into these two conclusions.

**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.**

We will consider the words a little first in the grammatical sense of them, and then we will consider the reason of them: For here they are used logically as a strong and mighty argument, both for the supporting of his own spirit under those afflictions, and for the justifying and acquitting God in so afflicting him.

Naked came I out of my mother's womb...

Naked—There is a two-fold nakedness: there is an internal nakedness, and there is an external nakedness; there is a nakedness of the soul as well as of the body. The nakedness of the soul is, when it is divested of all its gracious ornaments and endowments. When Job said, **"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither,"** it refers especially to the nakedness of the body; for though it be a truth that Job came naked into the world in regard of his soul, yet he knew he should not go naked out of the world, in regard of his soul. Seeing then, he refers nakedness to his

going out of the world as well as to his coming in, therefore it cannot be here meant of an inward nakedness. His soul came naked in, but he knew his soul should go out clothed. Neither can it be meant of a then present spiritual nakedness, for Job was never so richly and gorgeously attired in his soul, never appeared in such glorious ornaments of grace, as when he was stripped of all worldly comforts. Therefore, the nakedness here is bodily nakedness, that which Moses speaks of Gen. 2:25, describing our first parents, **“They were both naked,”** said he, **“the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.”** Yet that nakedness and this which Job speaks of (though they were both bodily and external) were very different and unlike, for that nakedness of Creation needed no covering; nakedness was then an ornament. Man was richly attired when he had no garments. The nakedness of creation was the absence of clothing, or a not using of clothes; it was not the want of clothing. But the nakedness Job speaks of, is the nakedness after the fall properly, where nakedness imports not only a not having of clothes, but a want of clothing; and so nakedness is a part of that curse and punishment which followed sin. **“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb,”** that is, *I came into the world in a sad and miserable condition, weak and poor.* And so nakedness is put not strictly as opposed only to clothing, but we may take it more largely for the want of all outward comforts whatsoever, *I came a poor destitute creature into the world; I had not only no clothing upon my back, but I had no comfort for my body; I brought neither sheep nor oxen, nor children nor servants into the world with me; I had none of these things, nothing to help me of my own, when I first set footing into the world.*

Some naturalists considering this kind of nakedness, have fallen out into great complaints against nature, or indeed rather against the God of nature; as Pliny, in the preface to his 7th book of his natural history, does as it were chide with nature for turning man into the world in such a helpless forlorn condition, as if man were dealt with more hardly than

any other creature, than any beasts of the field or souls of the air. Other creatures, said he, come into the world with hair, or fleeces, or bristles, or seals, or feathers, or wings, or shells, etc. to defend and cover them, but nature casts man naked upon the naked ground. This he spoke, not considering that nakedness was once no trouble, but rather an honor and an ornament, and this he spoke not knowing whence or how that kind of troublesome nakedness came into the world. And this he spoke, not observing as he might, how many ways God provided for the help and supply of that nakedness; giving man understanding and reason instead of weapons and clothes, which also are a means for the procuring of all things necessary for the supporting of that naked and weak perishing condition.

... Naked shall I return thither.

The difficulty that is in this lies only in that word *thither*; the doubt is, what place he means or whither? What into my mother's womb? There is no such return, as Nicodemus said, **"Shall a man that is old go into his mother's womb and be born again?"** (John 3). Some answer it thus: the adverb *thither* does not necessarily refer to the literal antecedent; but in Scripture sometimes relatives refer to somewhat in the mind or in the thought of the speaker, and not to that which was before spoken by him; as that of Mary shows in John 20:15, when she comes into the garden and finds that Christ was risen, **"She meets Christ and supposing him to be the gardener, said unto him, 'Sir, if you have borne him hence...'"** *Him*, what *him*? There was no antecedent mentioned to which *Him* should relate, only Mary's mind was so full of Christ, that she thought everyone would understand *what him*, or *whom* she spoke of: as if none could speak of or think anything but of Christ only. Therefore, she made the relation to that which was in her own spirit, and not to what was formerly expressed. So, some interpreters make the *thither*

to be God or the grave, *I shall return to God, or I shall return to the grave, to the house of the grave*, as the Chaldee paraphrase has it. For they suppose Job had his mind full of those thoughts, therefore he may make a relation to that.

Another consideration for the clearing of it is this, that such adverbs of place as this is, do not only signify place, but a state or a condition, wherein any one is, or to which anything or person is brought; as it is ordinary in our speech to say, *hitherto, I have brought the matter*, that is, *to this state or to this condition*. So, when Job said, **“Naked shall I return thither,”** that is, *I shall return to such a condition or to such an estate, as I was naked before, so I shall return to a state of nakedness again*.

But thirdly, that which may more clearly carry it, the *thither* which Job here speaks of may be understood of the earth or the grave, **“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither,”** to the womb of the earth which is the grave: and so there may be in the latter a reference to the former, taking the one properly and the other improperly, taking the earth for his mother’s womb in an improper sense, that is, the earth which is the common parent from whence we all came, and to which we all return; the earth shall receive and take in all mankind again, when man dies the earth opens her bowels and receives him in, and which makes her once more a mother, the earth at last being, as it were, with-child, or rather big with children, shall travel in pain, groaning to be delivered, shall by the mighty power of God bring forth mankind again. There shall be a mighty birth from the womb of the earth at the last day. In Scripture the resurrection is called a birth. In the day of the resurrection mankind is newly begotten by God, and mankind is new-born. This is supported by Ps. 2:7: **“Thou art my son this day have I begotten thee,”** which words are applied by Paul, in Acts 13:33, to the resurrection of Christ. God has fulfilled the promise made to the fathers, to us their children, in that he has raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second Psalm, **“Thou art my son this day have I begotten thee.”**

And as Christ, so all men, but especially all Christians, shall be again begotten by the power of God, and born from the womb of the earth in the day of their resurrection.

So much for the understanding of these words, **“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb and naked shall I return thither.”**

I shall collect some observations from the two ways. First as they contain a general truth. Second, as they are an argument or a reason for the support of a man in such a sad condition as Job was then reduced unto. In the former way observe,

First, *That every man is born a poor, helpless, naked creature.* The soul is naked of all that is good, there is not a rag of grace upon it, when we come into the world. Our bodies are naked too, so that we are born with nothing upon us, but only an ugly dress of sin, such as may justly make God loath us, and us a terror to ourselves.

Secondly, *Naked shall I return.* Note,

When death comes, it shakes us out of all our worldly comforts and possessions. Death is called an unclothing: **“We that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed”** (2 Cor. 5:4), that is, *not that we would die.* Death is called an *unclothing*, because it pulls all outward things off from a man; it pulls off all his raiment, his riches, his lands, his honors; yea death unclothes the very bones, our flesh wears off quickly in the grave. We have a usual phrase among us, and it is a very proper one: when a rich man dies (we say) *he left a great estate*; he leaves it indeed, for he cannot carry it with him; he must go out naked, how well clothed soever he was while he was here. The Apostle does more than intimate, that some rich men do scarce believe this for found doctrine; he speaks as if he would beat them off from some thought of carrying the world with them out of the world. While they live they are buried in their riches, and when they die, they hope their riches will be buried with them, yea and rise with them again. Such a conceit (I say) the Apostle seems to meet with,

for in 1 Tim. 6:7, having said, **“We brought nothing with us in to this world,”** he adds in the next words, **“and it is certain we can carry nothing out;”** he does not say, *We brought nothing into the world, and we can carry nothing out,* as Job here speaks, but as if Job’s assertion had come into question in Paul’s time, he said, **“We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain,”** never doubt of the truth of it, **“we can carry nothing out,”** we shall go out as we came in. **“Many,”** as the prophet Habakkuk speaks, **“lade themselves with thick clay”** (Hab. 2:6). But as the question there follows, **“How long?”** This *lading* must be laid down again. If riches end not before thee as thine, they must end with thee. Yet if any would carry riches and clothing out of the world, it will be their wisdom to labor for spiritual riches, for spiritual clothing, when such die, as they shall not be found naked, so they shall not go out naked. All your other clothing and riches must be left on this side the grave, but get spiritual clothing and riches, and you shall go out of the world adorned and enriched forever: the clothing of grace, the robe of righteousness, a vesture of spiritual ornaments will endure to all eternity.

Thirdly, note further, how the Holy Ghost describes the life of man, **“Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I return.”**

The life of man it is nothing else but a coming and a returning. Here is nothing said of staying or abiding; *we have here no continuing city,* while we are here, we can hardly be said to continue here, and after a few days we shall not be here at all. It is but a coming and a going; it is but a flood and an ebb, and then we are carried into the *ocean of eternity.*

We may yet consider the words as they are an argument (and so I shall note two things from them). So Job uses them as an argument both to support himself and to acquit God. Then observe,

First, *That a godly man in Job’s straits studies arguments to acquit and justify God in all his dealings with him.* Job could not have

found out upon longest study a better or a stronger argument for the acquitting of God than this is: *I have as much as I brought, then what wrong is done me in all this.* As wicked men when they fall into straits or troubles, especially when they fall into sin, study arguments how to shift themselves out and lay all the blame upon God; as Adam and Eve our first parents in paradise (there it began) when they had sinned and were naked, they began to devise shifts how to put it from themselves and to fasten the fault upon God. David, on the other side, labors as much to clear God, if ever he should be stripped naked, **“I will confess my sin, that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest and clear when thou judgest”** (Ps. 51:4). Weigh the reason why David confesses his sin in that Psalm, *I do it, says he, that I may by this means acquit God, whatsoever God shall do with me hereafter, whatsoever affliction God shall bring upon me.* Men, it may be, will begin to judge God for it, and to say that he has dealt hardly with me, notice having been taken what an eminent servant of God I have taken: **“Behold,”** said he, **“I confess my sin before thee that thou mayest be clear when thou judgest,”** or as the Apostle Paul quotes the place, according to the Septuagint, in Rom. 3:4, **“That thou mightest overcome when thou art judged.”** David knew men would be apt to judge God, if they saw him afflicted, and therefore to stop their mouths, or to give God the day against them, he confessed his sin, thereby showing cause why God might chastise him, either for correction of sin past, or prevention of sin to come.

Secondly, as the argument refers to Job himself, we may observe this,

That the consideration of what we once were, and of what at last we must be, may relieve our spirits in the greatest outward afflictions of this life. Art thou for the present in a naked condition? Consider you were naked once, and before long shall be naked again. Consider the two extremes: the beginning and the ending and that will bear you up in the middle condition. There is many

a man that complains and says, *I have nothing but the clothes on my back left me, and they are but rags:* Why! With nothing but the clothes upon thy back? Know O man that you were born with nothing but your skin on your back. Consider this, and leave complaining; this was one thought which helped Job to bear this burden, the want of all. And the Apostle Paul uses this argument to the very same purpose, in 1 Tim. 6:6, having said that, **“Godliness with contentment is great gain,”** he subjoins presently this argument of Job, for says he, **“we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out.”** To consider what (not long ago) we were, and what very shortly we must be, will mightily work the soul to contention in what estate soever we are.



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New Testament Study: Romans 3:19-31

A Study by Scott Sperling

Romans 3:19-20 – Every Mouth Silenced

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

IN PREPARATION for his grand statement of the Gospel message of justification by faith, Paul here summarizes (in effect) all of what he has said in the first part of this epistle, starting in Rom. 1:18. From Romans 1:18 to the end of the first chapter, Paul established that all Gentiles were sinners and thus, in need of the salvation available through faith in Christ. Starting in Romans 2, and going until Romans 3:18, Paul established that the Jews, though they have the law, are all sinners and in need of the salvation available through faith in Christ. Here, in Rom. 3:19, Paul reiterates these conclusions, emphasizing the fact that knowledge of the Law does not, in itself, bring salvation. Rather, knowledge of the Law shows us how unrighteous we are, and silences any boasts that we may have concerning our own righteousness. As Paul says: **“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God”** (vs. 19).

The Jews, and especially the Jews, could not claim to be righteous in God's sight, because (since they had knowledge of God's law) they knew how far short they fell in attaining God's standard of righteousness. On the contrary, this knowledge of the Law, should have **"silenced"** any boasting about being righteous, and led them to the conclusion that they would be **"held accountable to God"** for not living up to the righteous standard that God established in His Law. "In every instance the principle applies, that what the law says it says to those who have the law. Those to whom any revelation of the divine will is made are bound to be conformed to it. What the law written in the heart says, it says to those who have that law; and what the law as written in the Scripture says, it says to those who have the Scriptures" [Hodge, 80]. The purpose of God's law, no matter how it is revealed to us—whether it is revealed to us through His written Word, or by His Spirit working through our consciences—is to **"silence"** whatever claim we think we might have of being righteous. Knowledge of God's righteous standard is the great **"silencer"** of man before God.

The Jews well knew, and indeed, each and every one of us well knows, that we sin, that we fall short of God's righteous standard. As Paul concludes: **"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin"** (vs. 20). This is a scary, even damning, sentence: **"...no one will be declared righteous in God's sight..."** If Paul's epistle ended right here, our outlook would be bleak, indeed. God's perfect righteousness, and sense of justice, would demand an accounting for our sins. Absolutely **"no one"** is exempt from this accounting. Paul points out that, it is not important in the grand scheme of things, whether we are declared righteous by other people; what is important, is whether we are declared righteous **"in God's sight."**

The more we learn about, and ponder, God's perfect Law, the more we become **"conscious of our sin."** God gave His

Law, and then stated that life would be the result of keeping that Law: **“Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD”** (Lev. 18:5). To underscore this statement, He gave this promise by His own name, saying, **“I am the LORD.”** What hope, then, is there for us, as sinners? Is there any path to life for us? Are we hopelessly doomed, because of our sin? “To be prepared for the reception of the gospel, we must be convinced of sin, humbled under a sense of its turpitude, silenced under a conviction of its condemning power, and prostrated at the footstool of mercy, under a feeling that we cannot satisfy the demands of the law, that if ever saved, it must be by other merit and other power than our own” [Hodge, 87]. Thank God that this is not the end of Christian doctrine, but is the gateway to the glorious Gospel message, which Paul will introduce in the next verses.

Romans 3:21-26 – Justification by Grace through Faith

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the

present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

With the words **“But now...”** (vs. 21), the tone in the book of Romans shifts. Since Rom. 1:18, Paul has been laying out his case that all people are sinful, both Gentiles and Jews, both rich and poor, westerners and easterners, the strong and the weak: other than Christ (when He walked this earth), there are no exceptions. This has been grim reading, for the most part. Our deserved judgment has been placed right before our eyes. We have been shown to be “justly condemned, helpless in the power of sin, powerless to escape God’s wrath” [Moo]. But with the words **“But now...”**, a more pleasant outlook appears. After laying before us *the bad news*, Paul will now lay before us *the good news*, the greatness of the blessed Gospel message. The phrase **“But now”** “marks the shift in Paul’s focus from the old era of sin’s domination to the new era of salvation” [Moo]. “The human predicament has been radically transformed because of the saving act of God in Christ, which Paul proceeds to develop” [Morris]. “There are no more wonderful words in the whole of Scripture than just these two words **‘But now.’**” [Lloyd-Jones, in Moo].

The verses before us here, Romans 3:21-26, have been given great importance by Christian scholars, and rightly so. Grant Osbourne, an American New Testament scholar, called this “the core of Romans and indeed of any discussion of the doctrine of salvation.” Others go further. Hermann Olshausen, a 19th century German scholar, called this passage “the citadel of the Christian faith.” Martin Luther said this was “the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible.” Leon Morris, a 20th century Australian New Testament scholar, went even further, and opined that this is “possibly the most important single paragraph ever written.”

Paul summarizes the glorious Gospel message: **“But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been**

made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. **This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe**” (vss. 21-22). The problem that Paul exposed in Romans 1:18 through 3:20 is that, in and of themselves, **“there is no one righteous, not even one”** (Rom. 3:10). Here Paul introduces a solution to that problem, and that is attaining **“the righteousness of God”**, which is given to us by God **“through faith in Jesus Christ.”** God, in the law, provided for the forgiveness of sin through substitutionary sacrifice. Then God, through Christ, provided the perfect substitutionary sacrifice, whose sacrifice could atone for all sins ever committed, because of His perfect righteousness. God established in the Gospel that this forgiveness of sins (and thus righteousness) can be attained **“through faith in Jesus Christ,”** as Paul teaches here. And so, the problem that all of us have, that is, that we are due to be condemned and punished for our behavior on earth, can be solved if we would, by faith, accept the sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf. In this way, we are **“given through faith”** the righteousness that we need in order to survive Judgment Day. **“To that righteousness is the eye of the believer ever to be directed; on that righteousness must he rest; on that righteousness must he live; on that righteousness must he die; in that righteousness must he appear before the judgment-seat; in that righteousness must he stand for ever in the presence of a righteous God”** [Haldane, 132].

This is a righteousness testified to **“by the Law and the Prophets.”** It was not an afterthought. The plan of God was always to offer salvation by grace. Isaiah prophesied it: **“I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of His righteousness”** (Isa. 61:10). God Himself described to Moses His own gracious nature, and His desire to forgive sin: **“And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,**

abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (Exod. 34:6-7). Isaiah wrote explicitly of Christ’s sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins: **“After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities”** (Isa. 53:11). One could say that much of the Epistle to the Hebrews is a commentary on how the Law points to Christ, His sacrifice for us, and the atonement available to us through Him. Moreover, Paul will elaborate, in Romans 4, on the role of faith in the forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament, by using the examples of Abraham and David. And so, there are many ways that **“the Law and the Prophets”** testify to the imputed righteousness available to us through faith in Christ.

God has chosen that this righteousness be **“given through faith in Jesus Christ”** (vs. 22). Jesus, and the works of salvation that He did on our behalves, is necessarily the object of that faith. It is **“faith in Jesus Christ”** that is the effective faith that brings salvation. A general faith in God, and His sovereignty, is not enough. A person must believe that he or she is a sinner, in need of the salvation offered through Christ; and then, one must believe that Christ’s sacrifice paid the price of the punishment that we deserve for our sins. This is the saving faith: the necessary **“faith in Jesus Christ”** that Paul wrote of. This is the same faith that John wrote of in his Gospel: **“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”** (John 3:16).

This faith, and the righteousness that comes through it, is available to everyone. It is not limited to one chosen group, or class, or race, or nationality. It is not limited to those who do good works, or to those who think they are good. This is beside the point. As Paul teaches, this righteousness is **“apart from the law”** (vs. 21). It is not even limited to those who belong to a specific religion, or denomination, or sect. One

does not have to be a church-goer or church member to receive this gift of righteousness, this gift of salvation. It is available to all people, equally, who were created by God: Jew, Gentile, rich, poor, bound, free, learned, uneducated, powerful, meek. As Paul affirmed: **“There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 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”** (Rom. 3:22b-24). **“All have sinned”**, and so, all have been offered **“justification”** in the same way: by grace, through faith, in Christ.

It is **“justification”** that is offered. To be **“justified”** is “a judicial act of God by which He freely acquits the penitent sinner, and adopts him as His child on the ground of Christ’s perfect righteousness, and on condition of a living faith” [Lange’s, 139]. It means “to be acquitted by God from all charges that could be brought against a person because of his or her sins” [Moo]. The meaning can easily be remembered by the mnemonic (cliché though it may be, but reasonably accurate): to be **“justified”** means to be treated by God *just as if I’d never sinned*.

Note: being **“justified”** is quite different than being *pardoned*. When a person is pardoned, it means that his sentence is put to an end, but it does not confer innocence. The one who is pardoned is still guilty. **“Justification”**, however, actually confers *righteousness*, even **“the righteousness of God”**, as Paul points out in verse 22: **“This righteousness is given...”** The distinction between being *pardoned*, and being *justified* is important. One who is *pardoned*, being still guilty, cannot have fellowship with the infinitely righteous God. One who is *justified*, being declared righteous, can have fellowship with God. “Indeed, mere pardon leaves a sinner forever to stand naked before God. It grants him no robe of righteousness.... It is therefore a doctrine full of comfort that the believer is not only forgiven, He is also taken

into favor —‘**accepted in the Beloved.**’ His standing is good before God” [Plumer, 149].

We need this justification because we have **“sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** (vs. 23). The phrase **“fall short of the glory of God”** is a somewhat vague, yet multi-faceted, phrase, which has been assigned many different meanings by commentators. It can mean that we fall short of being able to appear in God’s glorious presence; or that we fall short of receiving glory from God, as part of His approval of us; or that we fall short of displaying His glory through us, as we live in obedience as those created in His image. Any or all of these interpretations of this phrase are credible theologically. Given this, I believe that this phrase may have been made purposely vague, and purposely multi-faceted, by Paul (and the Holy Spirit), in order that we may meditate on the different ways that we **“fall short of the glory of God”**, and thus, are in need of **“justification”** by God.

This **“justification”** comes to us, as Paul teaches, **“freely by His grace”** (vs. 24). This is a purposely (somewhat) redundant phrase, emphasizing that this **“justification”** is all of God, and nothing with respect to it comes from the work of those who are justified. This underscores what Paul wrote in vs. 21, that this righteousness of God available through Christ is **“apart from law.”** “God’s justifying verdict is totally unmerited. People have done, and can do, nothing to earn it” [Moo].

“Well,” you might ask, “isn’t my *faith* a *work* that I am doing to gain this justification?” The answer is no. Faith in Christ is not depicted in the Bible as a *work* that we *do*, in order to attain justification. Why not? First, *faith* is **“apart from law”**, as Paul pointed out in verse 21. Second, *faith* is not an active work, but a passive state of mind. As John Calvin teaches: “Faith is something merely passive, bringing nothing of ours to the recovering of God’s favor but receiving from Christ that which we lack” [Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.13.5]. Third, the reason that faith is a passive state of mind on our part is that

faith itself is given to us by God, through the Holy Spirit. As Paul teaches us in Ephesians: **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”** (Eph. 2:8). *Faith* is a **“gift of God”**, not a work of man. And so, this **“justification”** is all from God, **“freely”** given, from the riches of His **“grace.”**

Now, though **“justification”** comes **“free”** to us, it did not come free to Christ: Christ bought it and paid dearly for it, as Paul points out: We are **“justified... through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus”** (vs. 24). *Redemption* in that culture was a commercial transaction by which a person was freed from slavery, or a prisoner of war was freed from captivity, through a price that someone paid on his behalf. In the context of the Gospel, our *redemption* is the price that Christ paid to free us from sin: to free us from the *dominion* of sin (for we were slaves to sin), and to free us from the *effects* of sin (the deserved punishment for our sins). Christ paid the price of *redemption* by suffering for our sins on the cross. Because Christ was sinless, His suffering of the wrath of God on the cross was not needed in regard to His own sins (because He was sinless), but could be used as a *substitutionary* payment for our sins. The cost of redemption was paid in Christ’s blood. Imagine the joy, in those times, when a slave was redeemed by a benefactor. Imagine the slave’s joy at being freed; imagine the joy when the shackles were removed; imagine the joy at just breathing that first breath of air as a free man. We should all have such joy, and more. We have been redeemed out of a much worse slavery (a slavery to the evil taskmaster of *sin*), and have been redeemed out of a much worse punishment (an eternity of punishment for our sins). Rejoice in our redemption by Christ!

So, up to this point, Paul has taught us that our justification comes to us by faith, not by works. Next, he teaches us the mechanism within the Law, by which we are justified. In the Law, God established that sin could be atoned for through a substitutionary blood sacrifice. Those sacrifices

were prophetic of the ultimate sacrifice of atonement – the death of Christ on the cross. Christ’s sacrifice, as Paul teaches here, is sufficient to atone for *all* human sin, even those sins committed before His death: **“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus”** (vs. 25-26). So, Christ’s sacrifice, not only atones for our sins, but it also establishes and confirms God’s perfect righteousness. The Law’s demand for punishment due to sin is satisfied by the punishment that Christ received on our behalves.

Notice God’s active participation in this: God Himself **“presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement.”** God, in His grace, took the initiative to offer a sacrifice of atonement for us. In the Law, the sinner, the one seeking atonement, would bring his offering to the priests, who would carry out the sacrifice of the animal, as prescribed by the Law. This is described in Leviticus: **“If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you. You are to slaughter the young bull before the LORD, and then Aaron’s sons the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting** (Lev. 1:3-5). Note here, the active role that the sinner, the person seeking atonement, takes in the sacrificial offering. The sinner brings the animal to the tabernacle. The sinner places his hand on the head of the offered animal, as a sign that he seeks atonement for his sin, that he seeks to be forgiven by God for his sins.

In the case of Christ, God Himself **“presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement”** (vs. 25). So then, where is the active participation of the sinner in the process, as prescribed by the Law? This is where faith comes in. The sacrifice is **“to be received by faith”** (vs. 25). By **“faith”**, we as sinners demonstrate our desire that our sins be atoned for, that our sins be forgiven by God. Our **“faith”** is the equivalent act of placing our hand upon the head of the animal, as described in Leviticus. And only through **“faith”** will Christ’s sacrifice **“be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you”** (Lev. 1:4). “By faith in his death as a sacrifice for sin; by believing that he took *our* sins; that he died in *our* place; by thus, in some sense, making his offering ours; by *approving* it, loving it, embracing it, trusting it, our sins become pardoned, and our souls made pure” [Barnes, 88].

Paul has presented here in this passage, the essence of the Gospel message, the essence of Christ’s mission on earth, and the essence of saving faith. Notice how effective this Gospel, how complete and all-encompassing our salvation is, through faith. Paul presented three aspects of our salvation. First, we are **“justified”** (vs. 24). This is legal act, by which we are deemed by God to be covered in Christ’s righteousness through faith. Second, we are **“redeemed”** (vs. 24). This is our salvation from slavery to sin, and the effects of sin. Third, we have **“atonement”** for our sins (vs. 25). This gives us salvation from God’s wrath. Through Christ, we never have to undergo the punishment that we deserve for our sins. Praise be to God for the complete and all-encompassing nature of the salvation that we have through faith in Christ!

Romans 3:27-31 – Humility

²⁷ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰ since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. ³¹ Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

To conclude the chapter, Paul gives a summarizing coda, of sorts, emphasizing the role of faith, not works, in our justification. **“Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law”** (vs. 27-28). The Christian faith, and the Gospel message, eliminates any right to **“boast.”** Our salvation is of God, and through Christ. There is no room for the boasting of men. “In any religion of law, the worshipper may legitimately feel satisfaction in his personal achievement, but this is a satisfaction that can lead to pride. For those saved by grace, however, that is impossible. Grace leaves no place for satisfaction in one’s own achievement, for salvation is all of God” [Morris]. The free gift of salvation forces humility.

Meditate on how this reflects perfectly the mien and ministry of Christ on earth. He came to earth, and behaved on earth, with all humility, and without a hint of boastfulness – though Christ, as **“God over all, forever praised”** (Rom. 9:5) certainly had reason to boast. So then, the behavior and mien of Christ is given to us as an example of how we should

behave, and then, Christ's lesson of humility is further strengthened by the Gospel message, which (as Paul points out here) precludes any boasting on our part. We stand before God in humility, and we should also express this same humility in all aspects of our lives before others.

The **"boasting"** about which Paul is writing is primarily referring to the self-righteous judgment of the Jews over the Gentiles (of which Paul directly wrote in Rom. 2:1). And so, Paul next reminds the Jews who God is: **"Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith"** (Rom. 3:29-30). The Jews well knew, and took pride in, that the God they worship is the one true God. And the Jews knew full well (or should have) that God promised their father Abraham many times that through him, all nations would be blessed (see Gen. 12:3; Gen. 18:18; Gen. 22:18). So Paul, in effect, here is saying that *now is that time*. The **"circumcised"** are justified by faith, and the **"uncircumcised"** are justified **"through that same faith."** Paul will write more about this, in detail, in the next chapter.

But as a point of emphasis here, to conclude this section, Paul ties the Gospel message, and *justification through grace by faith*, to the entire teaching of the Law in the Old Testament. **"Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law"** (Rom. 3:31). The revelation by the Holy Spirit of God's ways and God's Law in the Old Testament is unified with the revelation of Christ and His mission in the New Testament. The free gift of salvation in no way **"nullifies"** anything that was taught to the Jews in the Old Testament times. Rather, the provision of atonement for our sins through Christ's sacrifice absolutely **"upholds the law"**, as taught to the Old Testament prophets. The Bible is one grand revelation of God's Law and God's grace, working in perfect harmony.

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<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>

A Study in History: The Reformation



Introduction to the Protestant Reformation, pt. 5, 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 9.

The Reformation and Rationalism

The Roman Catholic Church makes Scripture and tradition the supreme rule of faith, laying the chief stress on tradition, that is, the teaching of an infallible church headed by an infallible Pope, as the judge of the meaning of both.

Evangelical Protestantism makes the Scripture alone the supreme rule, but uses tradition and reason as means in ascertaining its true sense.

Rationalism raises human reason above Scripture and tradition, and accepts them only as far as they come within the limits of its comprehension. It makes rationality or intelligibility the measure of credibility. We take the word Rationalism here in the technical sense of a theological system and tendency, in distinction from rational theology. The legitimate use of reason in religion is allowed by the Catholic and still more by the Protestant church, and both have produced scholastic systems in full harmony with orthodoxy. Christianity is above reason, but not against reason.

The Reformation is represented as the mother of Rationalism both by Rationalistic and by Roman Catholic

historians and controversialists, but from an opposite point of view, by the former to the credit, by the latter to the disparagement of both.

The Reformation, it is said, took the first step in the emancipation of reason: it freed us from the tyranny of the church. Rationalism took the second step: it freed us from the tyranny of the Bible. "Luther," says Lessing, the champion of criticism against Lutheran orthodoxy, "thou great, misjudged man! Thou hast redeemed us from the yoke of tradition: who will redeem us from the unbearable yoke of the letter! Who will at last bring us a Christianity such as thou would teach us now, such as Christ himself would teach!"

Roman Catholics go still further and hold Protestantism responsible for all modern revolutions and for infidelity itself, and predict its ultimate dismemberment and dissolution. But this charge is sufficiently set aside by the undeniable fact that modern infidelity and revolution in their worst forms have appeared chiefly in Roman Catholic countries, as desperate reactions against hierarchical and political despotism. The violent suppression of the Reformation in France ended at last in a radical overthrow of the social order of the church. In Roman Catholic countries, like Spain and Mexico, revolution has become a chronic disease. Romanism provokes infidelity among cultivated minds by its excessive supernaturalism.

The Reformation checked the skepticism of the renaissance, and the anarchical tendencies of the Peasants' War in Germany and of the Libertines in Geneva. An intelligent faith is the best protection against infidelity; and a liberal government is a safeguard against revolution.

The connection of the Reformation with Rationalism is a historical fact, but they are related to each other as the rightful use of intellectual freedom to the excess and abuse of it. Rationalism asserts reason against revelation, and freedom against divine as well as human authority. It is a one-sided development of the negative, protesting, antipapal and

antitraditional factor of the Reformation to the exclusion of its positive, evangelical faith in the revealed will and word of God. It denies the supernatural and miraculous. It has a superficial sense of sin and guilt, and is essentially Pelagian; while the Reformation took the opposite Augustinian ground and proceeded from the deepest conviction of sin and the necessity of redeeming grace. The two systems are thus theoretically and practically opposed to each other. And yet there is an intellectual and critical affinity between them, and Rationalism is inseparable from the history of Protestantism. It is in the modern era of Christianity what Gnosticism was in the ancient church—a revolt of private judgment against the popular faith and church orthodoxy, an overestimate of theoretic knowledge, but also a wholesome stimulus to inquiry and progress. It is not a church or sect (unless we choose to include Socinianism and Unitarianism), but a school in the church, or rather a number of schools which differ very considerably from each other.

Rationalism appeared first in the seventeenth century in the Church of England, though without much effect upon the people, as Deism, which asserted natural religion versus revealed religion; it was matured in its various phases after the middle of the eighteenth century on the Continent, especially in Protestant Germany since Lessing (d. 1781) and Semler (d. 1791), and gradually obtained the mastery of the chairs and pulpits of Lutheran and Reformed churches, till about 1817, when a revival of the positive faith of the Reformation spread over Germany and a serious conflict began between positive and negative Protestantism, which continues to this day.

1. Let us first consider the relation of the Reformation to the use of reason as a general principle.

The Reformation was a protest against human authority, asserted the right of private conscience and judgment, and roused a spirit of criticism and free inquiry in all departments of knowledge. It allows, therefore, a much wider scope for the exercise of reason in religion than the Roman church, which

requires unconditional submission to her infallible authority. It marks a real progress, but this progress is perfectly consistent with a belief in revelation on subjects which lie beyond the boundary of time and sense. What do we know of the creation, and the world of the future, except what God has chosen to reveal to us? Human reason can prove the possibility and probability of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, but not the certainty and necessity. It is reasonable, therefore, to believe in the supernatural on divine testimony, and it is unreasonable to reject it.

The Reformers used their reason and judgment very freely in their contest with church authority. Luther refused to recant in the crisis at Worms, unless convinced by testimonies of the Scriptures and “cogent arguments.” For a while he was disposed to avail himself of the humanistic movement which was skeptical and rationalistic in its tendency, but his strong religious nature always retained the mastery. He felt as keenly as any modern Rationalist, the conflict between natural reason and the transcending mysteries of revelation. He was often tormented by doubts and even temptations to blasphemy, especially when suffering from physical infirmity. A comforter of others, he needed comfort himself and asked the prayers of friends to fortify him against the assaults of the evil spirit, with whom he had, as he thought, many a personal encounter. He confessed, in 1524, how glad he would have been five years before in his war with papal superstition, if Carlstadt could have convinced him that the Eucharist was nothing but bread and wine, and how strongly he was then inclined to that rationalistic view which would have given a death blow to transubstantiation and the mass. He felt that every article of his creed—the trinity in unity, the incarnation, the transmission of Adam’s sin, the atonement by the blood of Christ, baptismal regeneration, the real presence, the renewal of the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the body—transcended human comprehension. In Aug. 2, 1527, during the raging of the pestilence at Wittenberg, he wrote to

Melanchthon, who was absent at Jena: "For more than a week I have been tossed about in death and hell; so that, hurt in all my body, I still tremble in every limb. For having almost wholly lost Christ, I was driven about by storms and tempests of despair and blasphemy against God. But God, moved by the prayers of the saints, begins to have pity upon me, and has drawn my soul out of the lowest hell. Do not cease to pray for me, as I do for you. I believe that this agony of mine pertains to others also."

In such trials and temptations, he clung all the more mightily to the Scriptures and to faith which believes against reason and hopes against hope. "It is a quality of faith," he says in the explanation of his favorite Epistle to the Galatians, "that it wrings the neck of reason and strangles the beast, which else the whole world, with all creatures, could not strangle. But how? It holds to God's Word, and lets it be right and true, no matter how foolish and impossible it sounds. So did Abraham take his reason captive and slay it, inasmuch as he believed God's Word, wherein was promised him that from his unfruitful and as it were dead wife, Sarah, God would give him seed."

This and many similar passages clearly show the bent of Luther's mind. He knew the enemy, but overcame it; his faith triumphed over doubt. In his later years he became more and more a conservative churchman. He repudiated the mystic doctrine of the inner word and spirit, insisted on submission to the written letter of the Scriptures, even when it flatly contradicted reason. He traced the errors of the Zwickau prophets, the rebellious peasants, the Anabaptists, and the radical views of Carlstadt and Zwingli, without proper discrimination, to presumptuous inroads of the human reason into the domain of faith, and feared from them the overthrow of religion. He so far forgot his obligations to Erasmus as to call him an Epicurus, a Lucian, a doubter, and an atheist. Much as he valued reason as a precious gift of God in matters of this world, he abused it with unreasonable violence, when

it dared to sit in judgment over matters of faith.

Certainly, Luther must first be utterly divested of his faith, and the authorship of his sermons, catechisms and hymns must be called in question, before he can be appealed to as the father of Rationalism. He would have sacrificed his reason ten times rather than his faith.

Zwingli was the most clear-headed and rationalizing among the Reformers. He did not pass through the discipline of monasticism and mysticism, like Luther, but through the liberal culture of Erasmus. He had no mystic vein, but sound, sober, practical common sense. He always preferred the plainest sense of the Bible. He rejected the Catholic views on original sin, infant damnation and the corporeal presence in the eucharist, and held advanced opinions which shocked Luther and even Calvin. But he nevertheless reverently bowed before the divine authority of the inspired Word of God, and had no idea of setting reason over it. His dispute with Luther was simply a question of interpretation, and he had strong arguments for his exegesis, as even the best Lutheran commentators must confess.

Calvin was the best theologian and exegete among the Reformers. He never abused reason, like Luther, but assigned it the office of an indispensable handmaid of revelation. He constructed with his logical genius the severest system of Protestant orthodoxy which shaped French, Dutch, English and American theology, and fortified it against Rationalism as well as against Romanism. His orthodoxy and discipline could not keep his own church in Geneva from becoming Socinian in the eighteenth century, but he is no more responsible for that than Luther for the Rationalism of Germany, or Rome for the infidelity of Voltaire. Upon the whole, the Reformed churches in England, Scotland and North America, have been far less invaded by Rationalism than Germany.

[This study will continue in the next issue.]

*Old Testament Study:
The Old Testament for Christians*



The Old Testament for Christians, pt. 2
by Scott Sperling

[Here we continue an intermittent 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.]

**Created in God's Image –
Gen. 1:26-27**

26 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."

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

MAN, A SPECIAL CREATION OF GOD

In the previous study, we focused primarily on the plural pronouns in vs. 26, the **"us/our/our"** in that verse, and concluded that the best explanation for the use of plural pronouns there is that the three persons of the Trinity—the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—were all involved in the act of creation described in these verses.

That there is a consultation among the three persons of the Trinity here, implies that this act of creation was performed with special deliberation and care. All three persons of the Trinity were involved; they consulted with each other; man created in the image of God was to be the crowning act of the creation of the heavens and the earth. “Man is that great *piece of work*, concerning which God is described as taking forethought and counsel, as making him in His own image, and (see ch. 2:7) as breathing into him the breath of life” [Cook, 35].

The importance of what’s said in these verses, Gen. 1:26-27, specifically the concept that man was created in God’s image, cannot be overstated. These verses make a Biblical declaration that God has specially set man apart from the other creatures. “The questions of the origin and of the nature of man are inseparably connected... This grand declaration that man is made in the image of God, after His likeness, is determinative of the whole Biblical idea of man... It is, in truth, the presupposition of the history of God’s dealing with man from the first to last” [Orr, 33, 36]. Man was created in God’s image in order that man may have a special relationship with God, not only here on earth, but throughout eternity. Paul spoke of God’s desire that we would have a relationship with Him, that we would seek Him and find Him: **“From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us”** (Acts 17:26-27). We are unique among the creatures of the earth, in that we relate to God in a personal way. We seek Him; we find Him; we communicate to Him; He communicates to us; He loves us; we love Him, and we show our love for Him through obedience to His written word.

And so, man was created to be, in effect, God's representative on earth, relating to Him, made in His "image", and "ruling over" the other creatures. This made the action of creating humans a more important act of creation than the others; an act worthy of divine deliberation.

IN WHAT WAYS ARE WE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

A question that we may ask: in what ways are we humans made in the "image" and "likeness" of God? We certainly are not made in the *exact* image of God, for we lack many traits that God has: His omnipotence, His omniscience, His perfect holiness and righteousness. We are limited, at least on earth, to reside in a human body, and God is not limited in this way.

So, again, we may ask, "In what ways are we made in the image and likeness of God?" Clues to answering this question can be found in the reasons that we were made in God's image. As stated above, one reason is that God desires a relationship with us. So, we may infer that any traits that we have, which other creatures lack, and which facilitate our communicating and relating to God, these traits we may venture to say are part of being made in God's image.

Another clue to answering this can be found in the reason given in vs. 26 for humans being made in the image of God: **"...so that they may rule over the fish... the birds... the livestock... all the wild animals... and over all the creatures..."** This implies that humans were given special traits that none of the other animal creatures have. We humans are set distinctly apart from all other creatures that God made on earth, given certain traits that God has, in order that we may **"rule over,"** and have dominion over, all of the other creatures on earth.

Certainly, we have fulfilled this God-given commission. Humans are in complete control and dominion on earth. No other creature comes even close to exerting the power and dominion that humans have. There are no competing cities or countries that are run by, say, chimpanzees or dolphins, which

challenge the dominion of humans. Any of the strongest, the most intelligent, the most talented of other animal species, are far, far, far inferior to humans with respect to exerting power and control on earth. Yes, a tiger may maul and kill a single human in the jungle, but after doing so, the tiger must flee and hide from humans to avoid the repercussions of doing so. The race of tigers cannot compete with humans in having complete power and dominion over the jungle. Humans do what they please, and no animal can stop them.

We may answer the question of how we are made in the image of God, by exploring what God-like traits we have that allow us to have a relationship with God, and also what God-like traits we have that set us apart from other creatures, especially those traits which enable us to **“rule over”** all other creatures. Given these guidelines, let us venture to summarize some of the ways that we are created in the image of God:

- We are *intelligent, reasoning* beings. Through our God-given *intelligence*, we have the ability to communicate through spoken and written language. God relates to us, and has communicated His will to us, through His written word (and, at times, His spoken word). We are unique among His creatures in that we communicate abstract ideas through a spoken and written language. The importance of language to God is demonstrated by God’s use of language to create the universe. He brought forth the universe through language, saying **“Let there be light”** (Gen. 1:3).
- We are beings who have *free will*. The actions of other creatures are entirely constrained by their instincts, as driven by their bodily desires. Humans, through their reasoning abilities, rise above their natural instincts, and make decisions which may conflict with their natural instincts, and bodily

cravings. We have the freedom to make choices based on *right* and *wrong*, *good* and *evil*. We can choose to act based on *love*, over against our own bodily self-interest. In the absence of *free will*, the commandment not to eat of the fruit in the garden would have made no sense, and would have had no purpose. Humans, on Judgment Day, will be held accountable for how we exercised our *free will*.

- A corollary to having free will, is that we also have the capability for *abstract thought*: the ability to understand *morality*; the ability to understand *love*; the understanding of concepts such as *justice* and *righteousness*, etc. We also have the capability to understand abstract thought as communicated through *literary devices*: typology, symbolism, metaphors, parables, etc. All of these devices, which are used in the Bible, enhance our understanding of God and His ways. And so, the understanding of these and other abstract concepts are important in our relationship to God. Because we are unique among the creatures in having the capability for abstract thought, we uniquely can understand God's righteousness and holiness, and so also, we (uniquely among the creatures) can understand our need for a Savior, the meaning of Christ's sacrifice, and the great love of God for us in giving His Son for us. Who else among the creatures could understand the words, **"For God so loved the world..."** (John 3:16)?
- Just as God created the heavens and the earth, so we humans have been endowed with *creativity*. All animals create certain things by instinct (hovels and such; things needed for their survival). Humans alone have *creativity*: the ability to foresee, plan,

design, and build great buildings, cities, factories, etc. Through science, we study and learn about God's great creation, and this learning aids in our ability to build great things through our *creativity*. Our *creativity* has played a large role in our ability to **"rule over"** the other creatures on earth.

- God created Adam as an *eternal* being, in order to have an eternal relationship with Him. However, man destroyed through sin this aspect of being created in God's image. After his sin, Adam's body was subject to death.

Let us now draw on the writings of some scholars, in order to summarize the creation of man in God's image: "It is best to take the term [of being created in God's image] as referring to the whole dignity of man, in virtue of his fundamental affinity to God. It implies the possession by man of a free, self-conscious, rational and moral *personality*, like unto that of God – a nature capable of distinguishing right and wrong, of choosing the right and rejecting the wrong, and of ascending to the heights of spiritual attainment and communion with God. This involves a separation of man from the beast, and his supremacy as the culmination of the creative process" [ISBE, on *Image*]. "The image of God intended in Scripture is a mental and moral image. It is to be sought for in the fact that man is a person—a spiritual, self-conscious being; and in the attributes of that personality—his rationality and capacity for moral life, including in the latter knowledge of moral law, self-determining freedom, and social affections; highest of all, in his capacity for fellowship with God" [Orr, 57].

THE SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY OF MAN

All of us humans know that we have a physical *body*, and we all have a sense that there is more to us than this physical

body. We sense that there is a non-physical aspect to us, and this is commonly known as the *soul*. The *soul* consists of our intellectual capabilities, and controls the voluntary actions of our physical bodies. The *soul* makes a decision, and the *body* puts the decision into action.

In the Bible, we learn that there is another non-physical aspect to our beings, besides the *soul*. This is the *spirit*. According to the Bible, humans consist of *spirit*, *soul*, and *body*. Paul points this out, in blessing the Thessalonians: **“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 Thess. 5:23). Our *spirit* is the part of ourselves that interacts with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, through our spirit, reveals things to us. Paul gives an example of this: **“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children”** (Rom. 8:16). Our spirit, at times, communicates to God, in prayer and praise, through the Holy Spirit: **“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding”** (1 Cor. 14:14-15). Our *spirit* is that part of our nature that is in line with God’s will, receiving spiritual instruction, and influencing the *soul* and *body* to live our lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Through and by our *spirit*, we receive *spiritual* blessings (Eph. 1:3), increase in *spiritual* understanding (Col. 1:9), and offer *spiritual* sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5). And so, we are compound beings, interacting with the natural world through our bodies and souls, and interacting with the spiritual world through our spirits.

Now, since God is a Trinity, made up of three persons, and humans consist of three parts—body, soul, and spirit—it begs the question: Is man’s tripartite nature an aspect of being made in the image of God? I would say, yes, though (I must admit) there is not full agreement among scholars on this

point. The idea goes back to the early Church fathers. Augustine said, “Man has three parts—spirit, soul, and body. Man, therefore, is an image of the sacred Trinity” [Augustine, in Heard, 138].

For me, there is an analogy between the soul, the body, and the spirit of humans, and the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, which make up the Holy Trinity. To understand this analogy, it is helpful to review the roles of the three persons of the Holy Trinity:

- *God the Father* 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.).
- *Jesus the Son* has the *physical* role as the *mediator* between God and man. He is God *incarnate*, and interacted face-to-face with people when He was on earth.
- *The Holy Spirit* is the invisible force of God, the *influential* aspect of God, *indwelling* us, *teaching* us about God, and *guiding* us to carry out God’s will.

For humans, the *soul* has the authority. It makes decisions, and controls the actions of our bodies. So the role of the *soul* in humans is analogous to the role of the *Father* in the Trinity. The *body* of humans interact with others; it is our physical and visible aspect. The *body* is analogous to *Jesus the Son*, who is the physical aspect of the Trinity, interacting with humans in a visible form. The *spirit* of humans is analogous to the *Holy Spirit* of the Trinity. As mentioned, our *spirit* interacts with the Holy Spirit, and through this interaction, influences us to do God’s will.

For me personally, meditating on this analogy has helped me to understand part of the mystery of the Trinity. A human person is a unified being with three aspects, and (being a human) I understand the different aspects (body/soul/spirit)

of my being, and how these different aspects form one person. In my mind, this helps me understand how the three aspects of God's being—the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Spirit*—can at the same time, be united to form the one True and Living God.

Granted, the analogy isn't perfect. We humans, of course, are entirely limited on this earth to reside in our bodies. The Holy Trinity is not limited in this way. God is an infinite being, and we are not. But the Bible says that we are made in the *image* of God, it does not say that we are exactly like God. So, of course, the analogy is not perfect, nor is it meant to be. Nevertheless, I believe that it is significant that there are three aspects to each human, just as there are three persons in the Holy Trinity. Even if you disagree with the analogy, I think it is valuable to meditate on these things: to meditate on the nature of man, and how he relates to God; to meditate on the three persons of the Trinity, and their roles, and how they work.

By the way, there seems to be an indication that humans consist of body, soul, and spirit, all the way back in Gen. 2:7, a verse which depicts in detail the creation of the first man: **“Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”** Each of the three clauses in this verse seem to depict the creation of one aspect of man:

- The *body* – **“Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground...”**
- The *spirit* – **“...and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life...”**
- The *soul* – **“...and the man became a living being.”**

DEGRADATION OF THE IMAGE THROUGH SIN

Adam was created in the image and likeness of God. Later, through sin, Adam fell. A natural question is, then, how was the image of God in Adam degraded by the fall of Adam? One might think that this would be a difficult question to answer, because we don't have an unfallen Adam here against which to make a comparison. And yet, there was one unfallen man that did walk the earth, and that man was Jesus Christ. We learn in the Bible that Christ is the perfect image of God. In the book of Hebrews: **“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the *exact representation of His being*”** (Heb. 1:3). And from Paul: **“The Son is the *image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation*”** (Col. 1:15).

The incarnate Christ, in the form of *man*, was the most complete visualization of God that this world has ever had. “Christ is the visible representation and manifestation of the invisible God, the objective expression of the Divine nature, the face of God turned as it were toward the world, the exact likeness of the Father in all things except being the Father. Thus we receive **‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’** (2 Cor 4:6). He is the facsimile of God” [ISBE, on *Image*]. So we can infer that Christ, in His incarnate being, as He walked the earth under the limitations of being a man, contained in Him the full image of God, as it was originally created in Adam. “Since Christ was perfect man, he took all three parts of our nature, *spirit, soul, and body*. But then He took them in all their perfection, and that without any spot of sin, original or actual. Hence the human *spirit* in Christ was a perfect *spirit*, not that feeble semi-animate conscience which stirs, and only stirs, in our present fallen nature” [Heard, 159]. “Man was not made in the likeness of any creature that went before him, but in the likeness of his Creator; yet still between God and man there is an infinite distance. Christ only is the express image of

God's person, as the Son of his Father, having the same nature" [Henry, 6].

Consequently, in order to understand what was lost of the image of God in man by the fall, we just need to compare fallen man to Christ in His incarnate form. On the surface, clearly the main differences between Christ and other men are His holiness, His righteousness, His sinlessness, and His morality. But the differences go deeper than that. Christ had (as He walked the earth) a close and deep relationship with God the Father, such that all He did was within the will of God. Given this, and given that the *spirit* of man is the part of his being that relates to God (as we discussed above), then we can infer that one of the primary degradations of the image of God in man as caused by the fall of man, is that the influence of the *spirit* of man within his body was greatly weakened.

In other words, the fall of man can be seen as the *soul* and *body* breaking away from the influence of the *spirit*. For unfallen man, the *soul* and the *body* were at one with the *spirit*, and so unfallen man lived in holiness, and in a close relationship to God. Sin divided the *soul* from the *spirit* (see Heb. 4:12), and this division greatly impaired man's relationship with God. God still speaks to us by His Spirit, through our spirits, yet by his free will, fallen man often chooses not to heed the promptings of the *spirit*, just as Jesus pointed out to Peter in Gethsemane: **"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"** (Matt. 26:41). Paul masterfully describes the struggle of the *spirit*, against the yearnings of the *unspiritual* man: **"We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it**

out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing” (Rom. 7:14-19).

Here are ways that Biblical scholars have summarized the effect of the fall on the image of God in man:

- “The essential condition of man subsisted in three concentric circles. The innermost was his *spirit*; the inner, his *soul*; and the external, his *body*. With his *spirit*, man lived and moved in the love of God. The *body* stood, by means of the *soul*, under the potential influence of this light of love, and was thence expecting its glorification. By sin all this has now become reversed. It began by the *spirit* becoming dislocated from the divine love, its true life-centre” [Delitzsch, *Bib Psych*, 147-148].
- “The *spirit*, that part whereby we are receptive of the Holy Spirit of God, is, in the unspiritual man, crushed down and subordinated to the animal soul” [Alford, on 1 Thess. 5:23].
- “How far does man, as fallen, possess the divine image? Is it utterly destroyed, or to what extent does he retain it? The answer to that plainly is, in part to anticipate, that so far as the divine image answers to an indestructible element in man’s constitution — reason, conscience, freedom, etc.—it still remains, but in a broken and impaired condition. As respects to the actual exhibition of that image in moral resemblance to God, it is largely destroyed; even natural virtues are at best only a shadow of it, for they lack the *spiritual* element and true quality of holiness in not springing from the love and fear of God” [Orr, 57-58].

In addition to the *spiritual* effect on man, the fall brought a *physical* effect: Previous to the fall, Adam was an eternal being, just as God is. Eating the forbidden fruit brought death, just as God had warned: **“And the Lord God commanded**

the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you *will certainly die*’ (Gen. 2:16-17).

RETURN OF THE IMAGE OF GOD THROUGH SANCTIFICATION

So, the degradation of God’s image in man as a result of the fall of man can, in general, be summarized as: 1. The *spiritual* effect: Our *spirit* was greatly weakened, such that we do not heed its promptings, and so we readily fall into sin, and as a result, we have lost our close relationship with God; 2. The *physical* effect: We became mortal beings, subject to death.

Given this, we might ask: Is there any way to get these things back? Can the original image of God within us be restored? I would answer, as Paul did: **“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”** (Rom. 7:24-25). Through Christ, and Christ alone, it is possible to regain what we lost by the fall.

Concerning the *physical* effect of the fall, that our bodies are subject to death, we can gain immortal life for our *souls* through Christ, and Christ alone. This is the great gift of God to us: Though we brought death upon ourselves through our sins, God has provided a way for us to regain eternal life through Christ. We learn in the Gospel of John: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”** (John 3:16). And in his epistle, John taught: **“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son”** (1 John 5:11). And from Paul: **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Rom. 6:23).

Despite this, though, one physical consequence of the fall remains: our earthly bodies will die. We can never recover what we lost by the fall with respect to our earthly bodies. God promised that eating the forbidden fruit would bring death to Adam, and through Adam death to all, and that promise has been fulfilled. However, through Christ, after the death of this body, we will receive glorified, eternal bodies: **“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body”** (Phil. 3:20-21). “The Son of God was clothed with a body like unto *ours*, and will shortly clothe ours with a glory like unto *his*” [Henry, 6].

Now concerning the *spiritual* effect of the fall, that our *spirits* have been greatly weakened, such that we readily fall into sin: Can our *spirits* be restored? The answer to that is, *yes*, and this restoration of the *spirit* also occurs through Christ, by the process of *sanctification*. The purpose of sanctification is to restore the image of God within us, so as to make us more Christ-like, such that we are being conformed to the image of Christ, day-by-day. Paul taught: **“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be *conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters”** (Rom. 8:29). And elsewhere: **“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, *are being transformed into his image* with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”** (2 Cor. 3:18). And again: **“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”** (Eph. 4:22-24). In Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the process of sanctification is undoing the internal damage caused by the fall of man, and enabling your *soul*, as well as

your *body*, to be once again under the influence and control of your *spirit*, such that you listen to the Spirit of God speak to you through your *spirit*, heed the pleadings of the *spirit*, flee sin under the influence of the *spirit*, and engender a closer relationship with God through your *spirit*. “Reformed theology has traditionally held that mankind was created in the image of God, which was perfect in knowledge and righteousness, suffered irreparable destruction in the fall, and is delivered only through Christ’s death and resurrection, whereby the image is being progressively transformed in the believer (2 Cor 3:18) until its state of perfection at the resurrection (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; Col 3:9-10). Thus, the incarnate Son actualizes the perfection of the manhood which we have sinfully perverted” [Matthews].

The salvation of our souls, the eternal life we have through Christ, is such a glorious thing, that I’m afraid maybe we tend to downplay the importance of *sanctification*. Paul reminded us of the importance of sanctification as a *continuing* activity, in his startling statement: “...**continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling...**” (Phil. 2:12). Our *salvation*, as far as atonement and being saved from God’s punishment for our sins, was made complete on the cross when Christ said, “**It is finished**” (John 19:30); however, the *salvation* from being under the control of sin as we live the rest of our lives in this world *began* with Christ’s work on the cross, and continues within us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, through the process of sanctification. This is the *salvation* that we must “**continue to work out with fear and trembling.**” God is still holy and righteous, even after our salvation from His wrath; God still hates sin. And so we should have a healthy fear of God, and strive to our utmost to live without sin, to be sanctified with the help of the Holy Spirit, to be conformed to the likeness of Christ, who was the perfect image of God when He walked on this earth.

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Most of these books, those in the Public Domain, can be downloaded free of charge from:

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



A Sermon: Sovereignty and Salvation

A Sermon by the Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon

Sermon No. 60 –
Sovereignty and Salvation –
Isaiah 45:22

(Preached at the New Park Street Chapel,
London, Jan. 6th, 1856)

“Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” (Isaiah 45:22, KJV)

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — James 1]

SIX YEARS AGO, as near as possible at this very hour of the day, I was “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity,” but had yet, by divine grace, been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage, and to cry out by reason of the soreness of its slavery. Seeking rest, and finding none, I stepped within the house of God, and sat there, afraid to look upward, lest I should be utterly cut off, and lest his fierce wrath should consume me. The minister rose in his pulpit, and, as I have done this morning, read this text, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” I looked that moment; the grace of faith was vouchsafed to me in the self-same instant; and now I think I can say with truth,

“Ere since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”

I shall never forget that day, while memory holds its place; nor can I help repeating this text whenever I remember that hour when first I knew the Lord. How strangely gracious! How wonderfully and marvelously kind, that he who heard these words so little time ago for his own soul's profit, should now address you this morning as his hearers from the same text, in the full and confident hope that some poor sinner within these walls may hear the glad tidings of salvation for himself also, and may to-day, on this 6th of January, be “turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God!”

If it were within the range of human capacity to conceive a time when God dwelt alone, without his creatures, we should then have one of the grandest and most stupendous ideas of God. There was a season when as yet the sun had never run his race, nor commenced flinging his golden rays across space, to gladden the earth. There was an era when no stars sparkled in the firmament. for there was no sea of azure in which they might float. There was a time when all that we now behold of God's great universe was yet unborn, slumbering within the mind of God, as yet uncreate and no-existent; yet there was God, and he was “over all blessed for ever;” though no seraphs hymned his praises, though no strong-winged cherubs flashed like lightning to do his high behests, though he was without a retinue, yet he sat as a king on his throne, the mighty God, for ever to be worshipped—the Dread Supreme, in solemn silence dwelling by himself in vast immensity, making the placid clouds his canopy, and the light from his own countenance forming the brightness of his glory. God was, and God is. From the beginning God was God; ere worlds had beginning, he was “from everlasting to

everlasting.” Now, when it pleased him to create his creatures, does it not strike you how infinitely those creatures must have been below himself? If you are potters, and you fashion upon the wheel a vessel, shall that piece of clay arrogate to itself equality with you? Nay, at what a distance will it be from you, because you have been in part its creator. So, where the Almighty formed his creatures, was it not consummate impudence, that they should venture for a moment to compare themselves with him? Yet that arch traitor, that leader of rebels, Satan, sought to climb to the high throne of God, soon to find his aim too high, and hell itself not low enough wherein to escape divine vengeance. He knows that God is “God alone.” Since the world was created, man has imitated Satan; the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, has sought to match itself with the Eternal. Hence it has even been one of the objects of the great Jehovah, to teach mankind that he is God, and beside him there is none else. This is the lesson he has been teaching the world since it went astray from him. He has been busying himself in breaking down the high places, in exalting the valleys, in casting down imaginations and lofty looks, that all the world might

“Know that the Lord is God alone,
He can create, and he destroy.”

This morning we shall attempt to show you, in the first place, *how God has been teaching this great lesson to the world*—that he is God, and beside him there is none else; and then, secondly, *the special way in which he designs to teach it in the matter of salvation*—“Look unto me, and be ye saved: for I am God, and there is none else.”

I. First, then, **how has God been teaching this lesson to mankind?**

We reply, he has taught it, first of all, to *false gods, and to the idolaters who have bowed before them*. Man, in his wickedness and sin, has set up a block of wood and stone to be his maker, and

has bowed before it. He hath fashioned for himself out of a goodly tree an image made unto the likeness of mortal man, or of the fishes of the sea, or of creeping things of the earth, and he has prostrated his body, and his soul too, before that creature of his own hands, calling it a god, while it had neither eyes to see, nor hands to handle, nor ears to hear. But how hath God poured contempt on the ancient gods of the heathen? Where are they now? Are they so much as known? Where are those false deities before whom the multitudes of Ninevah prostrated themselves? Ask the moles and the bats, whose companions they are; or ask the mounds beneath which they are buried; or go where the idle gazer walketh through the museum—see them there as curiosities, and smile to think that men should ever bow before such gods as these. and where are the gods of Persia? Where are they? The fires are quenched, and the fire-worshipper hath almost ceased out of the earth. Where are the gods of Greece—those gods adorned with poetry, and hymned in the most sublime odes? Where are they? They are gone. Who talks of them now, but as things that were of yore? Jupiter—doth any one bow before him? And who is he that adores Saturn? They are passed away, and they are forgotten. And where are the gods of Rome? Doth Janus now command the temple? or do the vestal virgins now feed their perpetual fires? Are there any now that bow before these gods? No, they have lost their thrones. And where are the gods of the South Sea Islands—those bloody demons before whom wretched creatures prostrated their bodies? They have well-nigh become extinct. Ask the inhabitants of China and Polynesia where are the gods before which they bowed? Ask, and echo says ask, and ask again. They are cast down from their thrones; they are hurled from their pedestals; their chariots are broken, their sceptres are burnt in the fire, their glories are departed; God hath gotten unto himself the victory over false gods, and taught their worshippers that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. Are their gods still worshipped, or idols before which the

nations bow themselves? Wait but a little while, and ye shall see them fall. Cruel Juggernaut, whose car still crushes in its motion the foolish ones who throw themselves before it shall yet be the object of derision; and the most noted idols, such as Buddha, and Brahma, and Vishnu, shall yet stoop themselves to the earth, and men shall tread them down as mire in the streets; for God will teach all men that he is God, and that there is none else.

Mark ye, yet again, how God has taught this truth *to empires*. Empires have risen up, and have been gods of the era; their kings and princes have taken to themselves high titles, and have been worshipped by the multitude. But ask the empires whether there is any beside God? Do you not think you hear the boasting soliloquy of Babylon—"I sit as a queen, and am no widow; I shall see no sorrow; I am god, and there is none beside me?" And think ye not now, if ye walk over ruined Babylon, that ye will meet aught save the solemn spirit of the Bible, standing like a prophet gray with age, and telling you that there is one God, and that beside him there is none else? Go ye to Babylon, covered with its sand, the sand of its own ruins; stand ye on the mounds of Nineveh, and let the voice come up—"There is one God, and empires sink before him; there is only one Potentate, and the princes and kings of the earth, with their dynasties and thrones, are shaken by the trampling of his foot." Go, seat yourselves in the temples of Greece; mark ye there what proud words Alexander once did speak; but now, where is he, and where his empire too? Sit on the ruined arches of the bridge of Carthage, or walk ye through the desolated theatres of Rome, and ye will hear a voice in the wild wind amid those ruins—"I am God, and there is none else." "O city, though didst call thyself eternal; I have made thee melt away like dew. Though saidst 'I sit on seven hills, and I shall last forever;' I have made thee crumble, and thou art now a miserable and contemptible place, compared with what thou wast. Thou wast once stone, thou madest thyself; I have made thee stone again, and brought

thee low." O! how has God taught monarchies and empires that have set themselves up like new kingdoms of heaven. that he is God, and that there is none else!

Again: how has he taught his great truth *to monarchs!* There are some who have been most proud that have had to learn it in a way more hard than others. Take, for instance, Nebuchadnezzar. His crown is on his head, his purple robe is over his shoulders; he walks through proud Babylon, and says, "Is not this great Babylon which I have builded?" Do you see that creature in the field there? It is a man. "A man?" say you; its hair has grown like eagles' feathers, and its nails like birds' claws; it walketh on all-fours, and eateth grass, like an ox; it is driven out from men. That is the monarch who said—"Is not this great Babylon that I have builded?" And he is now restored to Babylon's palace, that he may "bless the Most High who is able to abase those that walk in pride." Remember another monarch. Look at Herod. He sits in the midst of his people, and he speaks. Hear ye the impious shout? "It is the voice of God," they cry, "and not the voice of man." The proud monarch gives not God the glory; he affects the God, and seems to shake the spheres, imagining himself divine. There is a worm that creepeth into his body, and yet another, and another; and ere that sun has set, he is eaten up of worms. Ah! monarch! though thoughtest of being a god, and worms have eaten thee! thou hast thought of being more than man; and what art thou? Less than man, for worms consume thee, and thou art the prey of corruption. Thus God humbleth the proud; thus he abaseth the mighty. We might give you instances from modern history; but the death of a king is all-sufficient to teach this one lesson, if men would but learn it. When kings die, and in funeral pomp are carried to the grave, we are taught the lesson—"I am God, and beside me there is none else." When we hear of revolutions, and the shaking of empires—when we see old dynasties tremble, and gray-haired monarchs driven from their thrones, then it is that Jehovah seems to put his foot upon land and sea, and with his

hand uplifted cries—"Hear! ye inhabitants of the earth! Ye are but as grasshoppers; 'I am God, and beside me there is none else.'"

Again: our God has had much to do to teach this lesson *to the wise men of this world*; for as rank, pomp, and power, have set themselves up in the place of God, so has wisdom; and one of the greatest enemies of Deity has always been the wisdom of man. The wisdom of man will not see God. Professing themselves to be wise, wise men have become fools. But have ye not noticed, in reading history, how God has abased the pride of wisdom? In ages long gone by, he sent mighty minds into the world, who devised systems of philosophy. "These systems," they said, "will last forever." Their pupils thought them infallible, and therefore wrote their sayings on enduring parchment, saying, "This book will last forever; succeeding generations of men will read it, and to the last man that book shall be handed down, as the epitome of wisdom." "Ah! but," said God, "that book of yours shall be seen to be folly, ere another hundred years have rolled away." And so, the mighty thoughts of Socrates, and the wisdom of Solon, are utterly forgotten now; and could we hear them speak, the veriest child in our schools would laugh to think that he understandeth more of philosophy than they. But when man has found the vanity of one system, his eyes have sparkled at another; if Aristotle will not suffice, here is Bacon; now I shall know everything; and he sets to work and says that this new philosophy is to last forever. He lays his stones with fair colors, and he thinks that every truth he piles up is a precious imperishable truth. But, alas! another century comes, and it is found to be "wood, hay, and stubble." A new sect of philosophers rise up, who refute their predecessors. So too, we have wise men in this day—wise secularists, and so on, who fancy they have obtained the truth; but within another fifty years—and mark that word—this hair shall not be silvered over with gray, until the last of that race shall have perished, and that man shall be thought a fool that was ever

connected with such a race. Systems of infidelity pass away like a dew-drop before the sun, for God says, "I am God, and beside me there is none else." This Bible is the stone that shall break in powder philosophy; this is the mighty battering ram that shall dash all systems of philosophy in pieces; this is the stone that a woman may yet hurl upon the head of every Abimelech, and he shall be utterly destroyed. O church of God! fear not; thou shalt do wonders; wise men shall be confounded, and thou shalt know, and they too, that he is God, and that beside him there is none else.

"Surely," says one, "*the Church of God* does not need to be taught this." Yes, we answer, she does; for of all beings, those whom God has made the objects of his grace are perhaps the most apt to forget this cardinal truth, that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. How did the church in Canaan forget it, when they bowed before other gods, and therefore he brought against them mighty kings and princes, and afflicted them sore? How did Israel forget it; and he carried them away captive into Babylon. And what Israel did, in Canaan and in Babylon, that we do now. We too, too often, forget that he is God, and beside him there is none else. Doth not the Christian know what I mean, when I tell him this great fact? For hath he not done it himself? In certain times prosperity has come upon him; soft gales have blown his bark along, just where his wild will wished to steer; and he has said within himself: "Now I have peace, now I have happiness, now the object I wished for is within my grasp, now I will say, 'Sit down, my soul, and take thy rest; eat, drink, and be merry; these things will well content me; make thou these thy god, be thou blessed and happy.'" But have we not seen our God dash the goblet to the earth, spill the sweet wine, and instead thereof fill it with gall? and as he has given it to us, he has said—"Drink it, drink it: ye have thought to find a god on earth, but drain the cup and know its bitterness." When we have drunk it, nauseous the draft was, and we have cried, "Ah! God, I will drink no more of these things; thou art God, and

beside thee there is none else.” And ah! how often, too, have we devised schemes for the future, without asking God’s permission! Men have said, like those foolish ones James mentioned, “We will do such-and-such things on the morrow; we will buy and sell and get gain.” whereas they knew not what was to be on the morrow, for long ere the morrow came they were unable to buy and sell; death had claimed them, and a small span of earth held all their frame. God teaches his people every day, by sickness, by affliction, by depression of spirits, by the forsakings of God, by the loss of the Spirit for a season, by the lackings of the joys of his countenance, that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. And we must not forget that there are some special servants of God raised up to do good works, who in a peculiar manner have to learn this lesson. Let a man, for instance, be called to the great work of preaching the gospel. He is successful; God helped him; thousands wait at his feet, and multitudes hang upon his lips; as truly as that man is a man, he will have a tendency to be exalted above measure, and too much will he begin to look to himself, and too little to his God. Let men speak who know, and what they know let them speak; and they will say, “It is true, it is most true.” If God gives us a special mission, we generally begin to take some honor and glory to ourselves. But in review of the eminent saints of God, have you never observed how God has made them feel that he was God, and beside him there was none else? Poor Paul might have thought himself a god, and been puffed up above measure, by reason of the greatness of his revelation, had not there been a thorn in the flesh. But Paul could feel that he was not a god, for he had a thorn in the flesh, and gods *could not* have thorns in the flesh. Sometimes God teaches the minister, by denying him help on special occasions. We come up into our pulpits and say, “Oh! I wish I could have a good day today!” We begin to labor; we have been just as earnest in prayer, and just as indefatigable; but it is like a blind horse turning round a mill, or like Samson with Delilah: we shake our vain

limbs with vast surprise, “make feeble fight,” and win no victories. We are made to see that the Lord is God, and that beside him there is none else. Very frequently God teaches this to the minister, leading him to see his own sinful nature. He will have such an insight into his own wicked and abominable heart, that he will feel as he comes up the pulpit stairs that he does not deserve so much as to sit in his pew, much less to preach to his fellows. Although we feel always joy in the declaration of God’s Word, yet we have known what it is to totter on the pulpit steps, under a sense that the chief of sinners should scarcely be allowed to preach to others. Ah! beloved, I do not think *he* will be very successful as a minister who is not taken into the depths and blackness of his own soul, and made to exclaim, “Unto me, who am less *than the least of all saints*, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” There is another antidote which God applies in the case of ministers. If he does not deal with them personally, he raises up a host of enemies, that it may be seen that he is God, and God alone. An esteemed friend sent me, yesterday, a valuable old manuscript of one of George Whitefield’s hymns which was sung on Kennington Common. It is a splendid hymn, thoroughly Whitefieldian all through. It showed that his reliance was wholly on the Lord, and that God was within him. What! Will a man subject himself to the calumnies of the multitude, will he toil and work day after day unnecessarily, will he stand up Sabbath after Sabbath and preach the gospel and have his name maligned and slandered, if he has not the grace of God in him? For myself, I can say, that were it not that the love of Christ constrained me, this hour might be the last that I should preach, so far as the ease of the thing is concerned. “Necessity is laid upon us; yea, woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel.” But that opposition through which God carries his servants, leads them to see at once that he is God, and that there is none else. If everyone applauded, if all were gratified, we should think ourselves God; but, when they

hiss and hoot, we turn to our God, and cry,

“If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproach should be,
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame,
If thou’lt remember me.”

II. This brings us to the second portion of our discourse. Salvation is God’s greatest work; and, therefore, in his greatest work, he specially teaches us this lesson, That he is God, and that beside him there is none else. Our text tells us *how he teaches it*. He says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” He shows us that he is God, and that beside him there is none else, in three ways. First, by the person to whom he directs us: “look unto *me*, and be ye saved.” Secondly, by the means he tells us to use to obtain mercy: “Look,” simply, “Look.” And thirdly, by the persons whom he calls to “look:” “Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth*.”

1. First, *to whom does God tell us to look for salvation?* O, does it not lower the pride of man, when we hear the Lord say, “Look unto *me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth?” It is not. “Look to your priest, and be ye saved:” if you did, there would be another god, and beside him there would be someone else. It is not “Look to yourself;” if so, then there would be a being who might arrogate some of the praise of salvation. But it is “Look unto me.” How frequently you who are coming to Christ look to yourselves. “O!” you say, “I do not repent enough.” That is looking to yourself. “I do not believe enough.” That is looking to yourself. “I am too unworthy.” That is looking to yourself. “I cannot discover,” says another, “that I have any righteousness.” It is quite right to say that you have not any righteousness; but it is quite wrong to look for any. It is, “Look unto me.” God will have you turn your eye off yourself and look unto him. The hardest thing in the world is to turn a man’s eye off himself; as long

as he lives, he always has a predilection to turn his eyes inside, and look at himself; whereas God says, "Look unto me." From the cross of Calvary, where the bleeding hands of Jesus drop mercy; from the Garden of Gethsemane, where the bleeding pores of the Saviour sweat pardons, the cry comes, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." From Calvary's summit, where Jesus cries, "It is finished," I hear a shout, "Look, and be saved." But there comes a vile cry from our soul, "Nay, look to yourself! look to yourself!" Ah, my hearer, look to yourself, and you will be damned. That certainly will come of it. As long as you look to yourself there is no hope for you. It is not a consideration of what you are, but a consideration of what God is, and what Christ is, that can save you. It is looking from yourself to Jesus. P! there be men that quite misunderstand the gospel; they think that righteousness qualifies them to come to Christ; whereas sin is the only qualification for a man to come to Jesus. Good old Crisp says, "Righteousness keeps me from Christ: the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Sin makes me come to Jesus, when sin is felt; and, in coming to Christ, the more sin I have the more cause I have to hope for mercy." David said, and it was a strange thing, too, "Have mercy upon me, for mine iniquity is great." But, David, why did not you say that it was little? Because, David knew that the bigger his sins were, the better reason for asking mercy. The more vile a man is, the more eagerly I invite him to believe in Jesus. A sense of sin is all we have to look for as ministers. We preach to sinners; and let us know that a man will take the title of sinner to himself, and we then say to him, "Look unto Christ, and ye shall be saved." "Look," this is all he demands of thee, and even this he gives thee. If thou lookest to thyself thou art damned; thou art a vile miscreant, filled with loathsomeness, corrupt and corrupting others. But look thou here—seest thou that man hanging on the cross? Dost thou behold his agonized head dropping meekly down upon his breast? Dost thou see that thorny crown, causing drops of blood to trickle

down his cheeks? Dost thou see his hands pierced and rent, and his blest feet, supporting the weight of his own frame, rent well-nigh in twain with the cruel nails? Sinner! dost thou hear him shriek, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabbacthani?*" Dost thou hear him cry, "It is finished?" Dost thou mark his head hang down in death? Seest thou that side pierced with the spear, and the body taken from the cross? O, come thou hither! Those hands were nailed for thee; those feet gushed gore for thee; that side was opened wide for thee; and if thou wantest to know how thou canst find mercy, there it is. "Look!" "Look unto *me!*" Look no longer to Moses. Look no longer to Sinai. Come thou here and look to Calvary, to Calvary's victim, and to Joseph's grave. And look thou yonder, to the man who near the throne sits with his Father, crowned with light and immortality. "Look, sinner," he says, this morning, to you, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." It is in this way God teaches that there is none beside him; because he makes us look entirely to him, and utterly away from ourselves.

2. But the second thought is, *the means of salvation*. It is, "*Look* unto me, and be ye saved." You have often observed, I am sure, that many people are fond of an intricate worship, and involved religion, one they can hardly understand. They cannot endure worship so simple as ours. Then they must have a man dressed in white, and a man dressed in black; then they must have what they call an altar and a chancel. After a little while that will not suffice, and they must have flower-pots and candles. The clergyman then becomes a priest, and he must have a variegated dress, with a cross on it. So it goes on; what is simply a plate becomes a paten, and what was once a cup becomes a chalice; and the more complicated the ceremonies are, the better they like them. They like their minister to stand like a superior being. The world likes a religion they cannot comprehend. But have you never noticed how gloriously simple the Bible is? It will not have any of your nonsense; it speaks plain, and nothing but plain things. "*Look!*" There is not an unconverted man who likes this, "Look unto

Christ, and be ye saved.” No, he comes to Christ like Naaman to Elijah; and, when it is said, “Go, wash in Jordan,” he replies, “I verily thought he would come and put his hand on the place, and call on the name of his God. But the idea of telling me to wash in Jordan, what a ridiculous thing! Anybody could do that!” If the prophet had bidden him to do some great thing, would he not have done it? Ah! certainly he would. And if, this morning, I could preach that anyone who walked from here to Bath without his shoes and stockings, or did some impossible thing, should be saved, you would start off tomorrow morning before breakfast. If it would take me seven years to describe the way of salvation, I am sure you would all long to hear it. If only one learned doctor could tell the way to heaven, how would he be run after! And if it were in hard words, with a few scraps of Latin and Greek, it would be all the better. But it is a simple gospel that we have to preach. It is only “Look!” “Ah!” you say, “Is that the gospel? I shall not pay any attention to that.” But why has God ordered you to do such a simple thing? Just to take down your pride, and to show you that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. O, mark how simple the way of salvation is. It is “Look! look! look!” Four letters, and two of them alike! “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Some divines want a week to tell what you are to do to be saved; but God the Holy Ghost only wants four letters to do it. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” How simple is that way of salvation! and Oh, how instantaneous! It takes us some time to move our hand, but a look does not require a moment. So a sinner believes in a moment; and the moment that sinner believes and trusts in his crucified God for pardon, at once he receives salvation in full through his blood. There may be one that came in here this morning unjustified in his conscience, that will go out justified rather than others. There may be some here, filthy sinners one moment, pardoned the next. It is done in an instant. “Look! look! look!” And how universal it is! Because,

wherever I am, however far off, it just says, "Look!" It does not say I am to see; it only says, "Look!" If we look on a thing in the dark, we cannot see it; but we have done what we were told. So, if a sinner only looks to Jesus he will save him; for Jesus in the dark is as good as Jesus in the light; and Jesus, when you cannot see him, is as good as Jesus when you can. It is only, "Look!" "Ah! says one, "I have been trying to see Jesus this year, but I have not seen him." It does not say, see him, but "Look unto him." And it says that they who looked were enlightened. If there is an obstacle before you, and you only look in the right direction, it is sufficient. "Look unto me." It is not seeing Christ so much as looking after him. The will after Christ, the wish after Christ, the desire after Christ, the trusting in Christ, the hanging on Christ, that is what is wanted. "Look! look! look!" Ah! if the man bitten by the serpent had turned his sightless eyeballs towards the brazen serpent, though he had not seen it, he would still have had his life restored. It is looking, not seeing, that saves the sinner.

We say again, how this *humbles* a man! There is a gentleman who says, "Well, if it had been a thousand pounds that would have saved me, I would have thought nothing of it." But gold and silver is cankered; it is good for nothing. "Then, am I to be saved just the same as my servant Betty?" Yes, just the same; there is no other way of salvation for you. That is to show man that Jehovah is God, and that beside him there is none else. The wise man says, "If it had been to work the most wonderful problem, or to solve the greatest mystery, I would have done it. May I not have some mysterious gospel? May I not believe in some mysterious religion?" No; it is "Look!" "What! am I to be saved just like that Ragged School Boy, who can't read his letters?" Yes, you must, or you will not be saved at all. Another says, "I have been very moral and upright; I have observed all the laws of the land; and, if there is anything else to do, I will do it. I will eat only fish on Fridays, and keep all the fasts of the church, if that will save me." No, sir, that will not save you; your good works are good for

nothing. "What! must I be saved in the same way as a harlot or a drunkard?" Yes, sir; there is only one way of salvation for all. "He hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." He hath passed a sentence of condemnation on all, that the free grace of God might come upon many to salvation. "Look! look! look!" This is the simple method of salvation. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

But, lastly, mark how God has cut down the pride of man, and has exalted himself *by the persons whom he has called to look*. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." When the Jew heard Isaiah say that, "Ah!" he exclaimed, "you ought to have said, 'Look unto me, O Jerusalem, and be saved.' That would have been right. But those Gentile dogs, are they to look and be saved?" "Yes," says God; "I will show you Jews, that, though I have given you many privileges, I will exalt others above you; I can do as I will with my own."

Now, who are the ends of the earth? Why, there are poor heathen nations now that are very few degrees removed from brutes, uncivilized and untaught; but if I might go and tread the desert, and find the Bushman in his kraal, or go to the South Seas and find a cannibal, I would say to the cannibal or the Bushman, "Look unto Jesus, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." They are some of "the ends of the earth," and the gospel is sent to as much to them as to the polite Grecians, the refined Romans, or the educated Britons. But I think "the ends of the earth" imply those who have gone the farthest away from Christ. I say, drunkard, that means you. You have been staggering back. till you have got right to the ends of the earth; you have almost had *delirium tremens*; you cannot be much worse. There is not a man breathing worse than you. *Is there?* Ah! but God, in order to humble your pride, says to you, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." There is another who has lived a life of infamy and sin, until she has ruined herself, and even Satan seems to sweep her out at the back door; but God says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Methinks I see one trembling here, and saying, "Ah, I have not been one of these, sir, but I have been something worse; for I have attended the house of God, and I have stifled convictions, and put off all thoughts of Jesus, and now I think he will never have mercy on me." You are one of them. "Ends of the earth!" So long as I find any who feel like that, I can tell them that they are "the ends of the earth." "But," says another, "I am so peculiar; if I did not feel as I do, it would be all very well; but I feel that my case is a peculiar one." That is all right; they are a peculiar people. You will do. But another one says, "There is nobody in the world like me; I do not think you will find a being under the sun that has had so many calls, and put them all away, and so many sins on his head. Besides, I have guilt that I should not like to confess to any living creature." One of "the ends of the earth" again; therefore, all I have to do is to cry out, in the Master's name, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." But thou sayest, sin will not let thee look. I tell thee, sin will be removed the moment thou dost look. "*But I dare not; he will condemn me; I fear to look.*" He will condemn thee more if thou dost not look. Fear, then, and look; but do not let thy fearing keep thee from looking. "*But he will cast me out.*" Try him. "*But I cannot see him.*" I tell you, it is not seeing, but looking. "*But my eyes are so fixed on the earth, so earthly, so worldly.*" Ah! but, poor soul, he giveth power to look and live. He saith, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Take this, dear friends, for a new year's text, both ye who love the Lord, and ye who are only looking for the first time. Christian! in all thy troubles through this year, look unto God and be saved. In all thy trials and afflictions, look unto Christ, and find deliverance. In all thine agony, poor soul, in all thy repentance for thy guilt, look unto Christ, and find pardon. This year, remember to put thine eyes heavenward, and thine heart heavenward, too. Remember, this day, that thou bind round thyself a golden chain, and put one link of it in the staple of heaven. Look unto Christ; fear not. There is no

stumbling when a man walks with his eyes up to Jesus. He that looked at the stars fell into the ditch; but he that looks at Christ walks safely. Keep your eyes up all the year long. "Look unto *him*, and be ye saved;" and remember that "*he* is God, and beside *him* there is none else." And thou, poor trembler, what sayest thou? Wilt thou begin the year by looking unto him? You know how sinful you are this morning; you know how filthy you are; and yet it is possible that, before you open your pew door, and get into the aisle, you will be as justified as the apostles before the throne of God. It is possible that, ere your foot treads the threshold of your door, you will have lost the burden that has been on your back, and you will go on your way, singing, "I am forgiven, I am forgiven; I am a miracle of grace; this day is my spiritual birthday." O, that it might be such to many of you, that at last I might say, "Here am I, and the children thou hast given me." Hear this, convinced sinner! "This poor man cried, and the Lord delivered him out of his distresses." O, taste and see that the Lord is good! Now believe on him; now cast thy guilty soul upon his righteousness; now plunge thy black soul into the bath of his blood; now put thy naked soul at the door of the wardrobe of his righteousness; now seat thy famished soul at the feast of plenty. Now, "Look!" How simple does it seem! And yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring men to. They never will do it, till constraining grace makes them. Yet there it is, "Look!" Go thou away with that thought. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."



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

<http://www.ClassicChristianLibrary.com>



A Meditation: The Traveller

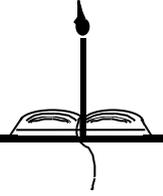
A Meditation: The Temper of Him That Goes Abroad, by James Meikle (1730-1799)

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

Now I leave my native land in peace with all, and wish well to friends and foes, as no doubt I have both.

Gratitude binds me not to forget my friends; grace, to forgive my foes. He carries but a poor principle in his breast, that goes away swollen with rage, in hopes to return and revenge; for "anger rests only in the bosom of fools." It is a Christian grace to forgive even the worst of injuries; for it ennobles a man more to conquer the wicked principle of his corrupt nature, than to take a city. Would I revenge a personal quarrel on any at the day of judgment? Surely no. Shall I, then, carry rancor to the very grave, or lie down in a condition in which I would not wish to rise? Therefore, my passion shall be converted into pity, and I will not only forgive men what they may have done amiss to me, but implore forgiveness for them in that wherein they may have offended God. Thus, shall I go lightly, compared with the mental madman who cherishes revenge.—He continually carries about with him a load of hurtful two-edged weapons, in hopes to find his foe, and satiate his revenge upon him; but, while he waits his opportunity, he slips a foot, and falls among the pointed weapons, which wound him unto death. So must every malicious person fare at last, who falls over the precipice of time into eternity, full of envy and inflamed with wrath.

Postscript



The Old and New Testament

“Without the New Testament, the Old Testament would be a labyrinth without a clue, a syllogism without a conclusion, a riddle without a solution, a torso without a head, a moon without a sun, since Christ is the proper interpreter of the Old Testament.”

-- *Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890)*

