

SCRIPTURE STUDIES

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

Old Testament Study: Exodus 13:17-22	3
<i>The Exodus from Egypt, pt. 2</i>	
A Classic Study: The Danger of Prosperity, pt. 6, by William Bates	8
New Testament Study: Matthew 22:23-33	12
<i>The Resurrection</i>	
A Topical Study: On Prayer, pt. 13	16
<i>Pray for Everything, pt. 5, by Stephen Charnock</i>	
A Study in Psalms: Job 1:1 (pt.2)	20
<i>A Good Man in a Bad Place, by Joseph Caryl</i>	
A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist, by William Spurstowe	22
<i>A Meditation Upon a Lamp and a Star</i>	

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May God bless you as you study His Word.



Old Testament Study: Exodus 13:17-22

The Exodus from Egypt, pt. 2 by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

¹⁷And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, 'Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt': ¹⁸But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

¹⁹And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, 'God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.'

²⁰And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. ²¹And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: ²²He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

"And it came to pass when Pharaoh had let the people go that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, 'Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war and they return to Egypt'" (13:17). How this reminds us of Psalm 103:13-14: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so that Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." This people who had spent many long years in slavery were now starting out for the promised land, and it is beautiful to see this tender concern for them. It exemplifies a principle of general application in connection with the Lord's dealings with His people. The Lord is not only very compassionate, but His mercies are "tender" (James 5:11). The Lord does not suffer His "babes" to be tested as severely as those who are more mature; witness the various trials to which He subjected Abraham — the command for him to offer Isaac was not the first but the *last* great test which he received. It was so here with Israel. Later, there would be much *fighting* when Canaan was reached, but at the beginning He led them not the way of the land of the Philistines, for that would have involved warfare. He had respect unto their weakness and

timidity. "The Lord, in His condescending grace, so orders things for His people that they do not, at their first setting out, encounter heavy trials, which might have the effect of discouraging their hearts and driving them back." (C.H.M.)

"God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines." This is the *first* thing noticed by the Holy Spirit after Israel left the land of Egypt — God chose the way for His people through the wilderness. Unspeakably blessed is this. **"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way"** (Psalm 37:23). We are not left alone to choose our own path. **"As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God"** (Romans 8:14). And what is it that the Spirit uses in His leading of us to-day? In this, as in everything, it is the written Word — **"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet,"** to reveal the pitfalls and obstacles of the way, **"and a light unto my path"** — to make clear the by-paths to be avoided (Psalm 119:105). What a full provision has been made for us! Nothing is left to chance, nothing to our own poor reasoning — **"we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"** (Ephesians 2:10).

"But God led the people about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea" (13:8). It is often said that the "wilderness" had no place in the *purpose* of God for Israel. But this is certainly erroneous. It was God Himself who led the people round about **"the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea."** It was God's original intention that Israel *should* take exactly the route which they actually followed. Not only is this evident from the fact that the Pillar of Cloud *led* them each step of their journey to Canaan, but it was plainly intimated by the Lord to Moses *before* the exodus took place. At the very first appearing of Jehovah to His servant at Horeb (Exodus 3:1), He declared, **"When thou has brought forth the people out of Egypt ye shall serve God upon this mountain."** God's purpose in leading Israel to Canaan through the wilderness, instead of via the land of the Philistines, was manifested in the sequel. In the first place, it was in order that His marvelous power might be signally displayed on their behalf in bringing them safely through the Red Sea. In the second place, it was in order that Pharaoh and his hosts might there be destroyed. In the third place, it was in order that they might receive Jehovah's laws in the undisturbed solitude of the desert. In the fourth place, it was in order that they might be properly organized into a Commonwealth and Church-state (Acts 7:53) prior to their entrance into and occupation of the land of Canaan. Finally, it was in order that they might be humbled, tried, and proved (Deuteronomy 8:2, 3), and the sufficiency of their God in every emergency might be fully demonstrated.

"And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night" (13:20-21). Very precious is this. Just as Jehovah — the *covenant* God, the *promising* God, the One who heard the groanings of Israel, the One who raised up a deliverer for them — reminds us of *God the Father*, just as the Lamb — without spot and blemish, slain and its blood sprinkled, securing pro-

tection and deliverance from the avenging angel — typifies *God the Son*; so this Pillar of Cloud — given to Israel for their guidance across the wilderness — speaks to us of *God the Holy Spirit*. Amazingly full, Divinely perfect, are these O.T. foreshadowings. At every point the teaching of the N.T. is anticipated. But the anointed eye is needed to perceive the hidden meaning of these primitive pictures. Much prayerful searching is necessary if we are to discern their spiritual signification.

This “pillar” was the visible sign of the Lord’s presence with Israel. It is called “a pillar of cloud” and “a pillar of fire.” Apparently its upper portion rose up to heaven in the form of a column; its lower being spread out cloudwise, over Israel’s camp. Note how in Exodus 14:24 the two descriptive terms are combined, showing that the “pillar” did not change its form, as a “cloud” by day and a “fire” by night as is popularly supposed; but, as stated above, it was *one* — a “pillar of fire” in its upper portion, a “cloud” below. It is clear, though, from subsequent scriptures (Numbers 14:14, etc.), that the whole “cloud” was illuminative by night-time “to give them light in the way wherein they should go” (Nehemiah 9:12). Let us now consider some of the points in which the Cloud typified the Holy Spirit.

1. The “Cloud” was not given to Israel until they had been delivered from Egypt. First, the slaying of the Paschal Lamb, then the giving of the Cloud. This is the order of the N.T. First, the death of God’s Lamb, followed by His resurrection and ascension, and then the public descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. So, also, is it in Christian experience. There is first the sinner appropriating by faith the death of Christ, and then the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell that soul. It is on the ground of Christ’s shed blood — not because of *any* moral fitness in us — that the Spirit of God seals us unto the day of redemption. Strikingly is this order observed in the epistle to the Romans — the great doctrinal treatise of the N.T. There, as nowhere else so fully, is unfolded God’s method of salvation. But it is not until *after* the believing sinner is “justified” (5:1) that we read of the Spirit of God. In 2:4-10 we get repentance; in 3:22-28, faith; and then in 5:5 we read, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us!”

2. The “Cloud” was God’s gracious *gift* to Israel. No word is said about the people *asking* for this Guide. It came to them quite unsought, as a tender provision of God’s mercy. Do we not find the same thing in the Gospels? At the close of His mission the Lord Jesus told the disciples of His departure, of His return to the Father. And though we read of them being troubled and sorrowful, yet there is no hint that any of the apostles *requested* Him to send them another Comforter. The purpose to do this proceeded alone from Himself — “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter” (John 14:16).

3. The Cloud was given to *guide* Israel through their wilderness journey. What a merciful provision was this — an infallible Guide to conduct them through the tract-less desert! “The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way” (Exodus 13:21). In like manner, the Holy Spirit has been given to Christians to direct their steps along the Narrow Way which leadeth unto life. “As many as are led by the

Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

4. The Cloud gave *light*. "**And by night in a pillar of fire to give them light**" (Exodus 13:21). Beautifully does Nehemiah remind their descendants of this hundreds of years later: "**Thou leadest them in the day by a cloudy pillar and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go**" (Nehemiah 9:12). By day or by night Israel was thoroughly furnished. For a similar purpose is the Holy Spirit given to Christians. He is "**the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord**" (Isaiah 11:2). Said the Lord to His apostles, "**When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth**" (John 16:13).

5. The Cloud was given *for a covering*: "**He spread a cloud for a covering**" (Psalm 105:39). This Cloud was for Israel's protection from the scorching heat of the sun in the sandy desert where there was no screen. Beautifully has this been commented upon by one who knew from an experience of contrast the blessedness of this merciful provision of God for Israel: "To appreciate what the cloud was to Israel, we must transport ourselves in imagination to a rainless country like Egypt. We lived many years on the coast of Peru — hundreds of miles as rainless as Egypt. We recalled with horror that some English hymn writer had sung the glories of a 'cloudless sky, a waveless sea.' In a small schooner, becalmed under a tropical sun off the coast of Equador, we tasted the awfulness of a waveless sea, and in Peru for half the year we had a cloudless sky, and rainless always. How beautiful the distant clouds looked, away off there on the peaks of the lofty Andes. We could not but feel, 'What must be the soothingness of bring under a cloud like those Indians who lived up there in that happy fertile region of clouds amid the valleys and mountains!' Therefore, that cloud must have been a welcome sight to those ex-slaves, accustomed to labor in the fields under the sun of Egypt. It was a proof to them of the all-mighty power of Jehovah. He could give them a cloud where there was nothing in Nature to form clouds. He could furnish a shelter to *His* people when no other people had a shelter" (C. H. Bright). So, too, is the Holy Spirit our Protector — we are "**sealed unto the day of redemption**" (Ephesians 4:30).

6. God *spoke* from the Cloud: "**He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar**" (Psalm 99:7). The Psalmist is here referring back to such passages as Exodus 33:9 — "**And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses**" (Numbers 12:5). In like manner the Holy Spirit is today the Spokesman for the Holy Trinity, "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches**" (Revelation 2:3).

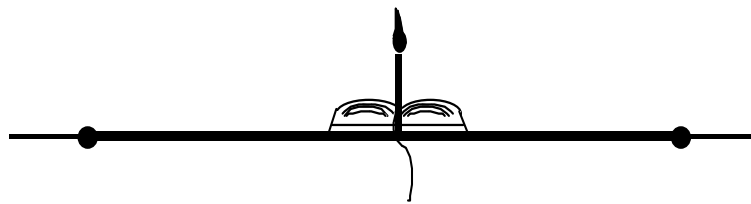
7. This Cloud was *darkness to the Egyptians*: "**And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. and it was a cloud and darkness to them**" (14:20). Fearfully solemn is this. God not only reveals, but He also conceals: "**At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank Thee, O Father. Lord of, Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent'**" (Matthew 11:25). It

is so with the Holy Spirit — “The Spirit of truth whom the world *cannot receive*” (John 14:17).

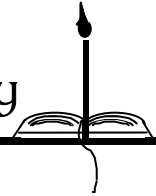
8. This Cloud rested upon the Tabernacle as soon as it was erected. **“So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle, and Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle”** (Exodus 40:33-35). How strikingly this foreshadowed the coming of the Holy Spirit upon that Blessed One who tabernacled among men, of Whom it is written, **“We beheld His glory”** (John 1:14). So, too, the Holy Spirit came upon the twelve apostles on the day of Pentecost and they were all **“filled with the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:4).

9. All through Israel’s wilderness wanderings this Cloud *was never taken away from them*: **“Yet Thou in Thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness; the pillar of the cloud departed not from them”** (Nehemiah 9:19). Despite all Israel’s failures — their murmurings, their unbelief, their rebellion — God never withdrew the Cloudy Pillar! So, too, of the Holy Spirit given to believers the sure promise is, **“He shall give you another Comforter, that He may (should) abide with you forever”** (John 14:16).

10. It is blessed to learn that the Cloud shall once more descend upon and dwell among Israel. When God regathers His scattered people, when He resumes His covenant relationship with them, and brings them to a saving knowledge of their Messiah-Redeemer, then shall be fulfilled the ancient promise, **“When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a Cloud and smoke by day and a shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the Glory shall be a defense”** (Isaiah 4:6). What a truly marvelous type of the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit was the fiery and cloudy “pillar”!



A Classic Study: The Danger of Prosperity



A Classic Study by William Bates (1635–1699)

[Here we continue a study by the eminent English Puritan William Bates, concerning the danger of prosperity. Mr. Bates is setting forth reasons that prosperity is dangerous to the believer.]—*Ed.*

The Danger of Prosperity, pt. 6

The prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (Prov. 1:32, AV).

2. The external means for converting sinners, are usually ineffectual upon them while they enjoy prosperity.

“The Gospel is the Power of God to salvation to them that believe” (Rom. 1:16), and the preaching of it is, by divine institution, the ordinary means of conversion. God could, by the immediate illumination of the mind, and influence upon the will and affections, convert sinners from the errors of their ways; but His wisdom and condescending goodness makes use of the ministry of men to convey the word of truth and life to the world. This way is very contagious, both to the compounded nature of man, by the senses to work upon the soul, and to the native freedom of his will: For though the supernatural agent infallibly changes the heart, yet the instrument can only direct and persuade men, as those who are endowed with intellectual and elective faculties; and thus the efficacy of divine grace is insinuated in a way suitable to the reasonable nature. The ministers are styled the light of the world, to discover to men their undone condition by sin, and to point out the way to their everlasting peace. Our blessed Redeemer saves the lost remnant of mankind by the sacred ministry; and where there are no *Evangelical preachers sent*, or only a doleful succession of blind guides—what Tertullian says of Scythia, a country that by the extremity of the cold is hard and dry, and perpetually barren—the hearts of men are frozen to their sins, there is no melting in the tears of true repentance, no holy heat, only their brutish lusts are ardent and active. But where the ambassadors of Christ are faithful and zealous to induce sinners to break off their sins by repentance, and to be reconciled to God, there are none more incapable of the sanctifying power of the gospel, than sinners in prosperity.

Pride, which is the vice of prosperity, makes them fierce and stubborn against the holy and strict rules of the word. **“We will not hearken to**

Thee, but will certainly do whatsoever goes out of our own mouth" (Isaiah 44:16-17). If a faithful minister points out the inside of their foul souls, their uncomely passions are raised against him. If he recommends the earnest study of holiness, and godliness, they entertain his counsels with derision and disdain. Those to whom the dearest and most affectionate honor is due, being spiritual fathers and physicians, are despised in their persons and office, by fools in their prosperity. They condemn what they do not understand, and affect not to understand what condemns them. They hear sermons to censure, and censure that they may not be troubled by them. What hope is there of reducing haughty scornors to the obedience of the gospel? Even the miracles and ministry of our Savior were without success upon the Pharisees, who "**heard and derided Him**" (see Luke 16:14). If such are convinced in their minds, and not disarmed of their pride and self-will, they refuse to yield themselves to the Lord. Meekness is a requisite qualification for receiving the Word. We are directed to "**lay aside all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness; and with meekness to receive the engrafted word, that is able to save our souls**" (James 1:21). We are prepared for Divine grace, by a serious sense of our want for it, and earnest desire to obtain it. "**He fills the hungry with good things and the rich He sends empty away**" (Luke 1:53). None are so insensible of their spiritual wants, and averse from the humble acknowledgement of them, as the prosperous sinner; and none more unlikely to obtain spiritual riches.

Infidelity that is occasioned and confirmed by prosperity in sin, renders the gospel ineffectual to the salvation of men. "**The word preached did not profit the Jews, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it**" (Heb. 4:12). A steadfast belief of divine revelations is the principle of obedience: without it, motives of the highest strain are ineffectual. Eternal things are not within the prospect of sense, and though set forth with the clearest evidence of reason, and enforced with the greatest earnestness of affection, yet the sons of darkness sleep profoundly in their sins. If heaven with its joys and glory be revealed in the most affecting manner, it has no more efficacy to move them, than charming music to awaken one out of a lethargy: only violent remedies, bleeding, scarifying, and burning, are proper and powerful for recovery. If they are warned, that the everlasting King will shortly open the clouds, and come with terrible majesty to the universal judgment, and require an account for His abused mercies: their hearts are apt to reply, as the priests did to Judas, "**What is that to us? See you to it**" (Matt. 27:4). The terrors of the Lord no more affect them than thunder does the deaf, or lightning the blind. In short, though charged and adjured by all the threatenings of the law and neglected gospel, though entreated by all the precious promises of mercy, they continue hardened in their voluptuous sins. They despise the eternal rewards of holiness and wickedness, as incredible and impertinent, and ministers as men of vain talk and imaginations. For the infidel senses are not affected with things future, and sinners while prosperous, are under

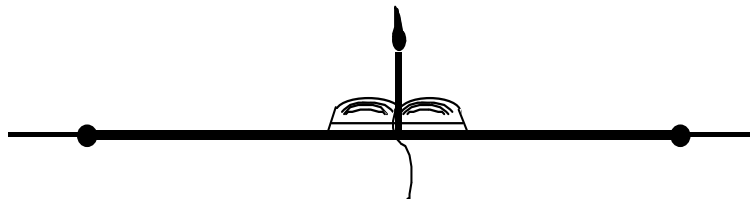
their dominion.

Suppose in preaching the word, a sharp ray of truth darts through the deep and settled darkness of the heart, yet it is soon damped and without saving effect upon sinners in their prosperity. They may be terrified but are not subdued by the armor of Light; for they presently take sanctuary in the world to escape the strokes of it. The carnal passions dare not appear before such objects as awaken the conscience; the senses strongly apply the mind to things that touch them; the fancy is the spring of distraction in the thoughts, and these reign in their full power in prosperous sinners, so that they do not by serious consideration apply things of eternal consequence to themselves. The heart of man with difficulty changes its end; though outward actions may be suspended or overruled for a time, but the love that is natural and predominant in the heart to the present world, cannot be purified and raised to heaven, without the divine efficacy of the word applied by most solemn and frequent thoughts. How plain and convincing are the words of our Savior; **“What will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”** (Mark 8:36). But how few in hearing them, have found their souls that were lost in the corrupting vanities of this world? The most seem not to know they have immortal souls, while they live as if they had none. The reason is, they will not consider duly their invaluable worth, and the woeful folly in neglecting them. When the bird often straggles from the nest, the eggs are chilled and unprolific, for want of its warming incubation. Divine truths are without life and vigor, when they only lie in the memory, without serious and frequent revelations on them. Many are enlightened, but not affected; or affected, but not resolved; or resolved, but their resolutions are not prevailing and permanent, because the word does not sink into their minds, by deep consideration.

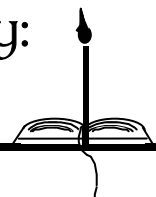
The other external means of recovering a sinner from the snares of death, is private admonition, either authoritative, or merely charitable, by showing him his sins, and the fearful consequences that attend them. The neglect of this duty, is a sign and effect of the greatest hatred, as the command of it implies, **“Thou shall not hate thy brother in thy heart, and suffer sin to lie upon him”** (Lev. 19:17). The performance of it, with prudence and meekness, with dear and earnest love, has a special advantage and efficacy, being directly applied to the person whose soul is concerned. The reproofs of a preacher are leveled in common against the sins of men, but not applied in particular to every sinner. It is the office of conscience, to bring home to every man’s bosom, what is proper to his case; and singularly to observe in himself, what is spoken in the general. But in private admonition, the superior of a friend supplies the duty of conscience. And (in this sense) **“woe be to him that is alone”** (Eccl. 4:10), that lacks a faithful friend to supply the duty of conscience, either to preserve him from falling into sin, or to raise him when down. Now, a prosperous sinner is most unlikely to receive the benefit designed by admonition. If the patient does not assist the cure, by receiving holy counsels with humility, respect, and thankfulness, they prove ineffectual, and

much more if they be rejected with averseness and contempt. When a superior (like a father that holds a child over a pit, to make him fear where there is danger) with solemnity admonishes him of his guilt and approaching judgments, he is apt to slight his person as censorious, and his admonition as impertinent. When a friend by faithful reproof endeavors to save his soul from sin and hell, he entertains his reproof with scorn, or with conviction and indignation. Thus the wise observer of men declares the careless wretched disposition of sinners in their prosperity, by their sorrowful reflections in adversity: **“Thou shalt mourn at the last, when your flesh and your body are consumed and say, ‘How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me?’”** (Proverbs 5:11-13). Instruction to prevent sin, reproof to correct sin, were disregarded with an implicit hatred, or rejected with absolute and express hatred.

To conclude this part of the argument: experience sadly proves that sinners are never reclaimed from their stubborn folly but by sharp afflictions. They will not believe the evil of sin, until by a real and sensible conviction they take a measure of the evil they have done, by the evil they suffer. Affliction tames the stubborn heart, and makes it humble and relenting. Even Pharaoh, who was a bold atheist in his prosperity, and stood upon high terms with Moses saying, **“Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?”**, yet later was an humble suppliant in his distress: **“And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, ‘I have sinned: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord that there be no more mighty thunderings, and hail’”** (Exodus 9:27-28). This is set forth in a true and lively comparison by the prophet Jeremiah: **“As a wild donkey used to the wilderness, that snuffs up the wind at her pleasure: in her occasion, who can turn her away?”** (Jeremiah 2:24). When fired with lust, she ranges about swiftly, without a rider to guide, and curb to restrain her. **“All they that seek her, will not weary themselves; but in her month they shall find her”** (Jer. 2:24): It is in vain to pursue her then, but when she is bagged and heave, they will tame her. Thus when sinners are prosperous, the call of God, and conscience, and of teachers, do not stop them in their voluptuous course, but affliction confines and reduces them to obedience.



New Testament Study: Matthew 22:23-33



The Resurrection

²³That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him with a question. ²⁴“Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. ²⁵Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷Finally, the woman died. ²⁸Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?”

²⁹Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹But about the resurrection of the dead— have you not read what God said to you, ³²‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

³³When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

In the previous section, the Pharisees and Herodians accosted Jesus with the purpose of entrapping Him by asking Him a question the answer to which was sure to offend someone. Here in this section, the Sadducees confront Him with a question designed to undermine His teachings.

“That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him with a question. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she

be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?" (vss. 23–28). First note that this confrontation occurred **“that same day”**: there was no rest for Jesus, even at a time when His heart must surely have been heavy due to His impending suffering.

This time, it's the Sadducees who confront Him. “Men came from different camps to wage war on Christ” [Calvin, III-29]. The Sadducees were the materialists of that time. They accepted the moral teachings of the Scriptures, but rejected the supernatural elements. They did not believe in the miracles of God, nor did they believe in such things as the resurrection of the dead, or angels, or the afterlife. Such a belief system necessarily leads to problems with respect to one's view concerning the nature of God. If God is righteous and just, and there is only life on earth, then either all God's justice must be carried out on earth, or God is powerless over the events of men's lives. Yet, on earth, we often see the wicked prosper, and the good suffer. “The Sadducees restricted the reward of the godly and the due punishment of the wicked to this present life. Even if it had been true that each man is treated equally according to his deserts, it was too outrageous to confine the promises of God to such narrow limits. Experience clearly shows their crass stupidity. Plainly the reward laid up for the good is kept back till a future life, and the penalties of the wicked are not paid off in this life” [Calvin, III-29]. Again, if one holds that there is no life after death, then one must conclude that God is either powerless on earth, or that God does not care to exercise His righteousness or to be just. So we see, belief in the resurrection of the dead, and life after death, is a cornerstone of Judeo-Christian faith. Such a belief is necessarily tied to understanding the true character of God: His righteousness, His holiness, His justice.

The Sadducees approached Jesus calling Him, **“Teacher”**. However, they had no desire to be taught. Rather, they wished to teach Jesus of their own views. They begin by citing the Biblical teachings concerning the levirate marriage. The levirate marriage was a pre-Mosaic custom that was codified in the Mosaic law. “The law of Moses, in this as in many other matters, recognized existing custom and imposed certain regulations upon them” [Spurgeon, 322]. The custom held that if brothers lived together, and a married brother died, the younger brother was to marry the widow, and carry on the elder brother's name (see Deut. 25:5-10). Now, this custom may seem a little odd to people in modern, non-agrarian cultures, but in the family structure of that time, it made perfect sense. The custom was a protection for the widow. She had left her family to join another family, and live among the other family. When her husband died, her connection to the family she joined was severely weakened. By marrying a younger brother, her connection to the family would be re-solidified. Contained in the law was a provision that allowed the younger brother to bow out of marrying the widow (see Deut. 25:7), but it was considered a

lapse of familial duty for him to do so.

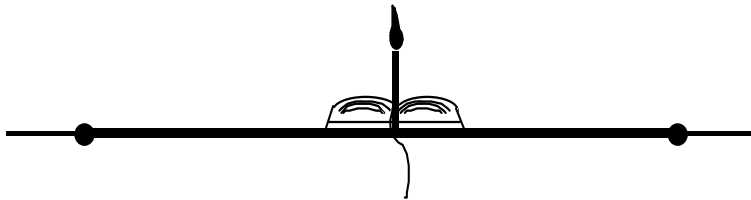
The Sadducees brought up the levirate marriage custom so as to set up (they thought) a contradiction in the Bible. They spoke of a family of seven brothers, who followed the levirate custom down to the seventh brother (though I'm sure the seventh brother had some misgivings, after seeing six of his older brothers die... Could it be her cooking?...). Since Moses codified the levirate custom, the seven marriages of the woman were all right and good. So the Sadducees asked, **"Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"** To the Sadducees, this was an argument against the resurrection. They felt that life after the resurrection would be chaos, because situations in this life would have made it so. "There never probably will be wanting unreasonable men, who will intrude into things unseen, and make imaginary difficulties their excuse for unbelief... Such a mind will often refuse to look at the overwhelming mass of plain evidence by which Christianity is supported, and will fasten down on some one single difficulty, which it fancies is unanswerable" [Ryle, 289].

Quite possibly, the Sadducees and Pharisees would argue over and over concerning the issue of the resurrection. Most likely, "this was one of the stock stories the Sadducees were in the habit of telling in order to cast ridicule upon the resurrection" [Spurgeon, 323]. Jesus, quite completely and succinctly, put the whole issue to rest: **"Jesus replied, 'You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living'"** (vss. 29–32). According to Jesus, the error of the Sadducees, by disbelieving the resurrection, was rooted in two things: they did not know **"the Scriptures"**, and they did not know **"the power of God"**. If they knew and believed **"the Scriptures"**, they would know that there is a resurrection, and life after death. References to these things are rife, of course, in the New Testament, and in the Old Testament (which is what the Sadducees had), there are numerous references to these things, implicitly and explicitly. For instance, Isaiah prophesied to God's people: **"But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead"** (Isa. 26:19); and Daniel: **"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt"** (Dan. 12:2); and Job: **"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"** (Job 19:25–27); and the

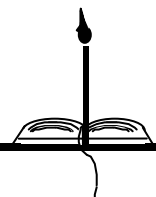
Psalmist: **“But God will redeem my life from the grave; He will surely take me to Himself”** (Ps. 49:15).

The Sadducees erred in another way concerning not **“knowing the Scriptures”**. They read into the Scriptures something that was not there. They thought that life after the resurrection would continue, in a way, as it is on earth. Jesus corrects this notion: **“At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like angels in heaven”** (vs. 30). “Note, it is not strange that carnal minds have very false notions of spiritual and eternal things” [Henry]. When dealing with spiritual and eternal things, we must realize that there are some things that we humans just do not know. There are mysteries which are kept hidden from us. This is one of them. Paul tells us: **“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man *is not permitted to tell*”** (II Cor. 12:2-4). The way of life in heaven is kept a mystery to men, purposely by God. We do know, as related here by Jesus, that life will not continue as it is in this fallen world. When we recognize this, we see that the foundation of the Sadducee’s argument is destroyed. “Their supposed argument was based on their own erroneous notions about the unseen world; and when the light of God’s Word was poured upon their seven men of straw, they vanished into thin air” [Spurgeon, 323].

The Sadducees also erred because they did not know **“the power of God”**. “The ignorance, disbelief, or weak belief, of God’s power, is at the bottom of many errors, particularly theirs who deny the resurrection” [Henry]. The Sadducees disbelief in the resurrection, resulted from their disbelief in the power of God. However, the one who created us, the one who conceived and constructed this vast universe, does have the creative power to raise us from the dead, into the realm of heaven, into those many mansions that have been prepared for us. God did not create us just to have us be destroyed. As Jesus points out, God is the God of the living: **“But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living”** (vs. 31-32).



A Topical Study: On Prayer



Pray for Everything, pt. 5 by Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)

[Here we continue a series on Prayer. This article concludes a study by the great intellect of Stephen Charnock. In the study, he digs deep into Phil. 4:6. In the previous study, he began to describe two motives for carrying out Paul's command to "pray in everything". The first, which was covered in the previous issue, is that to do so is "honorable to God". The second, which he covers here, is that to do so is "advantageous to us".]—Ed.

But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. (Phil. 4:6, AV).

2. It is most advantageous to us, for these reasons:

A. It is a universal expedient that will avail us in everything; the Lord would not direct us to use it in everything, but that there is nothing in which it will not stand us in stead. The advantage of other things is particular; one is good for this, another for that purpose, but prayer is good for all. The efficacy and advantage of it reaches as far as the Lord lets forth His omnipotency. Prayer can prevail for anything that the Lord will employ His power about. This can prevail for the supply of all wants, redress of all grievances, security from all fears, deliverance from all troubles, the satisfying of all our desires. It can prevail with that great God, who can do whatever He will in heaven and earth; who has all creatures, all things at His beck. **"By his strength he had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed"** (Hos 12:3-4). That which can prevail with Him who can do all, can do all at the second hand. This can prevail, not for small things only, but the greatest; not only for earth, but heaven: **"If thou seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thine heart, and all thy soul"** (Deut. 4:29). For Christ, see Prov. 8:6. For the Spirit, see Luke 11:13. **"How much more**

shall the Father give the Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Rom. 8:32). It can prevail not only for easy things, but the hardest, that which is most difficult; and bring relief in cases that seem most desperate, can do more than the whole power of nature. Prayer has wrought miracles, and if it do not so still, that is not because it is less powerful, but because the Lord thinks not fit they should be done: **"Then spoke Joshua to the Lord, in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the Children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon.' And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed"** etc. (Joshua 10:12-13). Peter was in prison, the king resolved to have his life; he is secured by armed men, by iron gates, by chains and bolts. His case seems desperate, his escape hopeless, to sense or reason impossible. But prayer is made for him, and this brings him out, in despite of all, and conveys him out of danger, through a train of miracles (see Acts 12:4-5). It is the readiest expedient always at hand, the easiest and shortest way, and the surest, never fails, is never in vain.

B. It is a ready way, always at hand; you need never be required to seek for this, as you may be for other means of supply and relief. All others may be out of your power, above your reach; but you need not be at a loss for this, which will stand you instead of all else. In a destitute condition, you may pray; when you are without riches, without liberty, without strength, without health, without friends; when you can neither help yourselves, nor others can help you; yet then you may pray, and so engage the Lord to help you. When you are in the depths, sunk below the reach of other relief, then you may pray. **"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord"** (Ps. 130:1). When you are environed with calamities, so strictly besieged by them, as no supply, no relief can get in to you; then you may relieve yourselves by prayer, as David did in such a case, **"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul"** (Ps. 116:3-4). Or if you were in as forlorn a condition, as Jonah in the whale's belly, where neither he nor any creature else could afford any help; yet then you might pray, as he did (see Jonah 2:1,2,7,10). He that can pray, needs never be at a loss, however the world goes.

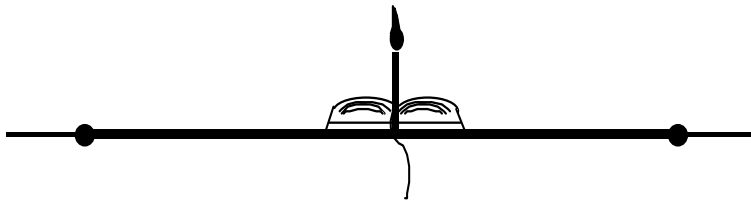
He has the key in his hand, which can open all the treasures of heaven, and let him in to all the riches of the goodness of an all-sufficient God. The violence of men may take estates from you, but they cannot take away the Spirit of grace and supplication; they may shut out friends from you, but they cannot shut you out from access to God by prayer. They may bereave you of liberty, but not of liberty to pray. They may

cast you into prison, but there you may be as much enlarged as anywhere. They may take from you public opportunities, but you may pray in private, in secret. They may watch your mouths, but your hearts may pray. You may be too weak to work, to follow your callings, but scarce too weak to pray. Not able to go abroad for help, but then you may go to God with your requests. You may be too weak to speak, to move your lips, but then your hearts may move, and therein lies the heart and soul of prayer (see II Kings 20:1-2; Isa 38). Prayer is an expedient ready at all times, on all occasions, to bring you in what supply and relief your need.

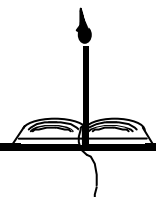
C. It is a short and easy way; no more but ask and have, seek and find (see Matt. 7:7). There may be difficulty and trouble in other ways of relief, but what show of either in this? Could your hearts desire an easier way to compass what you desire, than by making your requests known? Jehoshaphat's enemies were like to prove too hard for him, he could not levy an army sufficient to deal with them; but he could lift up his eyes to God and pray, and that did his work; a few words prevailed against a huge army: **"O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee"** (II Chron. 20:12). When you know not what to do, when you can do nothing, do but pray, which you may easily do, and the rest shall be done to your hand. So it was to Jehoshaphat (see II Chron. 20:17, 23). The poor woman in the Gospel, that had taken a costly and tedious way for relief (see Mark 5:25,26): She applies but herself to Christ, and without further trouble or expense, her grievance is removed (see Mark 5:29; see also Matt: 17:15-21). That which nothing else can effect, may be thus done with ease. When Naaman liked not the prophets' way for his relief, what did his servants say to him? **"If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash and be clean?"** (II Kings 5:13). If the Lord had bid us do something difficult and troublesome to get our wants supplied, our fears scattered, our grievances redressed, would we not have done it? How much more when He bids us but make our requests known. You have not many at command, you can make no friends, you can get no interest in great persons, you can raise no armies; these are too hard for you. O, but can you pray? Is that too hard for you? Why, this that you may so easily do, will do more for you than all the others can do. This can do all for you, that you need desire; and may not this be done with ease? The Lord does not require you should consume your bodies, or waste your strength in praying; rather put up your petitions, let but your hearts go along with it; you need not trouble yourselves to write it, no nor to express it in words, when your weakness will not afford expressions. The

Lord hears the language of the heart, and knows our meaning when we cannot utter it. **“He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit”** (Rom. 8:27). O what an easy way has the Lord opened unto us, for a universal supply and relief to us in all cases! How inexcusable shall we be, if we walk not in it!

D. It is a sure way, an expedient that never fails; of such efficacy, that it was never used in vain: **“I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain”** (Isa. 45:9). **“I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain”** (Ps. 22:4,5). **“Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee”** (Ps. 9:10). He has never been wanting to them that seek Him; He will never disappoint them, never suffer them to seek Him in vain. Your labor and paths may be in vain; your designs and projects, your care and thoughtfulness, your endeavors for yourselves and others for you may be in vain. But your prayers, if prayers indeed, will never be in vain. O where will you meet with an expedient that will never fail? Such an admirable engine is prayer, never used in vain. The disciples fished all night, and caught nothing (see John 21:3). But they never prayed at night, or an hour, and caught nothing. This net is never spread in vain, we may be confident of it (see I John 5:14-15). We have all the assurance of it that can be desired, the very best security that heaven and earth can afford: the word of the true and faithful God; His truth and faithfulness engaged for it, who is truth and faithfulness itself; and that in many great and precious promises. Martha says to Jesus: **“Whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, He will give it thee”** (John 11:22). He has vouchsafed to give us the like confidence, as to whatever we shall ask: **“If ye abide in me, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you”** (John 15:7; see also John 16:23; Matt. 7:7). Prayer will either be answered or rewarded; it will either procure the thing we desire, or something as good, or something better. If it be not returned on those you pray for, it will be returned with a blessing upon yourselves (see Ps. 35:13).



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



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

Job 1:1 - A Good Man in a Bad Place, by Joseph Caryl

¹There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil.

In the land of Uz. I will not trouble you with any geographical discourse: In a word we may consider three things about Uz.

1. Why it was called so.
2. Where it was seated.
3. What manner of people they were that dwelt in Uz.
 1. For the name, let it be taken from Uz, the name of a man. And there were three called by that name in Scripture, *Gen. 10:23, 22:21, 36:28*. From either of these Job's country might derive its name, but from which of these would be (I think) a nice debate; yet it is rather ascribed to Uz, or Huz, the eldest son of Nahor, *Gen. 22:21*.
 2. For the place, where it was seated, it is clear that it was upon the borders of the Sabeans, and of the Chaldeans, and of the Arabians, those Eastern people. Some affirm that the lot of the half tribe of Manassas on the other side Jordan, which was set forth for them when the people of Israel came into Canaan, was the very place where Job lived, and that was called Uz. It is clear that it was near those parts above mentioned. First, from *Lament. 4:21*, There the Prophet Jeremiah speaking of Uz, faith, **"Rejoice, and be glad O daughter of Edom, that dwells in the Land of Uz."** And *Jer. 25:20*, he speaks again of the land of Uz, **"All the mingled people, and all the Kings of the Land of Uz, they shall drink of the Cup"**: he mentions the cup also in that place, *Lam 4*. **"Rejoice and be glad O daughter of Edom that dwells in the land of Uz, the cup also shall pass through unto thee."** Secondly, Uz bordered upon those countries, for these people made out their parties, invaded, flew and took away Job's estate, cattle, and servants; therefore the place in all probability lay near these countries.
 3. For the condition and manners of the people: it is generally received that they were a people profane in their lives, and superstitious at least in their worship: *Edameans and Edomites*, the descendants of Esau, here and all the Scripture over. Among these Job lived, among these Job governed, there he exercised those precious graces, and practices those excellent du-

ties both of homeless towards God, and of justice towards men. It was in the midst of a sinful and perverse nation, in the land of Uz.

Then observe, first, *God has his servants in all places, including the worst places.*

There was never any air so bad but that a servant of God might breathe in it. Here God had a choice piece, even in the land of Uz, a place of profanity; there was *Bethel* in *Rethaven*, so “house of God” in a land of wickedness. Lot dwelled in Sodom, Joseph in Egypt, David in Mesech, and in Kedar. There were saints in Caesar’s (wicked Nero’s) household. Babylon held many of God’s people, yet let them not make such places their refuge, much less their election. But remember the call, “**Come out of here my people**” (Rev. 18:4).

Secondly, we may observe from hence (this being spoken of Job to set him forth in the excellency of his spiritual condition, that he lived in the land of Uz), that,

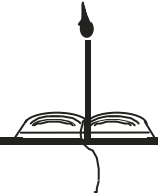
It is a great honor and a high commendation to be good, and do good among those that are evil.

You shall be recorded for it. This was one reason why the place is named, that the honor of Job might be lifted up, that he was good, not by the example and encouragement, but against the example of others. He was a leading man himself, though he lived among those that were scoffers and wicked, yet Job was holy. As they say concerning the affection of love, it is most unnatural for a man to hate those that love him; it is civil for men to love those that love them, but this is truly Christian for a man to love those that hate him and do him wrong. So in regard of living and conversing, as of loving and affecting, we may say, it is a most wicked thing to be naught among those that are good. It aggravates a man’s sinfulness, to be unholy while he converses with those that are holy. It is a good thing to be good with the good, to take example by them. But it is a most excellent thing, a glorious thing to be good among those that are stark naught, to worship God aright among idolaters, to fear God among those that have no fear of God before their eyes, to be perfect among hypocrites, to be upright among those that are unjust, to eschew evil among those that are altogether wrapped about with evil. This was the honor and commendation of Job. For a man to be as Lot in Sodom, never touched with Sodom’s wickedness, to keep himself pure and sincere and without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, to shine as a light in the midst of darkness: this brings honor both to God and man.

Thirdly, from the place where Job lived, we may observe, that,

Grace will preserve itself in the midst of the greatest opposition. It is such a fire as no water can wholly quench or put out. True grace will keep itself sound and clean among those who are leprous and unclean. It is such a thing as overcomes and masters all the evil that is about it: God has put such a mighty power into grace, that if it once possess the heart in truth, though there be but a little of it, though there be but as much as a grain of mustard-seed, not all the wickedness in the world, no not all the devils in hell can dispossess it. As all the water in the sea cannot make the fish salt, but still the fish retains its freshness, so all the wickedness and filthiness that is in the world, cannot destroy, cannot defile true grace, which will bear up its head and hold up itself forever.

A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist



A Meditation Upon a Lamp and a Star by William Spurstowe (ca. 1666)

Such is the disparity between a Lamp and a Star, as that happily it may not a little be wondered at, as to why I should make a joint meditation of them which are so greatly distant in respect of place, and far more in respect of quality, the one being an earthly, and the other a heavenly body. What is a Lamp to a Star in regard of influence, duration, or beauty? Hath it any quickening rays flowing from it? Or is its light immortal, so as not to become despised by expiring? Can it dazzle the beholder with its serene luster, and leave such impressions of itself upon the eye, as may render it for a time blind to any other objects? Alas! These are too high and noble effects for such a feeble and uncertain light to produce, and proper only to those glorious bodies that shine in the firmament. But yet this great inequality between the one and the other serves to make them both more meet emblems of the differing estate of believers in this and the other life, who in Scripture, while they are on this side heaven, are compared to wife virgins with Lamps burning, and when they come to heaven, to Stars shining, which endure forever and ever. Grace in the best of saints is not perfect, but must, like a lamp, be fed with new supplies that it go not out, and be often trimmed that it be not dim. Ordinances are as necessary to Christians in this life as manna to the Israelites in the wilderness though in Canaan it ceased. And therefore, God hath appointed His Word and Sacraments to drop continually upon the hearts of His children, as the two olive trees upon the golden candlestick. What mean then those fond conceits of perfectionists, who dream of living above all subsidiary helps, and judge ordinances as useless to them, as oil for a Star, or a snuffing of the Sun to make it shine more bright? It is true, when we come to heaven such things will be of no more use to our souls, than meat or drink will be to our bodies; but yet while we are on the earth, the body cannot live without the one, nor the soul without the other. Do thou therefore, holy God, preserve in me a due sense of my impotency and wants, whose light is fading, as well as borrowed, that so I may daily suck supplies from Thee, and acknowledge that I live not only by grace received, but by grace renewed, and while I am in this life, have light only as a Lamp in the Temple, which must be fed and trimmed, and not as a Star in heaven.

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The First Thanksgiving

"In one of the first Summers after their [the Pilgrims in America] sitting down at Plymouth, a terrible drought threatened the ruin of all their summer's husbandry. From about the middle of May to the middle of July, an extreme hot sun beat upon their fields, without any rain, so that all their corn began to wither and languish, and some of it was irrecoverably parched up. In this distress they set apart a day for fasting and prayer, to deprecate the calamity that might bring them to fasting through famine; in the morning of which day there was no sign of any rain; but before the evening the sky was overcast with clouds, which went not away without such easy, gentle, and yet plentiful showers, as revived a great part of their decayed corn, for a comfortable harvest. The Indians themselves took notice of this answer given from heaven to the supplications of this devout people; and one of them said, 'Now I see that the Englishman's God is a good God; for He hath heard you, and sent you rain, and that without such tempest and thunder as we use to have with our rain; which after our Powawing for it, breaks down the corn; whereas your corn stands whole and good still; surely, your God is a good God.' The harvest which God thus gave to this pious people, caused them to set apart another day for solemn Thanksgiving to the glorious Hearer of Prayers."

-- Cotton Mather

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