

## FEBRUARY

**Most merciful God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and has promised forgiveness to all those who confess and forsake their sins, we come before you in a humble sense of our own unworthiness, acknowledging our manifold transgressions of your righteous laws. Look upon us in mercy and forgive all our transgressions. Make us deeply sensible of the great evil of them, and work in us a hearty contrition, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, our only Savior and Redeemer. Amen. (*Prayers for the Use of Families, Chiefly Selected from Various Authors*)**

Day 1

### THE PRUDENT MAN

Matthew Henry

***"A fool's wrath is known at once,  
but a prudent man covers shame."***

**Proverbs 12:16**

Passion is folly. *A fool is known by his anger* (so some read it). Not but that a wise man may be angry when there is just cause for it, but then he has his anger under check and direction, is *lord of his anger*, whereas a fool's anger lords it over him. He that, when he is provoked, breaks out into indecent expressions in words or behavior, whose passion alters his countenance, makes him outrageous, and leads him to forget himself, *Nabal* certainly is his name and folly is with him. A fool's indignation is known in that day. He proclaims it openly whatever company he is in. He cannot defer showing his resentments. Those that are soon angry, that are quickly put into a flame by the least spark, have not that rule which they ought to have over their own spirits.

Meekness is wisdom. *A prudent man covers shame*. He covers the passion that is in his own breast. When his spirit is stirred and his heart hot within him, he keeps his mouth as with a bridle and suppresses his resentments by smothering and stifling them. Anger is shame and though a wise man be not perfectly free from it, yet he is ashamed of it, rebukes it, and suffers not the evil spirit to speak. He covers the provocation that is given him, the indignity that is done him. He winks at it, covers it as much as may be from himself, that he may not carry his resentments of it too far.

It is a kindness to ourselves and contributes to the repose of our own minds to extenuate and excuse the injuries and affronts that we receive, instead of aggravating them and making the worst of them, as we are apt to do.

*Matthew Henry's Commentaries*

## Day 2

### PRAYER CUMULATIVE G. Granger Fleming

***"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:20).***

The principle of providing for the future is right. What is to be provided is the great question. Now *prayer* is something which can be accumulated. This is contrary to our usual idea, which is that as the need arises it can be met by prayer, and thus sufficient grace can be obtained. This surely is a very hand-to-mouth existence. There is in this way very little chance of becoming "spiritual millionaires."

The power of capital is realized in the material world. By it great things are accomplished. True, labor is necessary; but labor alone is not sufficient. Labor--the power of the present, and capital--the stored energy of the past, are both required for material progress.

It is so in the spiritual world. The Bible is so much capital which our Heavenly Father has stored up for us. The heritage of our Christian hymns makes us rich towards God. We are indeed indebted to those writers who have left us such rich treasure of song and literature. Now there are others who are not so well recognized but are yet as effective. There have been men and women, yes and little children too, who have lived in the presence of God and have uttered their petitions in His ears. We are the inheritors of these prayers.

There is a story of a Scottish matron who spent many an hour in prayer. The main burden of her petition was that not one of her descendants to the end of time should perish. She had such a fear of this that she prayed specially that all descending from her should be saved. It was prayer with a point. We cannot realize what a privilege it must be to belong to such a race. The blue blood of kings is nothing to this. For prayer in this case modifies the tendency inherent in human nature to get away from God. Prayer, before even the engine is constructed, has taken and laid the lines for it, and those lines have the heavenly city as their terminus. We do not discuss whether the train will of necessity arrive at the terminus with its full complement of carriages. What prayer does is to make the way plain and to make it harder to depart from the living God.

Now the accumulation of capital in the material world is often largely made for the benefit of one's children. Parents realize that their own lives are but a span, but they desire that their children should get every chance in life. The busy man determines that his boys will not need to be handicapped as he was. He toils hard that one boy can go to the university and that another can learn engineering with the best firm; that one girl can have her taste for the violin indulged and that another may give herself to painting. The father and the mother gradually lose ambition in regard to themselves and center it in their children. Efforts are redoubled, economy is practiced, and the young people have every chance of starting life with a fair opportunity of success.

But what of the inner and real life? Shall the outer be provided for and not that which is more essential? By prayer he can provide for his family. One boy is going to the university. Why cannot the father precede him there in prayer. What kind of life will he lead? What sort of temptations will the young man need to contend with? What sort of influence does the father's heart wish the son to exercise? And then there are the daughters. What pits may be lying before the innocent girls? What an expanse of joyful love or what depth of shameful misery who can tell? Many have been as beautiful and sweet and innocent as they, and have been dragged down by some enemy. Shall not the parents then place them under the protection of the Almighty?

Here is boundless opportunity for those who desire to pray. Prayer is not limited to the present. It is linked up to the past, it deals with the present, and it is potential energy for the future. When we lie cold in the ground forgotten by nearly all on earth, or perchance looked upon while still living as "old fossils," our prayers can go flowing on. Some of us know in our own case that our lives have been encircled by the prayers of those who have gone before us.

It is not only as regards our descendants, or the Church, or the men of the future that prayer applies. It can apply to ourselves. Why should we always be on the defensive? Why should we need to pray chiefly when we experience attack from the enemy? The trenches of prayer are grand places for making a stand and preventing the enemy from sweeping the field. Let us be prepared for what is coming on us. But let us be more--let us be ready in the name of the Lord to be the assaulting party. Let this assault be made in the inner prayer chamber first. Then let us send forward our reconnaissance parties. Let us measure up our enemies' position, let us talk it over with our Commander-in-Chief, and then let us meet the foes' forward movements almost before they have begun. Thus, what is yet to come as well as the present is brought within the field of operations, and we learn that our Commander is equal to the future also.

*The Dynamic of All-Prayer (Condensed)*

### Day 3

## GOD'S UNIVERSAL PRESENCE

James Richards

***"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 39:7-10)***

The omnipresence of God lays a foundation to remark both the folly and the sin [sinfulness] of sin. What can set its folly in a stronger point of light? God has not only given us laws worthy to be obeyed, but he is always present to see whether we obey them. His all-seeing eye is never turned from us a single moment. Whether we wake or sleep, whether we weep or rejoice, whether we adore or blaspheme, he is always round about us, and his penetrating glance passes through our souls. His almighty power and everlasting mercy continually sustain us, while his justice is nigh and ready to cut us off. Who would think under such circumstances that we should dare to offend him?

But the poor blinded sinner beholds him not. He foolishly imagines that God is afar off--too far to notice his transgressions or to inflict upon him the merited punishment. Hence the language of his heart is, "*Can God judge through the dark cloud? Surely God does not see, neither will the Almighty regard it.*" The presence of a servant or a child is often sufficient to deter him from sin; but the presence of the great God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, his Maker and Judge, is inadequate to produce this effect. What greater proof can we have of human blindness and folly?

But the divine immensity shows not only the folly but the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It does this by teaching the greatness and glory of that Being against whom sin is committed, and the circumstances of atrocity which attend it. By how much greater God is, by so much the more are we bound to respect his authority; and by so much greater is our guilt if we violate that authority.

But the immensity of God's presence suggests a circumstance which exceedingly aggravates the guilt of sin. It teaches us to regard it as an audacious affront to his face. Sin is not committed behind his back or in some remote corner of the universe never visited by his presence. Even if it were, nothing could excuse its guilt and presumption. But it is always done while he surrounds us and penetrates us. How deeply this enhances the demerit of sin everyone can see at a glance. For shall not the presence of his glorious Majesty restrain us? Shall we dare to offend him in the very sight of his throne, with his almighty hand stretched out before our eyes, and his authoritative voice falling upon our ears?

As the omnipresence of God argues the great guilt of sin, so it likewise demonstrates the greatness of his forbearance towards those that offend him. How amazing that his wrath should not wax hot against those who continually trample upon his authority without fear or remorse; who do it, and persevere in doing it, in spite of his most solemn and earnest remonstrances.

But the Lord is God and not man, else the children of iniquity would be speedily consumed. He is long-suffering to us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth. He knows our iniquities and all their aggravations, for they are committed under the immediate notice of his eye. But he knows also how to restrain his anger and to display the exceeding riches of his forbearance and long-suffering. May we never mistake this for forgetfulness, nor think that his long-suffering is an act of forgiveness.

Finally, this subject presents a comfortable view of divine providence, and invites us to place our trust under the shadow of God's wings. Is he everywhere? He is everywhere--the almighty, infinitely wise and gracious God. His power and grace are as near to us as his essence, and he cannot fail to be a present helper to all those who know and put their trust in him.

Cultivate, my Christian friends, a sense of God's presence. It will enlarge your conceptions of his divine majesty. It will fortify your minds against temptation. It will encourage and strengthen you in duty, and in times of darkness and trouble cause your consolations to abound.

*Sermons (condensed)*

## Day 4

### PARABLE OF THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

Alfred Edersheim

*"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius." (Matthew 20:1-10)*

The principle which Christ lays down in this parable is that while nothing done for him shall lose its reward, yet for one reason or another, no forecast can be made nor inferences of self-righteousness be drawn. It does not by any means follow that the most work done, at least to our seeing and judging, shall entail a greater reward. On the contrary, "many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." And in such cases no wrong has been done; there exists no claim even in view of the promises of due acknowledgment of work. Spiritual pride and self-assertion can only be the outcome either of misunderstanding God's relation to us or else of a wrong state of mind towards others. It betokens mental or moral unfitness. The parable is an illustration and teaches nothing beyond this. Work for Christ is not a ponderable quantity--*so much for so much*--nor we the judges of when and why a worker has come.

Yet the parable conveys much that is new and comforting. (1) The abundance of work to be done. (2) The anxiety of the householder to secure all available laborers. (3) That it was not from unwillingness or refusal that the laborers had come at later hours, but because they had not been there and available earlier. (4) That when they had come, they were ready to go into the vineyard without promise of definite reward, simply trusting to the truth and goodness of him whom they went to serve.

When it is time to pay the laborers, the order of payment is inverse of that of labor, and this is a necessary part of the parable. If the first laborers had been paid first, they would either have gone away without knowing what was done to the last, or if they had remained, their objection could not have been urged except on the ground of manifest malevolence towards their neighbors; in other words, not that they themselves didn't receive enough, but that the others had received too much.

But it was not the scope of the parable to charge with conscious malevolence those who

sought a higher reward or deemed themselves entitled to it. We note that those of the third hour did not murmur because they did not receive more than those of the eleventh hour. They had not made any bargain with the householder at the beginning, but entirely trusted him. But those of the first hour had their greed excited. Seeing what the others had received, they expected to have more than their due. They now appealed to justice, but from first to last they had justice. Their "so much for so much" principle of claim--law, work, and pay--had been satisfied. Those laborers who, owing to the lateness of their appearance, felt they had no claim, trusted to the Master, and as they believed so it was unto them. Such a Master could not have given less to those who had come when called, trusting to his goodness and not in their deserts. Their reward was now reckoned not of work or debt, but of grace.

If all is to be placed on the new ground of grace, then the laborers who murmured were guilty either of ignorance in failing to perceive the sovereignty of grace--that it is within his power to do with his own as he wills--or else of malevolence when they looked on the Master with an evil eye. And so, in the illustrative case of the parable, "the first shall be last, and the last first." And in other instances also, though not in all, "many shall be last that are first, and first that are last."

*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*

## Day 5

### SECRET THINGS BELONG TO GOD Timothy Dwight

***"The secret things belong to the LORD [Yahweh] our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).***

The means or measures which God is pleased to adopt for the accomplishment of his purposes are always the wisest and best means, and such, as if heartily pursued by us, will prove to be in the most perfect manner efficacious. The means which he has adopted in the present case are *to withhold some things and to reveal others*. The things withheld are all withheld by design and in accordance with the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness. The things revealed were, with the same design and with the same infinite wisdom and goodness, revealed.

Every truth or doctrine which we know is attended or followed by many others connected with it, with more or less clearness or obscurity. Each of these, so soon as known by us, is in the like manner attended or followed by many others. Thus the doctrines, connected in one manner or another with those which we know, are multiplied to a degree which cannot be measured, faster than those which we have already known.

Our faculties, we know, never expand beyond a certain limit, differing somewhat in different men, and in the same man under different advantages. But still in all men there is a bound which none can pass. But the things to be known are literally without number or degree. And the things whose existence we are able to perceive and whose nature, relations, and dependencies we yet cannot understand, soon multiply and extend so as to bear no perceivable proportion to the extent of our capacity. Hence, all men of enlarged science agree, with a single voice, in declaring that the utmost increase of human knowledge amounts to little more than to know how few things can be known by us.

From these observations it is evident that a Revelation made to mankind must, in order to be useful to them, be proportioned in the number and nature of things which it discloses to the human capacity . . . such things, and such only, as are fitted to employ and enlighten their understandings, influence their affections, and direct their conduct in the happiest manner. It ought also to communicate such things only as will be useful to us, such as will promote our real interests and not such as would awaken or gratify that idle and restless curiosity, which is ever wandering in search of pleasure and ever uninterested in the attainment of real good.

In a Revelation there are many subjects whose nature and extent must of necessity surpass the understanding not only of man but of every finite being. Such, for example, are the *character and pleasures of God*. As these are in their nature and extent infinite, they can evidently be comprehended only by the infinite mind. Yet of these subjects even we can know something; and that something we absolutely need to know. God has accordingly disclosed to us several things concerning them in the Scriptures. As these subjects are in their nature and connection necessarily mysterious, we find our examination of them



attended from time to time with difficulties and perplexities, and are apt to believe that if more had been disclosed our difficulties and perplexities would have been lessened.

This is, however, an entire mistake. Had more things been revealed concerning these subjects, their nature would have seemed more vast, their connections more numerous and perplexing, their consequences more difficult and doubtful, and their mysteriousness more absolute and discouraging. Our minds, therefore, would in this case have been less satisfied and settled than they now are, and the influence of this part of Revelation on our hearts and lives would have been less useful and happy. In our present situation we are prone to imagine that if we could see a little farther and know a little more, we should arrive at certain boundaries where satisfaction and rest would be obtained. But did we reflect with only a moderate degree of attention and candor, we should perceive that our adventures in knowledge are like excursions in space--where the imagined goal at which we intend to stop retires even faster than we advance, and will continue to retire forever.

Thus from the very nature of the case it seems evident that the secret things referred to in the text are wisely withheld from us by our Creator, that in withholding them he has placed us in a better situation for obeying all the words of his law than if he had revealed them, and that this is one great--and not improbably the principal--reason for which they are withheld.

*Sermons* (condensed with minor editing)

Day 6

**MAN'S CHIEF END IS TO GLORIFY GOD  
AND TO ENJOY HIM FOREVER  
Thomas Watson**

***"Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."***  
**(Philippians 4:11-13)**

How may we glorify God? We glorify God by being content in that state in which Providence has placed us. We give God the glory of his wisdom when we rest satisfied with what he carves out to us. Thus Paul glorified God. The Lord cast him into as great a variety of conditions as any man: 'in prisons more frequent, in death oft,' yet he had learned to be content. A good Christian argues thus: It is God that has put me in this condition. He could have raised me higher, if he pleased, but that might have been a snare to me. He has done it in wisdom and love; therefore, I will sit down satisfied with my condition. God counts himself much honored by such a Christian. For one to be content when he is in heaven is no wonder, but to be content under the cross is like a Christian.

We glorify God by walking cheerfully. It brings glory to God when the world sees a Christian who has within him that which can make him cheerful in the worst times. The people of God have ground for cheerfulness. They are justified and adopted, and this creates inward peace. It reflects upon a master when the servant is always drooping and sad, so when God's people hang their heads, it looks as if they did not serve a good master, or repented of their choice, which reflects dishonor on God.

It will be a great comfort in a dying hour to think we have glorified God in our lives. At the hour of death, all your earthly comforts will vanish. What is one the better for an estate that is spent? But to have conscience telling you that you have glorified God on the earth, what sweet comfort and peace will this let into your soul! The servant that has been all day working in the vineyard longs till evening comes when he shall receive his pay.

If we glorify God, he will glorify our souls forever. By raising God's glory, we increase our own.

*A Body of Divinity*

## Day 7

### THE ART OF MEDITATION

Wilbur M. Smith

*"But his delight is in the law of Yahweh,  
and in His law he meditates day and night."*

Psalm 1:2

The great devotional book of the Bible, the Psalms, opens, as we all know, with the following words: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord [Yahweh]: and in His law doth he *meditate* day and night" (Psalm 1:1, 2). At the end of the nineteenth Psalm, David prays: "Let the words of my mouth, and the *meditation* of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord [Yahweh], my Strength and my Redeemer." Again and again the writer of the one hundred nineteenth Psalm declares his determination to *meditate* in the statutes of the Lord (vv. 15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148). The Lord commanded Joshua, as he stood on the threshold of his mighty work of conquest in Canaan: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt *meditate* therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). Here is probably where many Christian people fail in their Bible study. They do not know how really to feed upon the Word, to meditate upon it, to incorporate it in their lives.

The late Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas has said: "'Meditation' comes from a Greek word meaning 'to attend.' It is reading with *attention*. More than this, it is reading with *intention*. It is concerned at each point with personal application, and it must be our thought, our own musing, our own application. Look well at this text, made as clear as the printer's art can emphasize its teaching: 'MY meditation of HIM' (Psalm 104:34). The great, the primary, the essential point is *first-hand* meditation on God's Word as the secret of Christian living. The hour of meditation is not a time for dreamy, vague imaginings, but for revealing actual blessing, whether in the form of guidance, comfort, or counsel." Andrew Murray, who found the richest things in the Word of God, and who was a master in the art of meditation, reminds us that: "It is in meditation that the heart holds and appropriates the Word. Just as in reflection the understanding grasps all the meaning of a truth, so in meditation the heart assimilates it and makes it a part of its own life. We need continual reminding that the heart means the will and the affection. The meditation of the heart implies desires, acceptance, surrender, love. What the heart truly believes, that it receives with love and joy, and allows to master and rule the life. The intellect gathers and prepares the food upon which we are to feed. In meditation the heart takes it in and feeds on it."

We should be careful not to give all of our time just to reading the Word, to see how much we can cover; but, after reading a portion, we should carefully, prayerfully turn it over in our minds, and appropriate it in our hearts. Some time ago a professor at the University of Wisconsin coined the word "retinize," which, he said, meant "to read with the eye," but not to understand with the mind. So much of our Bible reading is simply "retinizing" the

written page without appropriating the living truth.

There is nothing finer on the need for meditation in our study of the Scriptures than the words which that mighty man of faith, George Muller, recorded in his diary, under the date of May 9, 1841, and I make no apologies for quoting it here, in spite of its length:

"It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, the benefit of which I have not lost for more than fourteen years. The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, or how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit. Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer after having dressed myself in the morning. Now, I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord.

"I began therefore to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching as it were into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that, though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer. When thus I have been for a while making confession or intercession or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it, but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably is ever sensibly nourished and strengthened, and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, either very soon after or at a later time, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man."

*Profitable Bible Study*

Day 8

**PLEASING GOD**  
**Matthew Henry**

***"Do not say, 'I will recompense evil';  
wait for Yahweh, and he will save you."  
Proverbs 20:22***

Those that live in this world must expect to have injuries done them, affronts given them, and trouble wrongfully created them, for we dwell among briars. Now here we are told what to do when we have wrong done us.

We must not avenge ourselves, no, nor so much as think of revenge or design it. *"Say not thou,"* no, not in your heart, *"I will recompense evil"* for evil. Do not please yourself with the thought that some time or other you shall have an opportunity of getting even with him. Do not wish revenge or hope for it, much less resolve upon it; no, not when the injury is fresh and the resentment of it most deep. Never say that you will do a thing which you cannot in faith pray to God to assist you in.

We must refer ourselves to God and leave it to him to plead our cause, to maintain our right, and reckon with those that do us wrong--in such a way and manner as he thinks fit and in his own due time. *"Wait on the Lord,"* attend his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, and he does not say that he will punish him that has injured you (instead of desiring that you must forgive him and pray for him), but *"he will save thee,"* and that is enough. He will protect you so that your passing by one injury shall not (as is commonly feared) expose you to another. Nay, he will recompense good to you to balance your trouble and encourage your patience, as David hoped when Shimei cursed him.

*Matthew Henry's Commentaries*

## Day 9

### SINLESS PERFECTION

John Smalley

*"If we say that we have no sin,  
we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."*

1 John 1:8

There are some who say that they have now no sin, though once they were great sinners. Either they think themselves perfectly sanctified, or that perfect holiness is not required of them, or else that their sins are done away in every sense by the atonement of Christ and the pardoning mercy of God. We will consider each of these claims to innocence separately and distinctly.

Some say they have no sin from an imagination of their being perfectly sanctified. God is able, indeed, did it seem good in his sight, to sanctify men wholly in this life. But that he never sees fit to do it we have abundant reason to conclude from his word. There are left upon sacred record not only great sins of some of the holiest men, but also the humble confessions of most eminent saints--such as Job, David, Isaiah, and Paul--that *they* were far from having attained to sinless perfection. It is also demanded, "*Who can say . . . I am pure from my sin?*" [Prov. 20:9]. And it is expressly said, "*There is not a just man upon earth who does good and sins not*" [Ecc. 7:20]. From all this it may be concluded with great certainty, that if any say their sanctification is perfect, it is but a vain boast or a foolish self-deception.

Some may say that they have no sin from an imagination that perfection is not now required of them. They may suppose that the old law demanding a perfect life and a perfect heart is disannulled, and a new one substituted making sincere obedience only the whole duty of a Christian. They ground this notion, I suppose, on such texts as Romans 6:14: "*Ye are not under the law but under grace.*" But if that text and others like it have reference to the *moral* law, they must be understood of it only as a *covenant of works*. Believers are delivered from even the moral law in this view; that is, they are not under its condemning sentence to eternal death however numerous and aggravated their sins may have been, and they have the promise of eternal life though their obedience is still imperfect. This is implied in their being justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption of Jesus Christ.

And this is all the sense in which they are not still under the moral law. Certainly they are not delivered from the law of perfection as the rule to which they are bound in duty to be conformed. To suppose any man delivered from this law of perfection as his rule of duty, is to suppose it right for him to do that which is in some measure wrong. It is to suppose that one can be perfectly free from sin without sinless perfection; and nothing can be a more express contradiction. If on this ground any imagine they have no sin, they are certainly deceived.

There is one ground more on which some say they have no sin; namely, because it is supposed that their sins--past, present, and to come--are all blotted out and done away by

the blood of Christ and by the pardoning mercy of God. And indeed, the expressions of Scripture are very strong in some places respecting the deliverance of believers by these means from all sin. As to the imputed atonement of our Redeemer, it is said, "*There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 8:1). "*Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died*" (vv. 33, 34).

As to the pardoning mercy of God, we read, "*Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD imputes not iniquity*" (Ps. 32:1,2). "*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us*" (Ps. 103:12). "*You will cast all their sins into the depth of the sea*" (Micah 7:19). And, "*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*" (Acts 3:19).

From the literal language of such texts as these, were there nothing to teach us otherwise, we might be ready to suppose that on repentance and faith in the blood of Christ sinners were delivered from all desert as well as from all danger of wrath and punishment. But conscience and reason and the general current of Scripture all jointly testify that this cannot be the case. Nothing is more plainly contrary to reason than that a man should cease to be faulty when his sins are forgiven, or that the blameworthiness of one person can be taken away by the suffering of another. Nothing is more contrary to the feelings of every true penitent than either of these suppositions.

Nor can anything be more contrary to the express declarations of God's word or to his evident dealings with good men. How is this consistent with the humiliation, mourning, and remorse for their sins so often expressed by saints both under the Old Testament and the New? How is this consistent with the many reprehensions [reproofs] given to good men in all parts of the Bible? How is it consistent with God's threats to visit, and with his so often actually visiting, the transgression of his children with the rod and their iniquity with stripes? Those who have no sin deserve no corrections or rebukes, and have no occasion for godly sorrow or self-reproach.

The forgiveness of sins, by whatever strong figurative terms it is sometimes expressed, can really intend no more than the remission of their eternal punishment. The atonement of Christ, though infinite, only delivers believers from the wrath to come. The justification of Christians, however full, does not imply that even by imputation they are so righteous as to have no sin justly imputable to them. Repenting sinners, believing sinners, pardoned and justified sinners, are sinners still. They have as much reason as ever, and more reason than ever, to remember, and be confounded, and never open their mouths any more because of their shame, when God is thus pacified toward them after all that they have done. For any on this ground to imagine that they cease to have any blameworthiness is certainly a very great self-deception.

And it may be observed that the particular design of our text appears to be that of guarding against an idea that believers become free from ill-desert by their interest in the atonement of Christ. For the apostle, having said "*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin,*" immediately adds, "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.*"

If a person thinks that he is sanctified wholly or has already attained to sinless perfection, have we not reason to suspect, and even to conclude, that he knows nothing of religion as he ought to know? When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up and the seraphim covering their faces while they cried "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory,*" he says, "*Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips*" [Isa. 6:3-5].

When the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, that holy man could only say in reply, "*I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*" [Job 42:5, 6]. And he had said long before, while maintaining his integrity, "*Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse*" [Job 9:20].

From such confessions of the best of men, and from many other things in the holy Scriptures, it may well be concluded that those who imagine they have attained to perfection in holiness are only alive without the law, like Paul while a Pharisee. But if persons think they have no sin because they are under a new law which allows of some sin, certainly neither the truth of Scripture nor common sense can be in them.

And must it not be evident, also, that if any really suppose all desert of punishment or blame is taken away from them by the atoning blood of Christ or by the pardoning mercy of God, they are not true Christians? Good men go mourning all their days because of the iniquities of their youth and under a humbling sense of their remaining imperfections.

*Sermons on a Number of Connected Subjects*



Day 10

**"HOW SHALL I GIVE THEE UP?"**

**Charles L. Feinberg**

*"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. . . . I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them. He shall not return to the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to repent. And the sword shall slash in his cities, devour his districts, and consume them, because of their own counsels. My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror. They shall walk after Yahweh. He will roar like a lion. when He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses, says Yahweh." (Hosea 11:1-11)*

Again, such conduct against the living God must be visited with His righteous wrath and condemnation. But God never delights in judgment, which is His strange work, but takes pleasure in mercy and favor. True, Israel is worthy of punishment but God's love must be reckoned with as well. Therefore, He cries out from the innermost recesses of His blessed being, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel?"

This verse has been said to be the greatest passage in the book. It may well vie for that honor. If God says He loved them from the very beginning, from a child, how much greater must be His love for them after so many centuries of gracious dealings with them? He finds it impossible to give them up, though they have revolted against Him. His love is now in the form of compassion, because in their unworthiness they need His love all the more. How our children as they grow older entwine themselves about our hearts! So did Ephraim about the heart of God. He could not bring Himself to the place where He would cast him off wholly, as He did with Admah and Zeboim (Deu 39:33), the wicked cities of the plain which were completely overthrown with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Actually, God is saying they are as wicked and guilty as these cities, deserving of the severest punishment, but His love is kindled for them. Let us not forget that God did chasten them for their waywardness, although He could not give them up altogether.

Samuel Rutherford's grand hymn is right: "O Christ, He is the Fountain, The deep, sweet well of love." His love and His compassions are kindled when He thinks of Israel. He is determined that He will not execute the fierceness of His anger; mercy rejoices over judgment. Ephraim will not suffer the same irrevocable fate of the cities of the plain. For the Lord is God and not man, who executes his unappeased wrath under great provocation.

God will not enter the city as a foe as in the days of Sodom.

The reason God's mercy triumphs so signally is the remnant among God's people. They will seek and walk after the Lord (see 3:4-5). Apostasy in Israel, even in the darkest days of her history, is never complete and universal; there is always a remnant among the people. To these godly ones God roars like a lion, His summons to gather His dispersed ones from their dispersion. It will be a voice of majesty and awe that will call the wandering ones back. They, on their part, will come trembling in eagerness and glad anticipation. The place of their origin will be specifically the west, as well as from Egypt and Assyria.

This was not true in the Assyrian or Babylonian exiles, but has been true ever since the dispersion by the Romans. What is meant, then, is a regathering from all the world as the prophet Isaiah also confirms (Is 11:11). From all these places they will come flying in haste as a dove (no longer the silly dove of 7:11), to be resettled in their own land by the Lord, never to be uprooted again.

*The Minor Prophets*

Day 11

## CONCERNING TRIBULATIONS

John Calvin

***"These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)***

***"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world." (I John 2:15,16)***

Whatever kind of tribulation presses on us, we must ever look to this end: to accustom ourselves to contempt for the present life and to be aroused thereby to meditate upon the future life. For since God knows best how much we are inclined by nature to a brutish love of this world, he uses the fittest means to draw us back and to shake off the sluggishness, lest we cling too tenaciously to that love. There is not one of us, indeed, who does not wish to seem throughout life to aspire and strive after heavenly immortality; for it is a shame for us to be no better than brute beasts, whose condition would be no whit inferior to our own, if there were not left to us hope of eternity after death.

But if you examine the plans, the efforts, the deeds of anyone, there you will find nothing else but earth. Now our blockishness arises from the fact that our minds--stunned by the empty dazzlement of riches, power, and honors--become so deadened that they can see no farther. The heart also, occupied with avarice, ambition, and lust, is so weighed down that it cannot rise up higher. In time, the whole soul, enmeshed in the allurements of the flesh, seeks its happiness on earth.

To counter this evil, the Lord instructs his followers in the vanity of this present life by continued proof of its miseries.

*Calvin's Commentaries*

## Day 12

### DEVOTION IN WORSHIP

Thomas Watson

*"Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy."*

Exodus 20:8

That we may sanctify and hallow the Sabbath by attentive hearing, beware of these two things: distraction and drowsiness.

It is said of Bernard that when he came to the church door, he would say, "Stay here all my earthly thoughts." Distraction hinders devotion. How often in hearing the word the thoughts dance up and down, and when the eye is on the minister the mind is upon other things. It is very sinful to give way to vain thoughts at this time because, when we are hearing the word, we are in God's special presence. To do any treasonable action in the king's presence is great impudence.

To have the heart distracted in hearing is a disrespect to God's omniscience. God is an all-seeing Spirit, and thoughts speak louder in his ears than words do in ours. To make no conscience of wandering thoughts in hearing is an affront to God's omniscience, as if he knew not our heart or did not hear the language of our thoughts.

To give way to wandering thoughts in hearing is hypocrisy. We pretend to hear what God says while our minds are quite upon another thing. *'This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me'* (Isa. 29:13).

Vain thoughts in hearing offend God. If the king were speaking to one of his subjects, and he should not give heed to what the king says but be thinking on another matter or playing with a feather, would not the king be provoked? Vain thoughts show a great defect in our love to God. Did we love him, we should listen to his words as oracles and write them upon the table of our heart.

Take heed of drowsiness in hearing. Drowsiness shows much irreverence. How lively are many when they are about the world, but in the worship of God how drowsy, as if the devil had given them opium to make them sleep! A drowsy feeling here is very sinful. Are you not in prayer asking pardon of sin? Will the prisoner fall asleep when he is begging pardon? Is not the bread of life broken to you in the preaching of the word, and will a man fall asleep over his food? While you slept, perhaps the truth was delivered which might have converted your souls. Sleeping is very offensive in a holy assembly. It not only grieves the Spirit of God but makes the hearts of the righteous sad. It troubles them to see anyone show such contempt of God and his worship, to see them busy in the shop but drowsy in the temple. Therefore, as Christ said, *"Could ye not watch one hour?"* so, can ye not wake one hour?

Each Sabbath may be the last we shall ever keep. We may go from the place of hearing to the place of judging, and shall we not give reverent attention to the word? You must give

an account for every sermon you hear. *"Give an account of thy stewardship,"* Luke 16:2. So God will say, *"Give an account of thy hearing."* How can we give a good account if we have been distracted in hearing and have not taken notice of what has been said to us? The judge to whom we must give an account is God.

Let all this make us shake off distraction and drowsiness in hearing and have our ears chained to the word.

*The Ten Commandments*

Day 13

**AFFLICTION**  
**Charles Bridges**

***"I know, O Yahweh, that your judgments are right,  
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me."***

**Psalm 119:75**

This is the Christian's acknowledgment: he is fully satisfied with God's ordering of affairs. This confidence invigorates not only his own soul but encourages the church. Yahweh's dealings are called *his judgments*--not as having judicial curses, but as the acts of his justice in the chastening of sin and in the administration of their measure and application. It is true that the Psalmist acknowledges Yahweh's general judgment. Yet it is in *regard to himself* that he acknowledges Yahweh's particular faithfulness. And this he knew, not from the dictates of the flesh (which give the exact opposite verdict), but from the testimony of the word and the witness of his own experience. It could not be doubted much less denied, *"I know, O Yahweh, that your rules of proceeding are agreeable to your perfect justice and wisdom. I am equally satisfied that the afflictions you have laid upon me from time to time are only to fulfill your gracious and faithful promise of making me eternally happy in yourself."* How blessed is the fruit of affliction when we can see God in it--that he is of great compassion and of tender mercy, that his thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace and not of evil! It is the patience and faith of the saints that will teach this difficult but most comforting lesson in deciphering the mysteries of God's providence.

Under the severest chastisement the child of God must acknowledge justice. Our gracious reward is always more, and our punishment always less, than our iniquities deserve. *"Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"* Indeed, he is in trouble, but not in hell. If he complains, then let it be due to no one but himself and his own wayward choice. *"I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right,"* and who can doubt the wisdom? Who would charge the surgeon with cruelty in cutting out the proud flesh that was bringing death upon the man? Who would not acknowledge the right judgment of his piercing work? So when the Lord's painful work separates us from our sin, weans us from the world, and brings us nearer to himself, what remains for us but thankfully to acknowledge his righteousness and truth? Unbelief is put to rebuke; and if we have indulged the suspicion that God has forgotten to be gracious, then we must confess, *"This is our infirmity"* (Ps. 77:7-10).

The assurance of the Lord's perfect justice, wisdom, and intimate knowledge of our respective cases leads us to yield to his ordering of affairs in dutiful silence. Thus Aaron, under his most grievous domestic calamity, *"held his peace."* Job, under a similar dispensation, was enabled to say, *"Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be the name of Yahweh."* Eli's language in the same trial was, *"It is Yahweh. Let him do what seems good to him."* David hushed his impatient spirit, saying, *"I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was you who did it."* And when Shimei cursed him, he said, *"Let him alone, and let him curse; for Yahweh has ordered him."* Hezekiah kissed the rod while it was smiting him to the dust--*"The word of Yahweh which you have spoken is good."* This is the consistent language of the Lord's people under chastisement--*"I know, O*

*Yahweh, that your judgments are right."*

The confession of justice may, however, be mere natural conviction. Faith goes further and speaks of *faithfulness*. David not only acknowledges God's right to deal with him as he saw fit and his wisdom in dealing with him as he actually had done, but God's *faithfulness in afflicting*--not faithfulness *though he afflicted*, but *in afflicting him*; not as if it were simply consistent with his love, but that it was the very fruit of his love! It is not enough for us to justify God. We have abundant cause to praise him! It is not enough to cease from murmuring. We have a stirring display of his faithfulness and love!

Yes, the trials appointed for us are nothing less than the faithful performance of his everlasting promises. And to this cause we may always trace the reason of much that is painful to the flesh, even though it may not be apparent to our eyes. If we determine to take note of its gracious effects in our restoration--instruction, healing of our backslidings, and the continual purging of sins--then we can say, "Is not the faithfulness of God gloriously displayed?" The Philistines could not understand Samson's riddle--how meat could come out of the eater and sweetness out of the strong. In the same way the world can little comprehend the fruitfulness of the Christian's trials--how his gracious Lord can sweeten the bitter waters and make the cross not so much the punishment as the remedy of sin. The Christian, then, finds no inclination and feels no interest in having any change made in the Lord's appointments, distasteful as they may be to the flesh. He readily acknowledges that God's merciful designs could not have been accomplished in any other way. Under such trials many sweet tokens of love are granted, which under circumstances of outward prosperity could not have been received with the same gratitude and delight.

You who are living at ease in the indulgence of what this poor world can afford, how little does the Christian envy your portion! In some future day you will surely be taught by experience to envy his! To the Christian the world's riches today are daily becoming poorer and its pleasures more tasteless. And what will they be and how will they appear when eternity is at hand?! Affliction is the special token of our Father's love. It brings us into conformity to the image of Jesus and prepares us for his service and kingdom. It is the only blessing that the Lord gives without requiring us to ask for it. We receive it, therefore, as promised, not as threatened. When the "peaceable fruits of righteousness," which it brings about in God's time and way, spring up in our hearts, then humbly and gratefully we will acknowledge the righteousness of his judgments and the faithfulness of his corrections.

*Psalm 119: An Exposition*

Day 14

**THE FUTURE OF THE SOUL**  
**George H. Hepworth**

*"If in this life only we have hope in Christ,  
we are of all men most miserable."*  
**1 Corinthians 15:19**

If a man lives in the conviction that there is nothing for him in the future, he has very little to complain of when the time comes to be annihilated, because he has had all he expected to get. If, however, a man is promised another life on what he deems good authority, and makes great sacrifices in order to fit himself for it but is told when nearing the end that the promise cannot be kept, he is "of all men most miserable." St. Paul was quite right in declaring that such a disappointment overtops all other kinds.

How brief is the span of human life! It is at best only an isthmus 'twixt two boundless seas, the past, the future--two eternities. Our days and months and years go by so noiselessly that we scarcely note the footfalls of their coming or their going. Childhood passes into youth in the twinkling of an eye. A little laughter, an hour's play with a few toys, and the time arrives when childish things must be put away. Youth, exuberant youth, shortly sobers into manhood. A dream or two, a few castles in the air, a fleeting vision of divine possibilities, then the shoulders broaden to bear heavier burdens and the heart recognizes the graver responsibilities of life. Manhood changes to old age like a flash of lightning in a summer cloud. Some hard work, some short years of earnest toil, some days of bitter disappointment, some nights of weary weeping and then the nerves grow dull, the sight becomes dim, the snows of winter are scattered over the head, the hopes of earlier days have either ripened or withered. The sun sets, we linger in the twilight for a few moments, and then the night comes down in which we can neither walk nor work.

You cannot hold on to your years however strong your grasp may be. They will slip away from you in spite of entreaty or menace. When you have stood on the seashore you have perhaps tried to hold a handful of sand. What a useless task it is! It falls between your fingers in spite of your utmost endeavor; and after a while, when you open your hand, only a few silvery or golden grains are left. So life escapes, and every present day becomes a yesterday. The clock ticks the time away whether you are hungry or well fed, and the pendulum swings relentlessly whether you are rich or poor. "And the same thing," says Solomon, happens to us all."

Now here is a curious fact. The elm by the roadside outlives us. The rusty sword that hangs on your library wall, telling you of the heroic deeds of a former generation, will be received by your children's children after you have been laid in your resting-place. The pebble which you kick off the sidewalk, if it had a tongue, would tell you the story of this earth when it was in its very infancy, more years ago than your imagination can conceive. The elm, the rusty sword, the worthless pebble have a kind of eternal life, but you must die. What a marvelous statement! How incredible it seems!

Is it not stranger than words can express that any thoughtful man should assert that the



soul is fenced in by death and that the road it has traveled ends at the grave? The body may be satisfied with seventy years, but not the mind. The soul's keen appetite is just whetted when it is told that there is nothing more to eat. Bodies are easily sated, but by the time they are ready to drop the soul within them has just begun to learn how to live. Why, then, should both die at the same moment? Why was the soul made so large, if this life is all?

If you were told that Niagara was made to drive the farmer's grist-mill for a single day and nothing more, you could not believe it. If you were told that a Corliss engine was invented to move the machinery which makes a single pin, and after that is of no further use, what would you say? Can it, then, be true that the soul of man will live just long enough to find out that it can do something, and then be told that it shall never have an opportunity to do this something? So odd an anomaly is beyond our credence. There is a pitiless irony in the statement that we no sooner gather our aspirations together and set ourselves sternly to some noble task than our day's work is over, and we must lay aside the tools and the materials with which we know we can build.

Let us give an illustration. Yonder is a vessel about to be launched. The plan has been carefully drawn by the architect, and the contractor has chosen his timber from a dozen forests. Now she stands complete, and the workmen with their sledges loosen the wedges and she slips down the ways and for the first time embraces the mighty deep which is to be her home. How gracefully she floats--a thing of life and beauty. How promising is her future! She is able to bear a thousand tons' burden across a wintry ocean in spite of mountainous waves and northern gale. She will laugh at the tempest, for she is brave and strong.

We board her for a trial-trip. Her white sails waft us by the forts and through the Narrows and around the light-ship. Then she comes back and is anchored in some convenient place. Suppose we tell you that her whole mission is accomplished and there is nothing more for her to do. You ask in wonder, "Why build her, then? Is it not folly to take so much pains for a trial-trip, and then leave her at her anchorage to rot and sink?"

The same may be said of the soul. This brief life is only the trial-trip. We pass by a few buoys in the harbor of eternal life, we stem the ebb or flood tide for a few hours, we just get a glimpse of the ocean that spreads beyond our vision, and then what we call death intervenes. With the great Atlantic of immortality ahead of us, shall we come to anchor in the grave?

It cannot be true. We were made for eternity, and the great ambitions which throb in our souls cannot be stilled by death. The funeral procession leaves us at the mouth of the harbor, and when our friends return to their homes we spread invisible canvas and sail on and on toward the throne of God.

*Herald Sermons*

Day 15

**MAN'S WILL: FREE YET BOUND**

**Walter J. Chantry**

***"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."***

**Matthew 12:34**

For more than fifteen hundred years the Church has engaged in a heated debate over the freedom of man's will. Some theologians, both Arminian and Calvinistic, have been quite lucid in their discussions concerning it. Others, for example Jonathan Edwards, have soared into the lofty clouds of philosophy where many a believer faints in the thin air of difficult logic and complex thought. But none is so refreshingly clear as our holy Lord. His instruction on the subject is laced with vivid illustrations to assist our groping minds.

Matthew 12:33-37 says, *"Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."*

In this passage are three verbal windows through which the light of Christ's lesson passes. Each presents a familiar scene: A tree that has fruit, a man who brings treasures out of a chest, and a stream that overflows from a fountain.

Man has a will and that will has a certain freedom. Our Lord clearly teaches that man has a power of choice. Every man has the ability to choose his own words, to decide what his actions will be. We have a faculty of self-determination in the sense that we select our own thoughts, words, and deeds. Man is free to choose what he prefers, what he desires. God never forces men to act against their wills. By workings of outward providence or of inward grace, the Lord may change men's minds, but he will not coerce a human being into thoughts, words or actions. Neither by creation nor by subsequent acts of God are man's decisions made for him; he is free to choose for himself.

When Christ stood to cry, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," he was soliciting a willing choice of himself as satisfying drink for the soul. God urges all sinners to come just because they *may* come. And it is our duty to inform the sinner that he has a warrant, a right to choose Christ. Beyond this, we must assure him that he has a positive *duty* to embrace the Saviour. The great guilt of sinners under the gospel is that they will not come.

Although man does have a will, it is neither independent of all influences nor supreme over all other parts of his personality. Far from the will reigning over a man, the will is determined by the man's own character. It is not raised to a position of dominance over the entire man.

Man is like a tree. His heart, not his will alone, is the root. There is no possible way by which the will can choose to produce fruit contrary to the character of the root. If the root is bad, the tree is bound by its very nature to produce evil fruit. Man is like a person standing alongside his treasure chest. There is no possibility of bringing pure gold out of a box filled only with rusty steel. The contents of the heart determine what words and deeds may be brought out. Far from being neutral, the will must reach into the heart for its choices. Every thought, word and deed will partake of the nature of the treasure within. Man is like a stream which cannot rise above its source. If the fountain is polluted, the outflow will be evil.

These three illustrations alike contain the same lesson. What a man is determines what he chooses. Choices of the will always reveal the character of the heart, because the heart determines the choices. Men are not sinners because they choose to sin; they choose to sin because they are sinners. If this were not so, we could never know a tree by its fruits, nor could we judge a man's character by his acts.

Our Lord has taught that the tree must be made good. Man must be renewed in his entire character. He must have a new heart to bring forth good fruit. The will cannot make the tree good; it may only exercise liberty to be what the tree already is. The will cannot reload the treasure chest with a new kind of goods; it may only freely bring forth what is there. The will cannot cleanse the fountainhead; it may overflow only with the waters available in the soul.

While we address the wills of men in gospel preaching, they are wills bound in the grave clothes of an evil heart. But as we speak and the Lord owns his word, sinners are quickened to life by divine power. His people are made willing in the day of his power. Our glorious God, by inward, secret, transforming power, can make the tree good, the treasures good, the fountain good. Thus all glory be to God and to the Lamb! Salvation is of the Lord!

*Man's Will--Free Yet Bound*

Day 16

SENTIMENT AND EMOTION  
Samuel P. Tregelles

***"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Philippians 1:29)***

There is sternness in the truth of God which might almost seem like harsh severity, when it is regarded by those whose thoughts on the subject of revelation have been formed in a great measure from sentiment and emotion. An imaginative feeling may exist, and this may be so cherished that even the Scripture is only used for sentimental purposes. The force of definite truth is by no means felt, because the mind has sunk into a kind of spiritual reverie. Indeed, there is a disposition to avoid definite truth. Thus, when the details of revealed promises and purposes are stated from the Word of God, there is a feeling that there is but little, if anything, in them that is really edifying or that can afford nourishment for spiritual life. Consequently, dreamy indefinite thoughts of God's love are cherished, a view is taken of the person and work of Christ and of His coming glory as may stir up spiritual emotions, or what are supposed to be such. But it must never be forgotten that holiness is not the only thing taught us respecting the Holy Ghost: He is the Spirit of Truth as well as the Holy Spirit of God. We are not to accredit any supposed holiness irrespective of truth.

Emotional religion has always a tendency to make *feeling* the standard of what should be received or rejected as truth. A certain kind of feeling--approaching to mysticism--is that which is allowed to rule the judgment as to what God has revealed. Sometimes these indefinite claims to spirituality are accepted by others. The doctrines of such teachers are supposed to be worthy of all acceptance, not because they are found in Holy Scripture, but because they are said to be true by such holy and devoted men. But if we would judge according to God, we must test all claims to holiness and devotion by means of truth.

It is very manifest that the doctrine of a secret coming of Christ and a secret removal of the Church to be with Him is peculiarly suited to those who cherish the religion of sentiment. What more cheering (they say) than the thought that the Lord may take His people to Himself at any moment? What more animating than the belief that this may take place this very day? And when anyone brings them to Scripture and tries to point out the revealed hope of the Lord's coming, it seems as if there were nothing but coldness in the teaching. They ask if such chilling doctrines can be consistent with love to the Lord. But know that whatever makes the feelings sit in judgment on Scripture and leads to the avoidance of the force of that Scripture teaching which is not in accordance with such feelings, must, however apparently sanctified and spiritual, be of nature and not of God. Are we to seek to be guided by other hopes than those which animated the Apostolic Church? They knew that days of darkness would set in before Christ's coming. They were instructed respecting the many Antichrists and the final Antichrist. But so far from their hope of the coming of the Lord and of resurrection being thus set aside, they were able to look onward through the darkness to the brightness of the morning.

It may freely be owned that those who think it right to expect the Lord at any moment,

and who sternly condemn others who maintain that His appointed signals shall take place first, have often in their hearts much real love to Him. But let such remember the prayers of the Apostle: "*That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.*" It is not only of importance that love should be rightly directed as to its object, but there should also be in the soul real spiritual intelligence.

A wife has the promise of her husband's return from a distant country, and she has his written directions for the rule of the house during his absence. Part of these directions includes a statement how his return shall be expected--that a letter will arrive first to say by what ship he will come. There would be no lack of love on her part if she sought to be occupied by-by-day as he directed. She would show that she believed that the promised letter should come and that he would then himself arrive by the appointed vessel. No one could reproach her for lack of love to her husband if she were not on the tiptoe of momentary expectation. But if the wife were to say that the part of her husband's directions related to the servants and not to her, and if she were to be constantly on the shore expecting her husband's landing and refused to simply attend to what her husband had said, she would show that she was a visionary and not one guided by the simple intelligence of her husband's mind. Feeling would have led away from true obedience.

Those who sentimentally make the secret rapture the center of all their thoughts, have habitually shown how utterly their love fails toward any Christians who object to this theory. They often speak of them as if such were devoid of love to Christ. It might seem as if they made that one point (in which they are led by feeling and not by Scripture) the very test of Christian profession. It is remarkable to notice how the sentimental expectation of the Lord's coming has led away from the close and reverential study of Holy Scripture. Indeed, it has been painful to hear of earnest and real desire to study the Word of God regarded as being "*occupied with the letter of Scripture.*" But do those who say this know what they mean? They speak of principles, and of having their minds occupied with Christ, but how can we obtain true principles except from God's revelation in the Word? And how does the Spirit lead the mind to be occupied with Christ except from the definite truth of Holy Scripture?

Of course, with this feeling all *critical* study of Scripture is denounced. It is deemed a waste of time. Even the study of the Word of God in the original Hebrew and Greek is spoken of as if it were a secular occupation. The English Bible is thought to be enough for teachers. Exact scholarship is deemed superfluous if the original languages are looked at. How different is this from the real study of God's Word; from using and valuing each portion, however minute, as being from Him; as being that of which He can unfold to us the meaning by the teaching of His Spirit. How different is this from the practical application of the most definite rules of grammar which lead to absolute persuasion that apostles and evangelists wrote nothing at random, but that even as to the most delicate shades of thought they used the right cases, moods, and tenses. All diligent and careful inquiry, all laborious examination of authorities so as to know what were the very words in which the inspired writers gave forth the Scripture, is regarded as merely intellectual and secular.

This is not healthy. Should not those who believe in the Divine authority of Holy Scripture

know better than to neglect its critical study? And if it be truly inspired, ought they not to feel it is of some importance to inquire what is its true text, and, as far as existing evidence can show, what were the very words in which the Holy Ghost gave it forth? It is most difficult to arouse Christians in general to a sense of the *full* importance of critical study of Scripture, especially when dreamy apprehensions are cherished and vague idealism has taken the place of truth, and sentimental asceticism is the substitute of Christian holiness.

He who truly loves the Lord Jesus Christ and is guided by His Spirit will be the most subject to that which is written in the Word. *True* acquaintance with Scripture is the best check to mere sentimental emotion.

*The Hope of Christ's Second Coming*

Day 17

**HUMILITY**  
**Thomas Somerville**

***"After that, He poured water in a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded." (John 13:5)***

In the present state of society it is hardly possible that we should fall into so gross a delusion as that which, for a season, possessed the minds of the apostles. We know that our religion is not the path to worldly honor and prosperity. But there are various symptoms by which a proud aspiring disposition may still be discovered in those who profess to be the disciples of Jesus. As often as we see them swelling with a fond conceit of their own abilities, intoxicated with prosperity and looking down with contempt and insolence upon their brethren; as often as we see them eagerly struggling for rule and preeminence, dictating to others with unwarrantable authority and angry because their favorite opinions are not implicitly adopted; as often as we see Christians prone to resentment, ready to apprehend injuries which never were intended and to exaggerate offenses which are frivolous and the effects of inadvertence rather than of malice; as often as we see them envious, turbulent, and active in vexing and disturbing their neighbors--we behold that haughty and domineering temper which stands in direct opposition to the genius and tendency of our religion.

We obey the spirit of our Lord's precept when we attain the practice of humble and condescending charity. There are many who do not altogether neglect the duty of charity but still have not attained that species, or kind of it, which is recommended by the example of Jesus. They consider indigence, or want, as the only legitimate claim to charity. When they give alms to the poor they think that they fulfil the great law of love. This is a very meager and partial view of our duty. Alms are a part, often an essential part, but by no means the whole of charity. It ought to be the study of the Christian to minister to the comfort as well as to the necessities and wants of his brethren. Many opportunities occur for the exercise of sympathy and tenderness where alms are not required. We may exercise the former when we have it not in our power to bestow the latter. To communicate counsel and direction to the ignorant and perplexed, to patronize the friendless, to pour consolation into the heart pierced with sorrow, to encourage the feeble-minded, to solicit with address the confidence of the man who is ready to sink under obdurate and concealed grief, to bear one another's burdens as well as to relieve one another's wants--this is to fulfil the law of Christ.

The example of our Lord, in this and every other instance, teaches us to perform acts of kindness in that easy, affable, and condescending manner which will render them most pleasing and acceptable to those who receive them. Many do generous actions with so bad a grace that their favors are a grievance rather than a relief to the persons on whom they are conferred. Insolence and upbraiding crush the tender spirit and repress the satisfaction which otherwise might arise from the emoluments of charity. Jesus never broke the bruised reed nor quenched the smoking flax. The temper, or spirit, recommended by his example is not confined to good offices of any particular description. It enters into common life. It pervades the whole system of conduct. *"Whosoever would be*

*great among you, let him be as the least."*

*Sermons* (1813)



Day 18

**THE EARTH**  
**Frederic Bettex**

***"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:2)***

In Hebrew the verb "to move" has also the sense of "to brood," and "waters" is equivalent to "mighty, seething, rushing streams." In these mysterious forces and laws, which the creative spirit of God in the beginning infused into that void and empty matter, are to be found all the phenomena which we observe here on earth; and even the human body is a wonderful workshop of unfathomable transactions, which take place in accordance with these forces and laws. For just as an artist or architect, who intends to produce something great, walks up and down meditating in his mind what shape and relation, size and form he will give each part of his work, and as the work now takes shape in his mind and stands before him complete, even before anything is visible to the eye, so the Spirit of God moved upon the waters and placed measure and weight, numbers and law into matter.

It is remarkable, however, how blind fallen man is, not only to that which is divine, but also to that which is natural and near to him. How many millions there are living upon this earth. She is the place of habitation, out of her they receive their sustenance, out of her they have been formed and to her they shall again return; and yet how little interest do most of them manifest in this great creation of God! They follow their business and their pleasure, and any sort of meaningless pastime, any kind of useless talk and worthless games is of more importance to them than the acquirement of knowledge concerning the great deeds and thoughts of God.

They learn in the common schools that the earth resembles a great ball, that it revolves once in a year around the sun, and that it is 25,000 miles in circumference; but in how few do these facts arouse any deeper or higher thoughts! But a Christian ought also in this to strive after perfection, in order that as far as his calling gives him time and opportunity he may find enjoyment in meditating upon God's creation, in which he has been placed, "for God has showed it unto them." *"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead"* (Rom. 1:20).

And how enormously great is this dwelling place for man! Of a ball 25,000 miles in circumference neither you nor I can have any proper conception. But if one considers the great oceans that cover the earth's surface, oceans upon which ships may sail for weeks and months, day and night, without seeing anything else than the sky above and the water beneath; or the deserts with burning sand much vaster than the whole of Germany, where the camel, "the ship of the desert," can likewise travel for weeks without reaching the end; or the immense grassy plains upon which millions of animals roam about; or these great stretches of country about the north and south poles, as large as entire Europe, covered with eternal snow and ice; and in addition to this those large countries inhabited by men; the mountain ranges and the glaciers, the mighty rivers which flow onward like broad lakes, I say, if you think about all this, and if you think further how this entire world soars

through space having no foundation to rest on, you cannot resist the impression that this earth is a wonderful work sustained by a master-hand.

But this earth not only *soars*, but it untiringly whirls in a prescribed orbit through space. You are aware that an express-train goes very fast; you are aware also that a cannonball goes much faster, so fast that it cannot be observed by the eye. But this ball upon which you live and in whose interior a mighty fire glows, from which we are separated by a thin solid crust; this earth with all its seas and countries, rivers and mountains, plains, glaciers and icebergs, flies through immeasurable space fifty times faster than a cannonball, and carries you and all men by day and by night, whether they work or whether they rest, and so gentle and so regular is its flight that you do not notice it.

And just imagine that it would be possible for you to take a position somewhere outside of this earth and see it pass by. What a sight that would be! At first you would see the earth in the distance appearing like a little star, but coming nearer it would grow larger and larger. Soon it would resemble the moon. Not long after it would cover half the sky, and would before your astonished gaze whirl by with the greatest velocity. You would see in turn sunshine and dark clouds, the storm-tossed ocean and the level plains, high mountains covered with snow and dark forests, great cities and dreary deserts. All this would in a few minutes pass by you in furious flight, and before you would recover from your surprise everything would be gone. You would see only a gigantic shining silvery ball in the sky, fast disappearing and soon looking again like a little star in the far depths of space, whirled onward by the breath of God.

Then you would have seen only a small part of the glory of the Creator, the earth, which God made in the beginning; for thus hundreds of other earths and planets, many much larger than ours, fly incessantly through space, some surrounded by moons and some by immense rings which consist of solid or liquid matter. Is it not then better for man, in view of all this, to rejoice in such glorious works of God, and by meditating upon them to admire and worship Him with the feeling, "*What is man that thou are mindful of him?*" [Is this not better] than again and again to have his mind centered on man and his small achievements, in the contemplation of which there is only unrest and self-conceit, while in beholding the works of God the soul finds peace and exaltation?

Thus many, many years ago the earth flew through space. Although yet without form and void, enveloped in darkness, it was even then for the "sons of God" a grand sight, as it is written, "*Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of earth? when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God sang for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors when I made the cloud the garment thereof and thick darkness a swaddling band for it?*" (Job 38:4, 7, 8, 9). And now this earth, having changed its surface, hastens onward in its orbit with a population of 1,300 millions, with innumerable animals, countless birds which fly through the air, and millions and millions of fish that swim through the depths of the sea. This thought likewise ought to exalt our soul and make God great before our eyes, who watches over all these creatures.

At this very moment, when you read this, God sees into your heart and knows all your thoughts; likewise the thoughts of those, who, on the opposite side of the earth, lie in their

sleep; likewise those of the wild bush-man in South Africa, who now with his poisoned arrow chases the antelope, or the Eskimo, who in his light skiff upon the stormy sea pursues the walrus. At this very moment, when He tries your heart and reins, He knows at the same time what every one of those four hundred millions of Chinese thinks, and He knows the history of their lives better than they do themselves. At this moment, when you read this, he sees upon this fast-moving earth all the sick and the distressed, the beggars in their poverty and the kings in their splendor and power, the great number of those who perish in battle, the criminal who prowls about in the darkness of night. He hears every word, song, prayer, curse, laugh, cry, every bitter complaint, every sigh which is directed to Him and every useless word spoken. He writes them all in His book for the day of judgment.

Further, He sees the lion in the desert, the raven in the air, every little bird in its nest, every insect in the grass. There is not a little fish in the deep ocean whose path is hidden from Him, not a leaf on a tree upon the whole earth whose shape and size He does not know, not a leaf that would fall to the ground without His will. Yes, while He governs, cares for, feeds and rules this entire world, He beholds in every drop of water those thousands of invisible little creatures, scarcely visible through a microscope, and gives every one of them life and food; for in Him lives, moves and exists everything. Indeed, if you look at things in this way, then He becomes mighty and great and you will acknowledge the power hidden in the word: *"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."*

*The First Page of the Bible*

## Day 19

### A PERFECT SALVATION

Kenneth S. Wuest

*"It is finished!"*

**John 19:30**

The perfect tense in Greek is very expressive. It speaks of an action that took place in the past, which was completed in past time, and the existence of its finished results. For instance: "I have closed the door," speaks of a past completed action. But the implication is that as a result the door is still closed. Thus, the entire meaning is, "I have closed the door and it is closed at present."

In John 19:30 our Lord cries from the Cross, "It is finished," referring to His work of procuring for lost sinners a salvation from sin through the blood of His Cross. The entire sense is, "It was finished and as a result it is forever done." "It stands finished" would be a good translation. The priests in the tabernacle always stood when ministering in the sacrifices. But our great High Priest is seated. His work is finished. He need never arise and offer another sacrifice.

In Matthew 4:4 our Lord answers Satan, "It is written." The perfect tense is used. He quoted from Deuteronomy. The words had been written by Moses 1500 years before, but are still on record. . . . A good translation reads, "It stands written." It is the eternal word of God.

In Ephesians 2:8 we have, "For by the grace are ye saved." The definite article appears in the Greek. God's salvation does not merely issue from a gracious attitude on His part. It proceeds from that particular gracious act of God the Son in dying upon the Cross to pay man's penalty incurred by him through sin. It is the particular grace that issues from Calvary that saves sinners.

The words "ye are saved" are in the perfect tense in Greek. That is, a Christian was given a perfect salvation in past time when he believed, and as a result of that past completed work of Jesus Christ on the Cross and his past acceptance of the same, he at present is a saved person. His present possession of salvation is based upon one thing only, what Jesus did on the Cross for him and his past acceptance of that work. That means that the works of an individual, past or present, do not enter into his acceptance or retention of salvation. Salvation is the alone work of Christ. The believer is the recipient. That means that the believer is saved and saved forever, for as he reads this text, the present results of the perfect tense are always present with the reader. And to strengthen the assertion, Paul adds another word in the present tense to show not only the existence but the persistence of the results. The full translation is, "By the grace ye were saved and as a result are in a saved state at the present time."

*Golden Nuggets from the Greek New Testament*

Day 20

**GOD'S WAYS ABOVE MEN'S**  
**Edward Payson**

***"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."*** (Isaiah 55:9)

God's thoughts and ways are not as ours respecting the best methods of dealing with his people, and carrying on the work of grace in their souls after it is begun. When God delivered his people from Egyptian bondage, if he had led them by the nearest and most direct way to Canaan, they might have reached it in a very few days. And had they been consulted, they would probably have thought the nearest way the best. But God thought otherwise. So when God converts his people from sin to holiness, he could, if he pleased, render them perfectly holy at once, and they are often ready to imagine that this would be much the better way both for his glory and their own good. But instead of adopting this method, he grants them at first but small degrees of grace, and increases it in a very slow and gradual manner. He leads them round for many years through a wilderness beset with temptations, trials, and sufferings, with a view to humble them, prove them, and show them all that is in their hearts. By the discoveries which they make of their own weakness, ignorance, and propensity to sin, their pride is humbled, their self-confidence destroyed, and their patience, meekness, and candor are increased. The Savior and his method of salvation is rendered more precious, and all ground for boasting forever excluded.

If God's thoughts and ways are thus high above ours, it must be abominable pride, impiety, folly, and presumption in us to censure them even in thought. Yet how often men do this! How often do they, at least in their hearts, find fault with God's word, murmur at his dispensations, repine under afflictions, feel dissatisfied with his manner of governing the world, quarrel with his sovereignty in the bestowing of favors, and thus in effect say that God is either unwise, unkind, or unjust, and that they could conduct things in a better manner! My friends, if this is not horridly impious and presumptuous, if it does not discover the most abominable pride, what does? For an illiterate peasant to censure the conduct of his prince, with the reasons of which he is utterly unacquainted; for a child of a week old to condemn the proceedings of his parent would be nothing to this. We are told that if any man judges a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him. What folly and shame is it then for us to attempt to judge of God's conduct when we know only so small a part of his ways, and even this part imperfectly.

An ancient writer tell us of a man who, having a house for sale, carried a brick to market to exhibit as a specimen. You may perhaps smile at his folly in supposing that any purchaser would or could judge of a whole house, which he never saw, by so small a part of it. But are not we guilty of much greater folly in attempting to form an opinion of God's conduct from that little part of it which we are able to discover?

Hence, whenever we attempt to judge of it, we do in effect set ourselves up as God, knowing good and evil. Well therefore may God reply to our vain, proud, and impious objections: *"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare*

*yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding....Would you indeed annul my judgment? Would you condemn me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God?*

And while God may thus with propriety address each of us, it becomes us to reply with Job, *"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther. I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know."*

*Sermons (condensed)*

Day 21

**BOUGHT WITH A PRICE**  
**Joseph Barber Lightfoot**

*"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:20)*

*"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." (1 Corinthians 7:23)*

The words which I desire to consider with you this evening occur twice in the same Epistle. The connection in the two passages is somewhat different, but the leading idea is the same in both. We have a Master, an Owner Who has a paramount, absolute, inalienable property in us. We are His slaves, His chattels, His implements. All other rights over us are renounced, are absorbed, are annulled in His rights. He has acquired us by virtue of purchase.

To St. Paul, Christ crucified was the lesson of all lessons. It gathered and absorbed into itself all other truths; it was the power and it was the wisdom of God. But we have stultified its wisdom, and we have enfeebled its power by our too officious comments. Theologians and preachers have darkened where they desired to make light. The simplicity of the Scriptures has been overlaid by technical terms; the metaphors of the Scriptures have been overstrained by subtle definitions. Redemption, atonement, imputation, satisfaction, vicarious punishment--what storms have not raged and what clouds have not gathered over these terms till the very heavens have been shrouded in gloom; and where men looked for illumination, they have found only darkness overhead and only confusion underfoot. But ever and again to simple faith, and to loving hearts, the Cross of Christ has spoken with an awe and a pathos which has taken them captive wholly. They were bought with a price. They cannot resist the appeal. They cannot deny the inference. They are no more their own.

"Bought with a price." In these few words the lesson of the Cross is summed up. Whatever else it may be, it is the supreme manifestation of God's love. The greatness of the love is measured by the greatness of the price paid; and the greatness of the price paid defies all words and transcends all thought. When we try to realize it, we are overwhelmed with the mystery and we veil our faces in awe. We summon to our aid such human analogies as experience suggests or as history and fable record. The devotion of the friend risking his life to save another life as dear to him as his own; the bravery of the captain and the crew sinking calmly and resolutely into their watery grave without a shudder, without a regret, disdaining to survive while one weak woman or one feeble child is left in peril; the heroism of the patriot hostage condemning himself to a certain and cruel death rather than forfeit his honour on the one hand or consent to terms disastrous to his country's welfare on the other.

All these have the highest value as examples of human courage and self-devotion. But how little after all does any such sacrifice help us to realize the magnitude of the Great Sacrifice. The analogy fails just there, where we look for its aid. It is the infinity of the price paid for our redemption which is its essential characteristic. It is the fact that God

gave not a life like our lives--not a weak, erring, sin-stricken, sorrow-laden victim like ourselves--but gave His only-begotten Son; gave His Eternal Word, to become flesh, to work and to suffer, to live and to die for our sakes. It is the fact that the Glory of the Invisible God condescended to visit this earth; to hunger and thirst, to be despised, to be buffeted, to be racked and mangled on the Cross. The sacrifice is unique because the Person is unique. Herein was love--not that we loved Him, but that He loved us. While we were yet sinners, while we were yet rebels and blasphemers, Christ died for us. And by that death God commends His love towards us--commends it so that henceforth no shadow of doubt or misgiving can rest upon it.

Do we marvel any longer that St. Paul determined to know nothing among his converts but Christ crucified; that to him it embodied all the lessons, and concentrated all the sanctions of the moral and spiritual life; that this weak and foolish thing stood out before his eyes as the very power and the very wisdom of God? In this one transcendent manifestation of God's purpose righteousness was vindicated, and love was assured, and ownership was sealed, and obedience was made absolute.

*Cambridge Sermons* (condensed)



Day 22

**THE TONGUE**  
**Ralph Wardlaw**

***"There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health" (Proverbs 12:18).***

The language of keen irritation, reproach, invective, and scorn often inflicts wounds on the heart that are deep and hard to cure--wounds *"like the piercings of a sword."* This is especially the case when the words are from the lips of a friend, or of one we love when heated by sudden passion. The utterance of a moment may embitter the future of a lifetime, the remembrance piercing the heart of him from whose lips the words escaped even more severely than that of the one who was the object of them.

Wit or levity also, when not chastened and controlled by an amiable disposition, often wounds deeply. A clever biting reply will not be suppressed for the sake of the feelings or even the character of a neighbor or friend. The man of wit must have his joke no matter the cost. The man whose wit is for self-display, to the sacrifice of every feeling but his own, can never be loved. He is feared, hated, avoided.

*"But the tongue of the wise promotes health."* It alleviates differences, allays resentments, vindicates character, soothes the sorrowful, comforts the afflicted, cheers the drooping and saddened spirit, promotes peace and concord, justice and piety, personal and social happiness.

*Lectures on the Book of Proverbs*

Day 23

**REPENTANCE**  
**Thomas H. Gallaudet**

*"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted,  
that your sins may be blotted out."*

**Acts 3:19**

We are to consider the nature of repentance. To do this it is necessary to observe that there are two words in the original Greek of the New Testament both of which our translators have rendered by the term "repentance," although they have meanings, in some important respects, very different from each other. One signifies a mere wish that some part of our past conduct had been otherwise, without any regard to its moral nature or consequences. The other denotes such a cordial, sincere, and permanent sorrow for all that we discover to be wrong in our past life, as will lead to a radical reformation of our whole moral character. It is the last which is used in our text and, indeed, in all other passages which speak of genuine evangelical repentance. So [it is clear] that no notion can be more unscriptural or absurd than that held by some Papists--that repentance is a grace to be exercised at stated intervals as a sort of penance, a duty which is to cancel at one stroke all past transgressions, and which, indeed, may be deferred till the last moment of dissolution [death].

Very different from this is that repentance which is enjoined by the Gospel. So far from being a desultory [random] duty to be performed at intervals, it is a fixed habit of the soul, implying a constant detestation of sin, a lively regret for all we have committed, and a steady purpose of thorough and universal amendment. It requires in its possessor an enlightened and discriminating conscience; for how can we sorrow for sin unless we understand what it is?

The true penitent, therefore, has correct views of the infinite excellence and purity of God's character; of the indispensable obligation of all intelligent creatures to obey his law, which is holy and just and good; of the injury done to his authority by the violation of this law; of the necessity of guarding it by a severe penalty; and of the justice of that sentence which inflicts everlasting punishment on every offender. Nor are these views of sin merely speculative. They touch the heart of the true penitent with deep humility and contrition, for he reckons himself among the chief of sinners. His iniquities overwhelm him with shame and confusion of face. He considers them as committed against that Being to whom he is indebted for all that renders existence desirable, against that Saviour who freely gave himself a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world; against that Spirit whose monitory suggestions and attractive influences have so often pointed the way and urged him to walk in the path to heaven.

Memory spreads before him the scenes of his past life; and day after day, passing in review, testifies to the enormity of his ingratitude and his guilt. How many moments have been wasted in slothful and criminal supineness [indifference]! How many have been devoted to the gratification of the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life!" And how have all--even he who has witnessed in his breast some fervent aspirations

after holiness, and earnest though imperfect attempts at obedience--been sullied by some lurking corruption? For all this he grieves, not merely nor principally because such conduct has exposed him to the dreadful penalty of the law, but because he has been evil and unthankful to him whose very nature is "love." With the Psalmist he is ready to exclaim, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight."

The true penitent laments also the remaining depravity of his heart. Even in his most pure and holy moments--in those which witness the flight of his affections from earth to heaven, and the ineffable communion of his spirit with the Father of spirits--even then, while he discovers how some selfish and sinful desire insinuates itself into his soul, he feels the deepest and most hearty repentance for his present guilt; for he then is best able to detect its true and odious character by contrasting it with his clear apprehension of real purity and holiness of heart. And if such seasons imbued [saturated] with so sweet a savor of things heavenly and divine, and affording a prelibation [foretaste] of that blissful state where sin can never enter--if even such seasons demand repentance and reliance upon the merits of Christ, what deep sorrow will the true penitent feel as he observes his affections becoming more gross and more tainted with the corrupt influence of the world! How often will he exclaim with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And sensible from past experience of his ignorance and weakness and guilt, he will tremble at the dreary prospect of a life which is always to be spotted with sin, resolving however by the aid of Divine grace to struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and when he fails, ever to feel the deepest contrition and sorrow.

Such, my brethren, is the nature of genuine repentance. It is a fixed habit of the soul, under the direction of an enlightened conscience, discerning well between right and wrong, and sensible of the immense evil of sin. It implies a constant and cordial [heartfelt] detestation of sin, a lively regret for all which we have committed, and a steady purpose of thorough and universal amendment.

*Discourses on Various Points of Christian Faith and Practice*

Day 24

**MERCY**  
**Thomas Scott**

***"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God."***  
**Romans 12:1**

There is something well calculated to keep us humble in the perpetual reference made in the Scriptures to mercy. We read of nothing granted us on the ground of merit, of nothing that comes from the hand of God as the reward of our good deeds or obtained by us as matter of desert. But the MERCY of God meets us at every point: the food we eat, the air we breathe, the garments we wear, the domestic comforts we enjoy, our civil advantages, and our religious privileges are all represented as matters of mercy--undeserved mercy.

This I say is humbling; yet it is just. Mercy must be the plea of the sinner; mercy must spare from day to day the man who deserves to be cast into hell. Mercy must supply the daily bread of the man whose very life is forfeited to the justice of his offended creator. And as we are spared and our needs supplied, and ten thousand sources of comfort are opened to us--and not to us only but to all the sinners of our race--we may well say that "the earth is full of the *goodness* of the Lord," and "that goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life."

And, my brethren, it would be well for us to habituate ourselves to look at all our comforts in this light. They are continued to us in *mercy*, since by sinning against God we have forfeited every one of them. This would silence many a murmur and produce delightful feelings of gratitude under circumstances which excite us now to anything rather than contentment and praise. Our language would often be like that of Jeremiah: "*Why should a living man complain; a man for the punishment of his sin?*"

But though a most powerful argument in support of a duty like that of the text might be drawn from the consideration of the innumerable *temporal* mercies bestowed upon us by our gracious God, yet these are not the things to which St. Paul here alludes. He is drawing this epistle to a close, which, while it is highly practical, is also most highly doctrinal. In its commencement, after friendly salutations and expressions of Christian affection to his brethren in Christ residing at Rome, he exhibits in all its awful nature the depraved condition of the gentile world. He then urges home upon the Jews the question whether they were at all better than the gentiles. And having shown that they were not, he draws the melancholy conclusion that "there was no difference, for that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Having thus established the universal sin and consequent condemnation of the whole human race, he proceeds to meet the grand inquiry, "How may *man* be just with God?" Had he remained spotless, innocent, and pure in the state wherein he was created, the answer would have been easy: he will be justified by his works, by his own acts and deeds, his constant never-failing obedience to the divine law. But when that law had been violated again and again by every child of Adam, no conclusion could possibly be clearer than that by the deeds of the law could no flesh living be justified in his sight.

Justification could not, therefore, depend on the law or on merit.

The apostle then goes on to shew that though man cannot justify himself, and is consequently in a state of condemnation, he is not on that account to be shut up under despair. But he proceeds to prove that there is a righteousness imputed without works, even that righteousness which Christ has brought in, and which he has provided by his own perfect fulfilment of the law, and by his obedience unto death in our place. This is by *grace*--all of unmerited favor, free goodness, mere mercy: "We are justified *freely* by his grace." In this righteousness we obtain a part through *faith*. Faith receives the record which God has given concerning his Son. Faith stretches out the hand to "receive the things that are freely given to us of God." Faith relies on the promise, and applies in assured expectation of receiving that which it asks, and which it knows God is ready to give. So important is the grace of faith that we are said to be *justified by it*, and by it *alone*. Yet faith has in *itself* no merit. It is no work which will compensate for failures in other things. It only receives with firm reliance those promises and those gifts which God bestows on the sinner, of mere mercy, and free grace.

*Sermons*

Day 25

WISE COUNSEL FOR YOUNG MEN  
Daniel Baker

***"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for Yahweh searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever."*** (1 Chronicles 28:9)

These words form a part of David's farewell address, or dying charge, to Solomon, his son and heir of his throne. Notwithstanding his many and acknowledged faults, David was, upon the whole, both a great and a good man. He was a great man, for he had risen from obscurity to distinction; from being a shepherd boy to be a king, and a powerful one. But he was also a good man. Not to mention other things, the book of Psalms, chiefly penned by him, is a memorial to his praise; a monument more beautiful than marble, more enduring than brass. And what, my young friends, I wish you not to forget is this--that he devoted the morning of his days as well as all his subsequent life to the service of his Maker. Yes, piety adorned his youth. It flourished in manhood, and was to him a crown of glory in his old age.

And now, having reigned over Jerusalem forty years and knowing that the time of his departure was near at hand, he devotes the last closing scene of his life to the cause of piety and of God. Most lovely was the closing scene. See the mild, bright sun sinking in the west, painting with rosy colors the fleecy clouds which, here and there, are seen reposing upon the bosom of the clear blue sky. It is a beautiful, a lovely sight, and one upon which the eye loves to linger. But the last closing scene in the history of a good man, when his sun of life is sinking in mild splendor to rise in more effulgent glory in another and a better world, has a beauty and a loveliness peculiarly its own.

Does he speak? Every eye is fixed, every ear is attentive. All are anxious to catch the last words which fall from his quivering lips. They are received as the counsels of wisdom and experience, almost as the voice of an oracle or angel of God. But the case before us is invested with peculiar interest, for it is not only a good man that is about to leave the world, but it is a great man--a mighty man, a warrior, a conqueror, and a king. This is he who, even when a youth, was more lauded than Saul. Yes, it is the far renowned David, the king of Israel, that is about to sink into the cold embrace of death. After the example of other Old Testament worthies who had gone before him, he gives his farewell address. He gives his dying charge.

Picture to yourself the scene. The chief men of Jerusalem, and the mighty men, and the princes of the blood are assembled in the palace of the dying monarch. There on his royal couch is the venerable man, with his cheeks furrowed and his locks silvery with age. And there stands that young man Solomon, his son, in youthful bloom--Solomon, the heir of David's throne. What silence reigns! And now the king speaks. First he addresses the nobles of his court, giving them political counsel. And then he turns his eyes upon Solomon, and upon him now every eye is fixed. Solomon, with profound veneration, waits to hear his father's charge. It falls upon his ear: *"And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou*

*the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever."*

How unexpected is this language! How widely different from what the nobles, and no doubt from what Solomon himself, anticipated. Certainly he will make a charge such as might be looked for from the mouth of a dying warrior and a king. No doubt he will speak after this fashion: "Solomon, your father rose from obscurity to distinction, from being a shepherd boy to be a king. Your father has fought many battles, achieved many victories. Solomon, you are to succeed your father upon the throne. Cherish a martial spirit, push forward your victories, enlarge your dominions, twine laurels around your brow, and thus add new splendors to David's throne."

No, not a word of this kind is uttered. What does he say? Let us hear it again: "*And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts; if thou seek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever!*"

Ah, my young friends, you young men whose hearts are set upon the world and the things of the world; you who are pressing after the riches of the world, and the honors of the world, and the pleasures of the world. Here you may see how these things appear in a dying hour, how they are viewed even by a dying warrior and a king. Riches are nothing. Honor, fame, all worldly splendor, all worldly glory--nothing. Religion looms up then. The favor of God, that is everything. All else fades away like twinkling stars before the rising sun. And how was this great truth confirmed by Solomon himself too, when the hour of his departure drew near. You recollect his language: "*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*" [Ecc. 1:3]. And again: "*Let us hear,*" says he, "*the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man, for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil*" [Ecc. 12:13,14].

Young men, you must exert a great influence in your day and generation, for good or evil. Remember, there are two great interests set up on earth, and they are antagonistical. See to it that the full weight of your influence be on the right side. Be bold in your opposition to everything that is evil and demoralizing; be valiant for the truth. Serve the God of your fathers with a perfect heart and with a willing mind. Tell me not that zeal in the cause of virtue, of religion, and of God will interfere with your other engagements or lawful callings in life. By no means will it. You may have the plow, or the pen, or even the sword in your hand, and God in your heart at the same time.

In every calling, in every profession, in every pursuit of life you may find illustrations of the fact that piety and the lawful pursuits of life are by no means incompatible with each other. You can be a zealous, warm-hearted Christian, and at the same time be active and enterprising in all the lawful callings and pursuits of life. Indeed he who professes to be a Christian and neglects his temporal duties dishonors the name of Christ. Yes, in relation to everything which claims your attention, be active and diligent, remembering the words

of our blessed Redeemer, *"The night comes when no man can work"* [John 9:4].

*Revival Sermons* (condensed)



Day 26

**PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS FROM EVIL**

**John Flavel**

***"Do not fear therefore;  
you are of more value than many sparrows."***

**Matthew 10:31**

A great advantage and mercy that the saints receive from the hand of Providence is in their preservation from the snares and temptations of sin. That Providence wards off many a deadly stroke of temptation and many a mortal thrust which Satan makes at our souls is a truth as manifest as the light that shines.

The Providence of God is the great barrier and hindrance to a world of sin, which otherwise would break forth like an overflowing flood from our corrupt natures. And so much corruption there remains in good men that they would certainly plunge themselves under much more guilt than they do if Providence did not take greater care of them than they do of themselves. For though they make conscience of keeping themselves, and daily watch their hearts and ways, yet such is the deceitfulness of sin that if Providence did not lay blocks in their way, sin would, more frequently than it does, entangle and defile them. And this Providence does in several ways.

*Sometimes by stirring up others to interpose with seasonable counsel, which effectually dissuades them from prosecuting an evil design. Thus Abigail meets David in the nick of time (I Sam. 25:34).*

*Sometimes by hindering the means and instruments, whereby the evil itself is prevented. Thus, when good Jehoshaphat had joined himself with that wicked King Ahaziah to build ships at Ezion-geber to go to Tarshish, God prevents the design by breaking the ships with a storm (2 Chr. 20:35-37).*

*Sometimes by laying some strong affliction upon the body, to prevent a worse evil. And this is the meaning of, "I will hedge up thy way with thorns" (Hos. 2:6). Thus, Paul had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him; and this affliction, whatever it was, was ordained to prevent pride in him (2 Cor. 12:7).*

*Sometimes by the better information of their minds at the sacred oracles of God. Thus, when sinful motions began to rise in Asaph's mind, from the prosperity of the wicked and his own afflicted state, he is set right again by going into the sanctuary, where God showed him how to take new measures of persons and things, to judge them by their ends and issues and not their present appearances (Ps. 73).*

*Sometimes by removing his people out of the way of temptation by death. In this sense we may understand that text, "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come" (Isa. 57:1), the evil of sin as well as sufferings. When the Lord sees his people low-spirited and not able to grapple with strong trials and temptations, it is for them a merciful Providence to be released by death and set out of harm's way.*

Now consider and admire the Providence of God, O ye saints, who has had more care of your souls than ever you had of them yourselves. How woeful your case had been if the Lord had not mercifully saved you from many thousand temptations that have assaulted you! I tell you, you cannot estimate the mercies you possess by means of such providences.

Walk, therefore, suitably to this obligation of Providence, and see that you thankfully own it. Do not impute your escapes from sin to accidents or to your own watchfulness or wisdom. See also that you do not tempt Providence, on the other hand, by an irregular reliance upon its care over you without taking all due care of yourselves.

Providence has been no less concerned about your bodies, and with great tenderness it has carried them in its arms through innumerable hazards and dangers. There are many hazards into which we are often cast in this world. Have not some of us fallen, and that often, into very dangerous sicknesses and diseases in which we have approached to the very brink of the grave? Have we not often had the sentence of death in ourselves, and our bodies at that time have been like a leaky ship in a storm, taking in water on every side until it was ready to sink? Yet has God preserved, repaired, and launched us out again as well as ever.

What innumerable hazards and accidents, the least of which have cut off others, has God carried us all through! Many thousands of these dangers we never saw nor were made particularly aware of, but though we did not see them, our God did, and brought us out of danger before he brought us into fear.

*The Mystery of Providence*

Day 27

## THE TESTS OF LOVE TO GOD

Thomas Watson

***"You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, and with all your strength."***

**Deuteronomy 6:5**

Let us test ourselves impartially whether we are in the number of those that love God. For the deciding of this I shall lay down fourteen signs, or fruits, of love to God; and it concerns us to search carefully whether any of these fruits grow in our garden.

*The musing of the mind upon God.* He who is in love, his thoughts are ever upon the object. What are our thoughts upon most? Can we say that we are ravished with delight when we think of God? Do we contemplate Christ and glory? Oh, how far are they from being lovers of God who scarcely ever think of Him!

*Desire of communion.* If we love God, we prize his ordinances. He speaks to us in his word, and we speak to him in prayer. Do we desire intimacy of communion with God?

*Grief.* Where there is love to God there is a grieving for our sins of unkindness against him. A child who loves his father cannot but weep for offending him. Do we grieve for our abuse of God's mercy, our non-improvement of talents? How far are they from loving God who sin daily and their hearts never smite them!

*Magnanimity.* Love turns cowardice into courage. Love will make one venture upon the greatest difficulties and hazards. He that loves God will stand up in his cause and be an advocate for him. He who is afraid to own Christ has but little love for him.

*Sensitiveness.* If we love God, our hearts ache for the dishonor done to Him by wicked men. To see not only the banks of religion, but morality broken down and a flood of wickedness coming in--to see God's sabbaths profaned and his name dishonored--if there be any love to God in us we shall lay these things to heart.

*Hatred against sin.* Fire purges the dross from the metal. The fire of love purges out sin. Sin strikes not only at God's honor, but his being. Is he a friend to God who loves that which God hates? He who has any secret sin in his heart is as far from loving God as heaven and earth are distant one from another.

*Crucifixion.* He who is a lover of God is dead to the world. He is dead to the honors and pleasures of it. What is there in the earth that we should so set our hearts upon it?

*A fear mixed with jealousy.* "Eli's heart trembled for the ark" (1 Sam. 4:13). It is not said that his heart trembled for Hophni and Phinehas, his two sons, but his heart trembled for the ark; because if the ark were taken, then the glory was departed. He that loves God is full of fear lest it should go ill with the church. He fears lest profaneness should increase. If the Sun of righteousness remove out of our horizon, what can follow but darkness?

*We love what God loves.* David esteemed the Word for the sweetness and value of it. That man who does not love the word has not the least spark of love in his heart. We love God's day, his laws, his saints.

*To entertain good thoughts of God.* He that loves his friend construes what his friend does in the best sense. Malice interprets all in the worst sense. He that loves God has a good opinion of Him; though he afflicts sharply, the soul takes all well.

*Obedience.* It is a vain thing to say we love Christ if we slight his commands. Does that child love his father who refuses to obey him?

*Endeavor to make God appear glorious in the eyes of others.* Such as are in love will be commending and setting forth the amiableness of those whom they love. If we love God we shall spread abroad his excellences, so that we may raise his fame and esteem and induce others to love him too.

*To long for Christ's appearing.* "When he shall appear, we shall be like him." Then shall we be delivered from all our sins and fears, acquitted before men and angels, and be forever translated into the paradise of God.

*To stoop to the meanest offices.* Love is a humble grace. It will stoop and submit to anything whereby it may be serviceable to Christ. If we love God, we shall not think any work too mean [lowly] for us by which we may be helpful to Christ's members.

*All Things for Good*

Day 28

## DESTRUCTION BY NEGLECT

J. H. Jowett

*"Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."*

**Romans 13:14**

"Make not provision for the flesh." Let the evil thing die of famine. Let the ungodly suggestion perish for sheer lack of food. Let the presumptuous thought be destroyed by the withholding of appropriate support. Kill your spiritual enemies by starvation. Make no provision for them. This appears to be the principle advocated by the great Apostle for the culture of the spiritual life. Our enemies are to be conquered by neglect. It is a principle which prevails along purely material planes.

Some two or three years ago the Liverpool School of Tropical Science sent out a body of qualified experts to investigate the causes of the malarial fever which works immeasurable havoc in the lives of multitudes of our fellow citizens throughout the Empire. The investigations have resulted in the discovery of the malarial microbe, which is the germ of this awful and widespread destruction. A further discovery has been made of the nutriment by which the microbe is sustained, and now our scientists are seeking to discover the means by which the microbe and its sustenance may be divorced. Can we separate it from its nutriment? Can we isolate it from its means of maintenance? That is the problem, and there is every prospect of its being satisfactorily solved. Our experts propose fighting the malarial microbe by surrounding it with conditions of famine.

It is even so in the realm of the spirit. When the microbes of evil appear in the life--little baby germs, infantile suggestions of revolt, weaklings of unclean desire--the effective method of destroying them is by deliberate and studious neglect. We are to annihilate them by refusing proper maintenance. We are to see to it that there is no food about the life on which they can thrive. We are to make no provision for them.

Now there is no method more absolutely efficient and assured in its working than the method of destruction by neglect. "Where no wood is, there the fire goes out." Deny the fuel, you exhaust the flame. If the enemy in the spirit hunger, starve him. If we surround him with plentiful food, if he finds rich provision for the maintenance, he will speedily become full grown and tyrannical. But if we starve him he will never be "fulfilled." He will pass away of sheer exhaustion.

I want to give this apostolic word "flesh" the apostolic content. We perilously impoverish its significance if we limit its comprehensions to the rise and sovereignty of carnal desire. It embraces dispositions and tendencies which appear to have no immediate relationship with carnality. The Apostle has broken up the surface of the word and enabled us to see its varied and manifold significance. He has proclaimed that, in his conception of the term, there are involved such presences as "wrath," "strife," "sedition," "drunkenness," "uncleanness." But whichever of these manifold guises the flesh may assume, the Apostolic method works a sure destruction. We are to slay them by withholding congenial food. Let us apply the principle to two or three of the enemies which besiege the souls of men.

*Wrath.* How shall I deal with unholy anger, with anger whose only influence is self-destruction? How shall I contend with passion that boils over and scalds and destroys the sensitiveness of my spirit? The way to destroy it is to "make no provision for it." It must find no food on which to grow strong. It must find no fuel with which to feed its flame. Now the nutriment of wrath is thought. There can be no anger if there be no thought. Thought is the fuel by which the fire is fed. We recognize this in our everyday speech. Here is a man who is under the impression that he has been contemptuously treated by his fellow. His feelings are worked into a passion, and his speech becomes violent and threatening. What counsel do we give him? We say to him, "Don't think about it." That is to say, we counsel him to withdraw his thought and to occupy it with other things. We assume that if the thought be withheld, the passion will subside. . . It is when we "dwell upon a thing" that our feelings are aroused. "As I mused the fire burned." . . Make no provision by thinking, and anger will languish and die.

*Strife.* This is another of the carnal enemies described by the Apostle Paul. "Whereas there is strife among you, are ye not carnal?" Strife is the opposite of a fruitful and blessed peace. Now the germ of strife is usually found in a tiny misunderstanding. The misunderstanding in its earliest stages may be small and puny, but we may make provision for it until it grows into fierce and violent strife. There are two correlative ways in which strife is engendered and matured.

We may make provision for strife by indiscreet conversation. To gossip about a misunderstanding will almost surely aggravate it. Misunderstandings grow by being talked about to others. To make them the topic of idle speech is to inflame and exaggerate them. It is a very device of the evil one that when we talk about a supposed injury it assumes colossal proportions. The way to deal with a misunderstanding is to make no provision for it. . . If we talk about it at all, let it be in frank and sanctified speech with the one in whom the misunderstanding has occurred. . . .

We may make provision for strife by indiscreet hearing. It is not only the speaker but the listener who may be making provision for the flesh. We may nurse the spirit of strife by being unwise and receptive hearers. There would be no talkers if there were no listeners. . . Let us make no provision for it, and let us close our ears when deliberate deafness will help to annihilate evil.

*Envyings.* This is another of the offsprings of the flesh characterized by the Apostle Paul. It suggests an ill relationship to another which, if nourished, will grow into ill will and manifest itself in positive attempts at injury. Let me give two or three familiar examples of its work. A young girl in a business establishment is very popular in her circle. She has many attractions, many gifts, and much personal charm. She is admired and sought after and lives in the light of ceaseless favor. Another girl in the same establishment enjoys no such popularity and is little sought and not conspicuously admired. What space there may be here for the growth of envy; and if suitable provision is made, how speedily envy will mature into ill will and grievous attempts to injure! . . .

A missionary comes to conduct special evangelistic services in a town. There is nothing

conspicuously great about his addresses. There is nothing extraordinary in his matter or manner. Indeed, he appears to be rather commonplace; and yet men and women are drawn into the Kingdom in crowds. And here is another minister of greater culture and apparently wealthier gifts, preaching the same Gospel, depending upon the same Lord, and yet only now and again has he the joy of drawing men and women into decided surrender to God. What an occasion there may be for the rising of envy! . . .

Have any of us felt the birth of these baby-devils within us? Let us make no provision for them. If the ugly thing has just shown its head, let us kill it by starvation. And how shall we do it? By withdrawing the thought on which it feeds and providing another kind of thought which be as poison. There is only one way of doing it. We must pray for those we envy, we must tell God all about it; and in these conditions the evil thing will languish away and die. We must look at the enviable one in our Master's presence, and he will become to us the lovable one. Envy is asphyxiated in the atmosphere of prayer. In prayer is no provision for the flesh.

*Brooks by the Traveller's Way*