

MARCH

Day 1

THE MAN OF UNDERSTANDING

Ralph Wardlaw

*"He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor,
but a man of understanding holds his peace."*

Proverbs 11:12

From the antithesis in the verse, it is evident that the word "despises" is not to be understood of *secret* and *silent* contempt, but of contempt *expressed in words, actions, or looks*. The man who is destitute of wisdom, or sound discretion, ridicules and exposes his neighbor for every little failing which he happens to find in him. In this he not only violates the royal law, but acts unwisely on his own account. The man of prudence--the wise man--holds his peace. He considers, in the first place, that *everyone* has his failings, and that he himself, therefore, does too; that though he might not be sensible of them, they are obvious enough to others. Under this impression he is tender toward others from a sense of his own defects and his liability to more.

He is further aware that by the expression or manifestation of scorn, he may bring upon himself odium and resentment, reaping as his merited reward a studied exclusion from the social circle. No man can be a more unpleasant member of society, in the private walks of life especially (of which free and confidential familiarity is the very zest), than the man who makes it his business to spy out failings.

The man of understanding, the man who has a proper regard for his own comfort and enjoyment, who duly appreciates the principle of "the golden rule" and considers how large an amount of the social happiness of mankind arises from things that are in themselves of minor importance, will lay a restraint upon himself and "*hold his peace*" even when the failings of others do not escape his notice.

Lectures on the Book of Proverbs

Day 2

The Glory of a Constant Will Samuel Wilberforce

"Then Elijah said to the people, I alone am left a prophet of Yahweh; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men." (1 Kings 18:22)

It was a wonderful sight which was that day seen upon Mount Carmel. Even the gross heart of the debased and idolatrous Israelites was moved and shaken when they saw the fire fall from heaven and "consume the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and lick up the water that was in the trench." By this even their gross heart was visibly affected, and such outward sights their dulness needed. But to a purged eye there was a nobler sight seen that day on Carmel than this sudden violation of God's ordinary rule in the material world. A mightier miracle was wrought than any which the mere senses could apprehend--the single saint of God standing for his Lord in the constancy of an assured will, in the simplicity of trust against the strength and the multitude of evil-doers; standing firm and unmoved and able to endure to any end.

Now it is by no means enough for us to look at this spectacle of man's true strength with a mere feeling of admiration. It is not for such a purpose that the lives of God's faithful ones are written in His word. They are "written for our instruction," that we may be in our day men of the same stamp, that we may learn from them how to trust in God and to do valiantly for Him. In this instance the lesson is most plain. It is the blessing and the glory of a constant will. It was this which made Elijah so great. It is this only which can make us great, for this is at the root of all true nobleness.

Doubtless there is here a vast natural difference between one man and another. One has, as we say, naturally a far stronger character than another. But a constant will--that inner bond of his humanity--is within the reach of all. Only let us strive after it aright.

To do this, first, we must remember that its right exercise is most properly a habit. Which of us doubts that if Elijah's daily conduct all lay open to us we should see a multitude of separate instances in which, against fear and pleasure and impulse, he had been choosing for God and abiding by his choice? Under what a training had his last three years been spent! How by the failing brook of Cherith, how in the widow's house at Sarepta, how in the midst of daily dangers, and always on the brink of a sudden death had he been learning to stand for his God before Israel and Ahab, and not to tremble! And even so must we seek this blessing. All life is full of opportunities of choice, and as we choose in them and abide by our choice, such are we. It is by the often repeated choice in little things that our characters are fixed.

The next, perhaps, is to do common actions with an aim at great objects. There is a true dignity in manual service, in daily labour, in the commonest employments, if they are prompted and directed by high motives; and this sets the seal of greatness on the life. Ahab was little in his purple and his crown. Elijah, in the weakness and poverty of age, was truly great. And this was the secret of his greatness: the thought of God rested on his mind. And to us also the thought of God will be a true talisman of strength. It will give

simplicity and directness to our life. Over the intervening crowd of daily difficulties will rise clear and high before us the mountain of God's presence, drawing to itself our advancing steps.

But then, once more, and as that without which all else will be in vain, we must seek earnestly from God the strengthening and the purifying of our will by the renewing of His Holy Spirit. Every man's own inner state, if closely watched, would bear to him abundant witness of a fall. Nothing else can solve the paradox of his greatness and his littleness. He could not have come from his Maker's hands what he finds himself to be. From the hands of the Almighty there could not come forth a ruin. And if he looks steadily upon himself, he is looking in upon a ruin--full of noble designs, showing still vast performances, but the hand of the destroyer has passed over them. And He must restore, who made it.

But in all His saints by the working of His Spirit there is, more or less, the self-same restoration. This is the glory of their redeemed manhood. And here is the deepest heart's joy of every thoughtful man, that for me too there is this portion. There is a true, a right, a perfect Will; and by it my will may and shall be healed. Amidst all the painted mists and empty boasts of this earth, amidst all its swelling waves and dark threatenings, amidst all the inner Babel-shouts of appetite and passion, there is a true and a right. And in Christ Jesus this I may choose, and none can take it from me. "The Lord sits above the water-floods; the Lord remains a king forever."

Sermons

Day 3

STEPHEN'S DYING PRAYER Archibald Alexander

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
Acts 7:59

These few words convey much precious instruction, to which I would now call your attention.

Stephen addressed his prayer to the Lord Jesus. He had just been favoured with a vision of this divine Person in his glory. He saw him standing on the right hand of God. He would never have thought of addressing himself to any of the saints or angels, who also stood round the throne of God. But here "a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost" in his dying moments prays to Jesus Christ, and this is recorded for our example and encouragement. And if we may call upon this name when dying, we may also at all times. Indeed, this is given as one characteristic of true worshippers, for the Scripture says, "Whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed--for the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The second truth which we may learn from this text is that the soul exists separate from the body in an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, and that in this state it is with Jesus. When we look at the dead body of a fellow creature and attend merely to the suggestions of sense and reason, we are tempted to suppose that the thinking principle which recently actuated this body has become extinct, or has ceased to be active. But sense and reason are not to be trusted in this case. Divine revelation, which is the word of God, teaches no such gloomy doctrine. It opens to our view another state of being, another world where Christ is gone, and gives us assurance that believers, while their bodies rest in the grave, are with Christ. So our Lord, when on the cross, said to the penitent malefactor, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Every believer, when called to die, should consider it his high privilege to cheerfully and confidently commit his departing spirit into the hands of Jesus his Lord. He who acts the part of a kind Shepherd while we are passing up through this wilderness--guiding, protecting, and feeding his little flock, and even carrying the lambs affectionately in his bosom--will not forsake the sheep of his pasture (whom he loves and for whom he has laid down his life) when called to pass through the last gloomy valley. There are many shadows of death through which he leads them safely. But in their passage over one which is preeminently deep and dark, he has enabled one of old to say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

Death is abhorrent to nature, and many are all their life subjected to bondage through fear of death. But Christ came to deliver us from those appalling terrors, and he does it by enabling us to exercise faith in his name. The soul that so believes in the day of adversity, and in the last hour, as to be able to commit itself unto Christ by an act of unwavering confidence, that soul need fear no evil. If the great High Priest and the ark of the covenant

lead the way, the swelling waters of Jordan shall be driven back and a free passage to Canaan be secured.

There is some reason to think that every believer when he dies will be conducted to Paradise by angels commissioned for that purpose. In the account of the rich man and Lazarus we read that no sooner had the soul of this pious beggar departed from the body than it "was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Now this representation of the state after death does not seem so much to have been intended to teach what happened to a single individual, as to furnish us with a general view of the different circumstances of the righteous and wicked when they enter into the invisible world. And therefore we may conclude that all true saints, as well as Lazarus, will be provided with a convoy of angels. And would it be considered an extravagant thought that those angels which act as guardians to the people of God here, keeping watch around their dwellings and holding them up in their hands, should be the ones commissioned to perform this kind office? For no doubt they contract an affection for those committed to their charge, and would be prompted to engage in such a service in behalf of those souls whom they watched over during their painful pilgrimage through the world. And for aught that we know, the departed saints will need some persons to be their guide in the new regions into which they at once enter, and where they are entire strangers.

But however pleasing may be the thought of being met at the very entrance into the future world by angels, the true believer finds no prospect of the future state so pleasing as that which promises to bring him into the presence of his Saviour. How happy they are who are thus present with the Lord, no human heart can conceive or tongue express. Truly, their joy is now full.

Practical Sermons (condensed)

Day 4

JOHN CALVIN, THEOLOGIAN AND EXPOSITOR

John Murray

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11,12)

As we think of Calvin we must think, first of all, of his greatest work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Over a quarter century, until this treatise reached its definitive form in 1559, he expended his greatest powers in the revision and expansion of this his masterpiece. The *Institutes* is the representative treatise of the Reformation. It was this work that gave to the Protestant Church the systematic presentation of Christian doctrine and the apologetic defence of Protestant faith indispensable to the polemic being conducted with Rome and to protection of the Reformation movement against those extremes and excesses invariably attendant upon liberation from tyranny. It was the *Institutes* that turned the battle to the gate. In Warfield's words: "In the immense upheaval of the Reformation movement, the foundations of the faith seemed to many to be broken up, and the most important questions to be set adrift; extravagances of all sorts sprang up on every side; and we can scarcely wonder that a feeling of uneasiness was abroad, and men were asking with concern for some firm standing-ground for their feet. It was Calvin's 'Institutes' which, with its calm, clear, positive exposition of the evangelical faith on the irrefragable authority of the Holy Scriptures, gave stability to wavering minds, and confidence to sinking hearts, and placed upon the lips of all a brilliant apology, in the face of the calumnies of the enemies of the Reformation."

We have not done justice to Calvin, however, until we compass the whole range of theology. He is *par excellence* the theologian of the Christian church. . . . The editors of the Brunswick edition of Calvin's works have not exaggerated when they say: "For if Luther was supremely great as a man, Zwingli second to none as a Christian citizen, Melancthon rightly designated the most learned of teachers, Calvin may justly be called the prince and standard-bearer of theologians." Or again in B. B. Warfield's words: "What Thucydides is among Greek, or Gibbon among eighteenth-century English historians, what Plato is among philosophers, or the Iliad among epics, or Shakespeare among dramatists, that Calvin's 'Institutes' is among theological treatises." In the last century no one in the British Isles was more competent than William Cunningham in the field of historical theology, and his verdict is: "The 'Institutio' of Calvin is the most important work in the history of theological science, that which is more than any other creditable to its author, and has exerted directly or indirectly the greatest and most beneficial influence upon the opinions of intelligent men on theological subjects."

If we ask the question as to the reasons for this assessment there is the paramount consideration that, in the words of William Cunningham, "he is the greatest and best theologian who has most accurately apprehended the meaning of the statements of Scripture,—who, by comparing and combining them, has most fully and correctly brought out the whole mind of God on all the topics on which the Scriptures give us information,—who classifies and digests the truths of Scripture in the way best fitted to commend them

to the apprehension and acceptance of men,--and who can most clearly and forcibly bring out their scriptural evidence, and most skilfully and effectively defend them against the assaults of adversaries." All of this Calvin fulfilled, and therein lies the secret of his pre-eminence.

I make bold to say, however, that the perennial and universal eminence belonging to Calvin must find its explanation in other additional factors, implied to some extent in Cunningham's summation of criteria, but, nevertheless, requiring expansion and supplementation. The first of these factors I am constrained to mention and place in the forefront is that feature which accords to Calvin's major treatise its perpetual up-to-dateness. It is true that Calvin was a man of his age and, therefore, all his writings bear the stamp of the period in the development of theological thought to which he belonged. This fact must always be taken into account in interpreting Calvin's views on various doctrines. It is unscientific in terms of theology to wrest statements from their historical context and apply them without discrimination to an entirely different historical context in which issues are precipitated that never arose in Calvin's mind or in the mind of his contemporaries.

But though Calvin was a man of his age the fact remains that he was to a remarkable extent, and to an extent not equalled by any other, a man of every subsequent generation. Why? Every careful reader of Calvin, especially of his *Institutes*, detects what may be called his biblico-theological method in contradistinction from the more scholastic method characteristic of his predecessors in the medieval tradition and of many of his successors in the Protestant tradition. This does not mean that Calvin is not systematic. He was a humanist before he was a reformer. And logic in argumentation and in the sequence and arrangement of his topics is manifest on every page. To use Reuss's terms, there is "the admirable disposition of his material, the force and validity of his reasoning in dogmatics, the acuteness and subtlety of his mind." But it is the biblically oriented and biblically conditioned way in which the biblical material is treated that makes Calvin's presentation abidingly and irresistibly relevant to the Scripture itself. It is this character unencumbered by patterns extraneous to the Scripture itself, a character pervasively maintained, that ensures for his exposition the quality of up-to-dateness consonant with the permanent relevance of the Scripture as the living and abiding Word of the living and abiding God.

The second factor that contributes to this permanent significance of Calvin's work is what becomes evident on cursory examination. Calvin was the exegete of the Reformation and in the first rank of biblical exegetes of all time. The canons that guided his work as a commentator are well stated by himself in the dedicatory preface to his first undertaking as an expositor of books of the Bible, the Epistle to the Romans (1540). To Simon Grynaeus he begins by saying: "I remember that three years ago we had a friendly discussion about the best way of interpreting Scripture. The plan which you particularly favoured was also the one which at that time I preferred to any others. Both of us felt that lucid brevity constituted the particular virtue of an interpreter. Since it is almost his only task to unfold the mind of the writer whom he has undertaken to expound, he misses his mark, or at least strays outside his limits, by the extent to which he leads his readers away from the meaning of his author. Our desire, therefore, was that someone might be found . .

. who would not only study to be comprehensible, but also try not to detain his readers too much with long and wordy commentaries." . . .

What must always impress the appreciative reader is the reverence with which Calvin approaches and deals with the Scripture. He is never forgetful that it is the Word of God. He writes again in the Epistle Dedicatory to his first commentary: "Such veneration we ought indeed to entertain for the Word of God, that we ought not to pervert it in the least degree by varying expositions; for its majesty is diminished, I know not how much, especially when not expounded with great discretion and with great sobriety. And if it be deemed a great wickedness to contaminate anything that is dedicated to God, he surely cannot be endured, who, with impure, or even with unprepared hands, will handle that very thing, which of all things is the most sacred on earth. It is therefore an audacity, closely allied to a sacrilege, rashly to turn Scripture in any way we please, and to indulge our fancies as in sport; which has been done by many in former times." Here at the outset of his work as a commentator, he has not only indicated his breach with the tradition of allegorical interpretation, but he has inveighed against it as sacrilege.

Unfortunately the indulgence of fancy against which Calvin protested is not a vice merely of the past. It is one that still persists to mar the purity and sobriety of pulpit ministration within the Protestant fold. Too frequently ingenious imagination has been substituted for the blood, sweat, toil, and tears of careful and reverent exposition; and the free rein of imagination has produced a pattern of spiritualizing that betrays its kinship with the allegorizing tradition which Calvin indicted as "audacity, closely allied to a sacrilege." In the Reformation period Calvin's commentaries are the prime example of emancipation from a hermeneutic that made it possible to turn Scripture in any way men pleased. It is more than surprising that heirs of the Reformation, priding themselves on the heritage of the Reformers, should show so little affinity with the guiding principles of the Reformation hermeneutic of which Calvin's commentaries are the superb example. May I be permitted to say, and say it with emphasis, that the Reformed expositor who is not in the habit of perusing Calvin's commentaries or, in any case, is not imbued with the principles of interpretation they exemplify, is not worthy of his own claims and profession as an heir of the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

A third factor . . . is that by God's grace Calvin united in an eminent degree, a degree unsurpassed in this history of the church since the apostolic age, piety and learning. Any theologian is unfitted for his task unless he knows the power of the redemption of which Holy Scripture is the revelation. . . . Calvin has quite properly been called the theologian of the Holy Spirit. This is why Calvin's writings, and particularly his masterpiece, are suffused with the warmth of personal and practical devotion. . . . Early in the *Institutes* we read: "Indeed we shall not say that, properly speaking, God is known where there is no religion or piety." And then in the same chapter we find the definition of piety, exemplified in Calvin himself and as a pervasive attitude brought to expression in all of his expository and theological work: "Here then is pure and genuine religion: it is faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that this fear also embraces willing reverence, and carries with it legitimate worship such as is prescribed in the law."

The *Institutio* is not only the masterpiece of Christian theology; it is a devotional classic. It

is theology, therefore, shot through with the warmth of ardent devotion.

Collected Writings of John Murray, vol. 1

Day 5

THE DIVINE AGENCY IN REVOLUTIONS

George Lawson

"God is jealous, and Yahweh avenges; Yahweh avenges and is furious. Yahweh will take vengeance on His adversaries, and he reserves wrath for His enemies."
(Nahum 1:2)

Does God punish nations for their wickedness under the Christian as well as the Jewish dispensation of religion? If he did not, we might discontinue the use of many of the Psalms in the praises of God. David often speaks of the righteousness of God's judgments against the nations; and if it was a glorious expression of the Divine Justice in the days of old to punish guilty nations, why is it to be thought that he is now weary of exhibiting such specimens of the excellency of his administration? Still it is true that the Lord of hosts will be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy will be sanctified in righteousness.

The Scripture tells us what these crimes were for which God spread desolation and misery over many countries in ancient times. If we knew that the same or the like crimes, aggravated by like or by worse circumstances, abounded in these countries which have been the theatre of the judgments of heaven, ought we not to be impressed with a due sense of that holiness which appears in the ways of the Lord, and to learn righteousness when his judgments are on the earth?

Our Lord censures the persons who thought that the men on whom the tower of Siloam fell were greater sinners than others in Jerusalem. And we too would deserve severe censure if we should pretend to judge of the degree of criminality chargeable on any nation from the calamities which have befallen it. These are not always the most wicked nations that are first or that are most awfully punished.

The Sovereign Ruler of the earth gives no account of his matters, and we can claim no right to call him to account. He has reasons worthy of himself for his conduct when he extends his long-suffering to some persons or nations to a greater degree than he does to others less wicked. But while we give him the glory of his sovereignty, we ought not to hide our eyes from the plain proofs which he is pleased to give us of his hatred to sin. The old lying prophet who deceived the man of God from Judah, and tempted him to eat bread when God had forbidden him to eat, was undoubtedly a greater sinner than the prophet whom he deceived. Yet the long-suffering of God to that offender should not hinder us from admiring the wisdom and justice of God in punishing a good prophet for his disobedience.

There are other reasons beside the punishing of guilty nations for which God makes use of his battle-axes and weapons of war in the destructive work for which they are fitted. By the revolutions accomplished in the world he gives striking manifestations to mankind of the vanity and instability of all earthly things, and of the infinite difference between these glories of the world which so much dazzle the eyes of beholders and the glory of his own eternal throne. We walk too much by sight, and not by faith or reason. When we see men elevated to uncommon heights of power, we almost think that they are immortal. When we

behold cities enriched by commerce or by the spoils of enemies, surrounded with strong fortifications, and defended by mighty armies, we almost think that they are eternal cities, as Babylon and Rome were once thought to be by their inhabitants, and perhaps too by their enemies. When a kingdom has stood long in its strength, although the kings that govern them cannot in their own persons live forever, we are ready to dream that their kingdoms are everlasting and that their princes will be perpetuated in a long line of descendants. Thus we are tempted to give these honors to earthly men and to sublunary things which are due only to Him who lives forever and ever.

We ought certainly to mourn when God punishes guilty nations. But if we believe that the world is governed by the providence of Him who sees what is past and to come at one glance, we ought not to confine our views of the works of God to their present appearance; but to remember that what he is now doing tends to something else which in his time he shall show, who is the blessed and only potentate; and that in his whole series of providential administration he keeps in view ends worthy of his wisdom and grace.

Perhaps we are too dim-sighted to see how these revolutions, which bring misery and desolation on many countries, can contribute to the good of mankind in their remoter consequences. We can, however, see how the prosperity of nations too often tends to the increase of vice by giving opportunities to men, and by furnishing them with strong temptations to gratify their own corrupt dispositions. In such cases sore calamities are necessary for checking the progress of wickedness, and forcing men, if they will not be virtuous, to set at least some bounds to their vices.

From Sermon III, "On the Divine Agency in Revolutions," in *Sermons* by George Lawson (1810) (condensed)

Day 6

THE SOLEMN SEARCH
Henry Blunt

"And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, Yahweh will not do good, neither will he do evil." (Zephaniah 1:12)

In every congregation there are many different classes of hearers. Among them, perhaps, one of the most important and most prominent is that to which such remarkable allusion is made in the words I have just read to you. Men who have become accustomed to the sound of the Gospel. Men to whom its threatenings and its promises are so well known that its threatenings excite little apprehension, and its promises little delight. Men upon whose ear the strongest appeals to their consciences--the most blessed invitations of a Saviour's love--fall unheeded. Men who live in a state of quiet without safety, or repose without security, and of peace without one well-grounded hope of peace. Their state has been described in several passages of Holy Writ under the very expressive metaphor of "settling on their lees," or on their dregs.

There appears, indeed, to be no state of mind which the Almighty views with more displeasure, and which he exerts himself more constantly to overcome or to punish, than this cold, dead, phlegmatic state of the affections and the heart, which God himself has denominated a "settling on our lees." The first portion of the text describes, under a very familiar figure, the exceeding carefulness and accuracy with which the Almighty will carry on his search after these men of whom we have been speaking: "I will search Jerusalem with candles," intending to imply, "No house however obscure throughout the whole city, no recess or closet in that house capable of containing one of these delinquents for whom I look, shall escape my search. For if the light of day be insufficient, I will bring even lamps and torches to the search rather than omit a single individual who is thus slighting and dishonoring me." It is not improbable that the expression is here used by God to meet the infidelity and the atheism of those who exclaimed, "The Lord sees not, neither does he regard." Why does he not? Because he lacks light? "Well, then," says God, "I will supply the deficiency; I will search Jerusalem with candles, and you shall learn whether I can neither see nor regard."

It appears at first sight strange to us that if God be about to utter warnings and to foretell punishments upon Jerusalem, this should be the class of persons whom he should especially visit; that if about to institute so accurate a search, these should be the only persons mentioned.

The reason, brethren, is this: the open sinner, the thief, the adulterer, the drunkard, the murderer is known and read of all men. There is no need of fresh warnings of condemnation upon him, and no necessity for candles to search him out. The very strictness of the search marks not only the determination of God to discover all for whom he seeks, but at the same time that he is looking for delinquents whose crimes are not written upon their foreheads, and their characters blazoned forth as the noonday.

Now this is precisely the case at all times and in all places with the class of persons of whom we speak. There may be nothing in the outward life and conversation of any individual among us this day which shall distinctly pronounce this man to be "settled down upon his lees," to be living in an unholy and false security. And yet who will venture to assert that there may not be many among us at this moment who, in the sight of God, are precisely the characters described and warned and threatened in the text. May the Lord reveal these persons to themselves, and show them the difference between the true and settled peace of the children of God, and the false and destructive peace of those who are dwelling in this ruinous security.

To aid in this important work shall be my first endeavor.

The first class of persons which falls the most obviously and undeniably under the description of the text is formed of those who live in that state of practical forgetfulness of God, so significantly expressed by those who say in their heart, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." Yet these are not the avowed enemies of God. They do not profane his name as the common swearer does, nor deny it as the Atheist does, nor dishonor it in their daily conversation as the loose or profane talker does. No, the text says expressly, "They say in their hearts," and probably never hint at it with their lips. Are there any among you to whom this distinguishing mark is not experimentally unknown? Who, when you rise in the morning begin the day by forgetting God? When you go forth to your daily avocations seek not his blessing? When you return to your comforts and your pleasures acknowledge not his hand? When you retire to rest close the day with the same forgetfulness of God with which you opened it? You, then, have need to tremble at the warning of the text.

Another class presents itself: you who have not profited by the chastenings and the judgments of God upon others, or upon yourselves during the last year. There is no stronger mark than this of a soul sunk in carnal and deadly security. What does God think of that man who, when God's judgments have been around him, and perhaps even entered his own house and struck down his worldly prosperity, or blighted his affections or disappointed his hopes, is still the same unthinking, careless, God-forgetting being that he ever was?

But we have still another class to whom to address a word of warning and of exhortation-- You who neglect to benefit by ordinances; and though the Word of God be in your ears do not hear it, that is, do not cherish it in your hearts and practice it in your lives. Listen to the manner in which God has described conduct precisely such as this by the mouth of his prophet Zechariah: "They made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts has sent. Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts." And the manner in which this wrath was manifested is told us in the following verse: "Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried and they would not hear, so they cried and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts."

Surely it is the worst of madness not to be aroused and to bestir ourselves when death and judgment, heaven and hell, are at the door. May the Spirit of God make us all more in earnest than we have ever been in the great work which lies before us. Religion must be

everything or it is nothing. Therefore, "Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave whither you are hastening."

Posthumous Sermons (condensed)

Day 7

THE DUTY OF SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES
George Whitefield

"Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (Acts 17:10,11)

This discourse is not designed so much for them that believe not, as for them who both know and believe that the Scriptures contain a Revelation that came from God, and that it is their duty as being chief parties concerned, not only to read but search them also. I pass on therefore to lay down some directions how to search them with advantage.

And first, have always in view the end for which the Scriptures were written--to show us the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. "Search the Scriptures," says our blessed Lord, "for they are they that testify of me." Look therefore always for Christ in the Scripture. For he is the treasure hid in the field, both of the Old and New Testament. In the Old you'll find him hid under prophecies, types, sacrifices and shadows; in the New, manifested in the flesh to become a propitiation for our sins, as a priest, and as a prophet to reveal the whole will of his heavenly Father.

Secondly, search the Scriptures with a humble childlike disposition. For whosoever does not read them with this temper shall in no wise enter into the knowledge of the things contained therein. For God hides the sense of them from those that are wise and prudent in their own eyes, and reveals them only to babes in Christ, who think they know nothing yet as they ought to know, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and humbly desire to be fed with the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby.

Thirdly, search the Scriptures with a sincere intention to put in practice what you read. For a desire to do the will of God is the only way to know it. But to those who consult his Word with a desire neither to know him nor to keep his commandments, but either for their entertainment or to scoff at the simplicity of the manner in which he is revealed, to those I say he never will reveal himself though they should search the Scriptures to all eternity.

Fourthly, in order to search the Scriptures still more effectually, make an application of everything you read to your own hearts. For whatever was written in the Book of God was written for our learning. And it is this application of all the doctrinal and historical parts of Scripture, when we are reading them over, that must render them profitable to us, as they were designed for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and [to] make every child of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.

Fifthly, labor to attain that Spirit by which they were written. For the natural man discerns not the words of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned. The words that Christ has spoken are Spirit, and they are Life; and they can be no more

understood as to the true sense and meaning by the mere natural man than a person who never had learned a language can understand another speaking it.

Sixthly, let me advise you before you read the Scripture to pray that Christ, according to his promise, would send his Spirit to guide you into all truth. Intersperse short ejaculations while you are engaged in reading, pray over every word and verse if possible, and when you close up the Book, most earnestly beseech God that the words which you then have read may be inwardly engrafted in your hearts, and bring forth in you the fruits of good living.

Seventhly, read the Scriptures constantly. Dig in them as for hid treasure. The Scriptures contain the deep things of God, and therefore can never be sufficiently searched into by a careless, superficial, cursory way of reading them, but [only] by an industrious, close and humble application.

Search therefore the Scriptures, my dear brethren. Taste and see how good the Word of God is, and then you will never leave that heavenly manna, that Angel's food, to feed on those dry husks--those trifling, sinful compositions which men of false taste delight themselves in. No, you will then disdain such poor entertainment and blush that yourselves once were fond of it.

The Christian's Companion: or, Sermons on Several Subjects (condensed)

Day 8

THE CHARACTER OF MOSES

W. B. Collyer

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."
(Hebrews 11:24-27)

It is impossible to contemplate the character of Moses, in any point of view, without being struck with its singular greatness. We are surprised to see the little deserted child, who floated in a bulrush ark the sport of winds and waves, starting up a lawgiver, a hero, a general, a monarch; and evincing in every sphere of operation, in every period of life, in every rank of society an evident superiority not merely over his contemporaries, but also over his predecessors and the generations which have followed him. But of all his distinctions, that which the apostle seized is the most conspicuous; of all his achievements it is the most noble; of all his conquests it is the most brilliant. It was at one and the same time a victory over the world, a victory over sin, and a victory over himself. *"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter . . . esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt . . . By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."*

What did he relinquish? Honor, reputation, distinction, a crown? The objects which dazzle the eyes, which captivate the affections, which subdue the heart, which inflame the desires of others--these he voluntarily resigned. He gave up of his own accord, from a noble contempt of its worthlessness, that for which the hero dyes his hands in blood, hardens his heart against the tears of humanity and the pleadings of nature, violates the rights of nations, destroys the liberties of mankind, and for the attainment of which Europe is now desolated and thousands are laid asleep in the dust. Moses aimed at a nobler conquest and won a greater field than that of Austerlitz or Calabria, when he subdued ambition, renounced the court of Pharaoh, and relinquished his claim on Egypt's well-watered kingdom!

What did he embrace? A life of danger, a sphere of humiliation, a track of ignominy. He did not withdraw to spend his days in ease and in elegant retirement. He neither shrank from the painful duties of life nor expected exemption from its troubles. On the contrary, he walked along its most thorny path. He chose a portion which necessarily involved in it affliction. And he did it upon the conviction of his judgment and the decisions of his heart. Had he been expressly called to it, we might have wondered less. But it was his choice, and he obeyed in the voice of God the impulse of his own great mind.

Oh, how I envy him his feelings! How sweet were the hours of his retirement, of his reflections, of his repose! He did not meet, like Brutus, an apparition in his tent raised by the accusations of conscience to reproach him with a deed which he had flattered himself

would cover him with immortal glory. He did not, in casting the die and taking his final resolution, decree, like Caesar, the ruin of his country's liberties. He did not, like Alexander, first subdue the world and then weep that he had not another world to conquer. These all had something to tarnish their glory, something to disturb their repose; and they felt how vain and how unsatisfactory is human greatness. They often repented of their choice; but he, never!

And this greatness is attainable! All have not a crown to resign, but every man has passions to conquer. All cannot reach the summit of a hero's fame, but all may choose the lot of Moses. They may be destitute of his talents, of his literature, of his rank, but they may adopt his decision; and in this he was most eminent and most glorious.

Here is a guiltless field for the noblest ambition, and here is a lesson for the proudest heart! Behold the eulogy of the greatest man that ever lived! And in what is it founded? Not on his distinction as a legislator, his skill as a general, his elevation as a monarch, his attainments as a scholar, not even his superiority as a prophet. These are all waived. Upon this alone his character rests--he *chose* "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." "*Go, and do likewise.*"

Selections from Theological Lectures

Day 9

ON PRESUMPTUOUS PLANS

Thomas Gisborne

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:13-17)

In this passage St. James directs his reproof against that disposition, so common among men, to form distant and presumptuous plans. If we knew nothing more concerning human life than what we hear in our dwellings and our streets, we might conclude that men are at this present moment capable of fixing and settling every circumstance to a certainty. They express their plans in terms which scarcely admit any doubt whether their scheme will be accomplished. The end to which St. James intimates that these schemes are most commonly directed is *gain*--the end of the pursuits of most men.

Our blessed Lord looked upon riches with a different eye from that of the world. He saw that they generally proved grievous hindrances to religion. Yet what multitudes set their hearts on this dangerous acquisition! The hope of obtaining wealth, or indulging in the enjoyment of it, ensnares men into forgetfulness of God, disregard of salvation, guilty enterprises and pursuits, deliberate fraud and open violence.

There is great folly in such presumption. Suppose your plans are free from those causes of failure which the world calls *accidental* events; suppose every precaution has been adopted for the furtherance of its success; suppose "fortune" smiles upon you; and suppose that everything turns out well. Have you any certainty of the fulfillment of your wishes? Have you the slightest assurance that you have in reality advanced one step towards the attainment of your goal? "Tomorrow," you say, "it will be within my grasp!" *"Boast not of tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth."* Death comes, and in a moment sweeps away you and your plans forever! How many schemes and projects of your neighbors or relatives have come to a halt by death? Their plans, expectations, and promises are no more. They who formed and cherished them are removed to another state of being--awaiting a *resurrection of life* or a *resurrection of damnation*.

In all our undertakings, intentions, and prospects, let us remember that God is the Master and we are the servants; that God is everything and we are nothing. He sits in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all. He lifts up and He casts down. The disposal of the lot is with Him, and in His hands are the issues of life and death. In all things we ought cheerfully to submit ourselves, for what can man do against Him? What can man do without Him? How shall any plan take effect except by his support? How shall any plan fail if it be supported by Omnipotence?

Man is lost in ignorance. He does not know what objects to pursue nor what measures will

contribute to its success. How shall he choose correctly? How shall he direct his steps aright? By committing himself to his Maker. Set your affections on those objects which God, in his holy word, points out as the only ones worthy of a Christian's regard. Pursue them on those principles and by those methods which the same holy word declares to be the only means lawful to a Christian. Then will the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Wisdom, maintain you under His unerring guidance. God is the God of all goodness! It is He who, of His own free bounty, has bestowed upon you life and all its blessings. What good gift is there which he is not ready to bestow upon you? *"He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"*

Sermons

Day 10

THE TRAVELERS

Joel Baker

"If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

Exodus 33:15

The life of man is one continued journey from the cradle to the grave. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they traveled three months and came to Mount Sinai in the wilderness, where they encamped many days to receive instruction from the Lord by the hand of Moses. Here they provoked God to destroy many of them by making and worshiping the golden calf. At this time Moses was greatly distressed for the people, and as their leader he sensibly felt his need of the divine presence. Accordingly he was disposed to make earnest supplication to God for his blessing and direction. Though Moses and the Israelites were now in a waste, howling wilderness bound for Canaan, of which land many good things had been said to increase their desire for it, yet it seems Moses chose to live and die with God in that wilderness rather than go up to the good land without God's gracious presence. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

The plain, important proposition from the text is this: God's gracious presence is desirable and necessary to direct and prosper us in the journey of life.

A man left to his own direction in this changing world would be like a ship in a storm, without helm or compass. "It is not in man that walks, to direct his steps. The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." With all our activity and resolution to carry on and accomplish our worldly schemes, we are wholly dependent on the blessing of God to enable us to bring them to pass. "Without me," says the Saviour, "ye can do nothing." This is true in temporal as well as in spiritual concerns. We can never expect to prosper when God does not smile upon our undertakings.

We need the divine presence to support and comfort us under the trials of life. Go where we will, follow whatever employment in life, crosses and disappointments will attend us. The gracious presence of God is an unfailing support under all the necessary evils of life. It will serve to smooth the rugged path of life and to fortify the mind against approaching evils. When God engages for a people, they have nothing to fear. Under his direction they may engage in the most weighty concerns and be enabled to accomplish the most difficult undertakings.

The principal and most effectual mean of obtaining the divine presence is earnest humble prayer to God. When God is about to bestow favors, he will first be sought unto by his people, to do it for them. He does not grant blessings for our prayers, nor will he bestow them without our prayers. The wisdom and goodness of God are wonderfully manifested by giving such things as we need in answer to prayer. Though God perfectly knows all our wants and has determined beforehand what mercies to grant, yet he has also determined to make us sensible of our need of mercy and humbly to ask for it before he bestows it upon us.

We may be sure to have the divine presence in all our journeying through life when the glory of God is our chief end. If God made his own glory his chief end in all his works, it is highly reasonable we should have this our leading object in all we do. It is not enough for us to aim at God's glory in some of the high acts of religion and to be regardless of it in everything else. The Apostle brings it down to small actions, and makes it necessary in everything. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Sermon (condensed)

Day 11

ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE

F. R. Webber

*"For Yahweh is righteous, He loves righteousness;
His countenance beholds the upright."*

Psalm 11:7

Although he died at the age of 30, Robert McCheyne was one of the best-known Scottish preachers of his day. He was born in 1813 in Edinburgh. He learned the Greek alphabet at the age of four, and he was able to write it correctly on his slate. At the age of eight he entered the high school, and when but fourteen he entered Edinburgh University. In 1831 he began his theological studies in the Divinity Hall, where Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Welsh were among his professors. . . .

He was licensed in 1835, and four months later he became assistant to the Rev. John Bonar at Larbert and Dunipace, Shropshire, a parish of about 6,000 souls. He became famous for his preaching even before his ordination, and his sermons at Larbert attracted attention far beyond his parish. In his collected writings, published shortly after his death, are most touching letters written to young people of his congregation who had been guilty of some slight transgression. In gentle language he pleads with them, all the while confessing his own great unworthiness. In 1836 he was ordained pastor of St. Peter's, Dundee, a newly organized *quoad sacra* congregation. This new district included 1,100 communicant members and between 3,000 and 4,000 souls. In 1838 he was appointed, because of his remarkable gifts, to make a tour of Forfarshire with Dr. Guthrie in the interest of church extension work. In 1839 he was sent with Andrew Bonar and others on a tour of Palestine in the interest of the General Assembly's Jewish missionary project. In 1842 he engaged in a preaching tour throughout the northern part of England, followed by preaching missions in London and Aberdeenshire. In March, 1843, he was taken ill rather suddenly and died at the age of 30.

Robert McCheyne, in his short career of less than seven years, had become famous throughout Scotland. His singularly upright character and the deep spirituality of his sermons and writings led men to call him "the saintly McCheyne," and they said this in utmost sincerity. He had a fine, clear voice, a good face and a most attractive manner. His power of analysis was unusual. His sermons are expressed in clear, simple language. His printed sermons rarely exceed three or four pages, and are often without introductions, conclusions or applications. His spoken sermons were often lengthy. It was his custom to write out the body of his sermon with great care, striving for utmost simplicity of language. With this as a foundation, it was his custom to add an appropriate introduction, amplifications, searching applications and appeals and a fitting conclusion at the time that he preached the sermon. His sermons were strongly doctrinal and expository, but those who knew him well, such as his friend Andrew Bonar, regret the fact that his matchless applications and direct appeals to his hearers were all delivered impromptu.

In his spoken sermons he first announced his text, then explained its relation to its context, and then announced and expounded the chief doctrine that he wished to

emphasize. He was noted for his skilful divisions and subdivisions. These were never arbitrary, never artificial, never an attempt at cleverness. He derived them from the text itself, and usually in the very words of the text, so that it might be impressed upon his hearers. As one pages through his printed sermons, these divisions and subdivisions are often so simple as to seem almost childish, yet one cannot deny that they are completely Scriptural. He used to tell his friends that every sermon must be constructed upon the basis of two grand principles: Ruin by the Fall and Recovery by the Mediator. His preaching was doctrinal, but no matter what might be the doctrine that he was expounding, Jesus Christ always occupied a central place. He was thoroughly evangelical, and he declared that Moderatism was a weed that had not been planted by the Lord, but which the Lord Himself would soon uproot. . . .

"McCheyne brought into the pulpit," says Dr. Blaikie, "all the reverence for Scripture of the Reformation period; all the honour for the headship of Christ of the Covenanter struggle; all the freeness of the Gospel offer of the Marrow theology; all the bright imagery of Samuel Rutherford; all the delight of the Erskines in the fulness of Christ. In McCheyne the effect of a cultured taste was apparent in the chastened beauty and simplicity of his style, if you can call it a style--in a sense he has no style, or rather it was the perfection of style, for it was transparent as glass. The new element he brought to the pulpit, or rather which he revived and used so much that it appeared new, was *winsomeness*. It was an almost feminine quality. A pity that turned many of his sermons into elegiac poems, thrilled his heart, and by the power of the Spirit imparted the thrill to many souls. How precious his example and memory have been to Scotland is shown by the continued demand for his *Life and Letters*. And how invaluable the evangelistic labours begun by him and his brethren, and still continued and often blessed throughout our country, no Scotch audience needs to be told."

A History of Preaching

Day 12

THE HABITUAL RECOGNITION OF GOD
Nathaniel W. Taylor

*"I have set Yahweh always before me;
because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved."*
Psalm 16:8

The whole life of man ought to be a continued act of religion; and such is the condition of man in the world that the far greater portion of life is made up of the performance or neglect of those duties which result from his worldly calling or occupation. Would we fill up this portion of our existence with its duties, we must set the Lord always before us. Are we engaged in mercantile transactions? Let us reflect that God is present--that our supreme Lawgiver and final Judge sees and knows whether we are satisfied with just and reasonable profits, whether we are desirous of imposing upon the other party, whether we are aiming to deal with strict honesty and uprightness. How would a habitual sense of God on the mind secure us from swerving to the right hand or the left in these transactions! Have we promised to execute a piece of work for an employer? Were we to set God before us and maintain a habitual impression of what he is in himself and what he is to us, how scrupulously careful would we be that we devoted to our employer's service all the time and labor for which he pays us, and that our conduct should be exactly that which in a change of circumstances we would wish from him!

The advantages of setting the Lord always before us may be seen in some of the more unimportant and ordinary occurrences of life. It is not merely under the severer dispensations of divine providence--not merely under the great and striking occurrences of life--that we are the subjects of duty. Our life is made up of unimportant circumstances rather than of great events. These are designed to answer the purposes of our discipline, as they are quite sufficient (for the most part) to exercise the Christian temper and affections

But it is in this part of our trial on earth that we chiefly fail. Great events arrest our thoughts and force us to think of God and of duty. But how many, how innumerable are those to which we attach so trivial an importance as scarcely to imagine that any duty is connected with them, or that they bring with them any responsibilities! The imperfections and disagreeableness of those around us, the perverseness of those with whom we transact business, the fretfulness and indiscretions and noisy disturbance of children, the interruptions which break in on our favorite engagements, an importunate application, a disqualifying but not severe illness, a letter important to another but not to us--[all these] break in upon our plans and try our temper. Or perhaps we place a high value on our leisure (our religious leisure or opportunities), on the duties of retired devotion or social worship, and say with cheerful anticipation it is good for us to be there. But the duties of the family or the indispensable calls of business defeat our schemes. Or perhaps we actually partake of these enjoyments, and then the divine vision is withdrawn and we are compelled to come down from the mount.

Under these and a thousand like occurrences of life, how little do we feel that we are

creatures of duty! How common is it to regard a measure of fretfulness and discontent as lawful, and to yield to a state of feeling that is as really offensive to God as the outbreakings of murmuring rebellion! And in this way how great a portion of life is filled up with overt sins against God! What is the remedy? Set the Lord always before you. It is he who directs these inferior trials no less than those which are more severe. Constantly, then, trace his hand even in the little disappointments and hourly vexations which occur in the most prosperous state. God reigns alike in the fall of a sparrow and in the revolutions of systems; and a perpetual conquest over impatience, and ill-temper, and self-will is the service to which he calls us in every condition. To feel this, by habitual regard of him as the omnipresent reigning God, is the ample and the only security that we shall not habitually be turned from the path of duty.

Sermons (condensed)

Day 13

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE
Joseph Lathrop

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13,14).

The Spirit of promise, which works in believers, is called the *holy* and *good* Spirit in distinction from the spirit which works in the children of disobedience, and which is called an *evil* and *unclean* spirit. If the Spirit is holy, we may conclude that all his operations tend to holiness and that the works which he produces are of a holy nature. By this mark we are to judge whether we are led by the Spirit of God: *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit"* [Rom. 8:5]. *"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh"* [Gal. 5:16]. They who are sensual have not the Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit and the works of the flesh stand opposed to each other.

We are never to ascribe to the divine Spirit anything but what is agreeable to the divine character. *"Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt any man. But each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. . . . Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down the Father of lights"* [James 1:13-17]. Good, we are to ascribe to Him; but not evil, *moral* evil. This is contrary to his nature and therefore is never the effect of his operation and influence. He is always the same holy Being--*"with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."*

If we would know by what Spirit we are guided, we must compare his operations with the precepts of the gospel. By the gospel we are called to meekness, humility, peacefulness, charity, sobriety, contentment, truth, and righteousness; and these are the fruits of the Spirit. Now if we find that the spirit which is in us leads to passion, pride, contention, self-confidence, uncharitableness and contempt of others, we may certainly conclude that it is not the Spirit of God.

By this rule we are to judge of all impressions, excitements, and impulses which at any time we feel. If we find ourselves strongly impelled to a certain action, we are not at once to conclude that the impulse is divine and thus infer that the action is our duty. Rather, we are *first* to examine whether the action itself is holy and virtuous. Then we may conclude whether the inward motion prompting us to it to be from above or from beneath, and whether the conduct in question appears to agree or disagree with the word of God. In other words, we are not to make our own feelings the standard of right and wrong, but rather to test our feelings by the sober sentiments of reason and the sure dictates of divine revelation.

A View of the Doctrines and Duties of the Christian Religion

Day 14

ANTICIPATING THE LAST JUDGMENT
Charles Spurgeon

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

There is a story told of two soldiers who, being in the valley of Jehoshaphat, the one said to the other, "Here in this place shall be the general judgment, and therefore I will now take up my place where I will then sit." And so, lifting up a stone, he sat down upon it, as taking his place beforehand. But as he sat there, such a quaking and trembling fell upon him that he remembered the day of judgment with horror and amazement forever after.

Might it not be of exceeding value to many of our friends if they would try and seat themselves in the place which they will occupy at the last great day? Let them think that it has come, and that they are present; for it will soon be so. Let them look up and realize the scene. Behold, a great white cloud comes floating upward and forward, and on the cloud there is a great white throne, from which everything is reflected of the past and present of mortal men. Gazing around for a moment, the mighty multitude astounds and amazes the beholder. The dead are there, and all the millions of the living. The sea has yielded up every corpse, and every foot of earth teems with myriads upon myriads of long-buried men. All eyes are turned toward the cloud, and the throne, and the Son of God who sits thereon surrounded by an innumerable company of angels. Who can adequately conceive, "the pomp of that tremendous day, when Christ with clouds shall come?"

See, the books are opened, and the last assize begins with sound of trumpet. It is even now at our doors, and the thought of it is enough to arouse the fears and startle the consciences of all but the most brutal and graceless of men.

The putting off or forgetting of the Lord's coming and the judgment is the cause of much hardness of heart. The evil servant would not have behaved himself so ill if he had looked upon his master's return as near at hand. Men who have death at their elbow and see judgment before their eyes are likely to break off their sins by righteousness, and seek to be reconciled to God. I have heard of the women of a certain island, that the first sheet they wove was the winding-sheet, and this they kept by them. I am afraid that this fashion has long since died out, and that both men and women live as if there would be no hereafter. This is the root of much of the impiety of our age.

Sit down, dear reader, if you are as yet unsaved, and take an hour for this solemn exercise; it may prove the turning-point of your history. In a few years you will be one of that vast assembly, and have to answer for every deed and word of your life. Think of it long, picture it vividly, let it work upon your mind. Though at the first it fill you with fear and trembling, it may conduct you to the Savior's feet; and then looking up to him with penitential faith, you may hear how to "have boldness in the day of judgment." If you fly to Jesus as your Savior, you will not fear to face him as your King. It has been well said, "You will meet the Great Day well if you get the Great Judge to judge you every day."

Suppose that this night you should start [wake] up and find the day of grace over and the day of judgment beginning! Suppose you should within an hour hear the Lord Jesus say to you, "Depart!" These are no vain imaginings. If you remain as you are, they will be true ere long. Do but put them before your mind's eye a little before the time, that you may judge of the wisdom of running so grave a risk. Those who wish to act well on great public occasions rehearse their parts beforehand. Unconverted friend, rehearse your part and prepare yourself to receive the dread sentence which awaits all who are out of Christ. Are you afraid to think of it? Be much more afraid of enduring it! If even to dream of the Last Day is a terrible event, what must it be then to be there in reality? The prisoner who will not even think of his trial is in his conscience assured of a verdict of condemnation. Would he not be far wiser to seek for a Counselor to plead his cause? Will you not seek One? Jesus, the faithful Counselor, asks no fee. Commit your cause into his hand, and you need not fear the Last Assize.

The Sword and the Trowel

Day 15

AHAB'S IVORY HOUSE
Harvey Goodwin

"So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of Yahweh which He had spoken. Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kings 22:37-39)

Now I wish to speak to you about the difference between the history of the life of Ahab, as it has been preserved for us in the Book of Kings, and the history of it as we may suppose it to have existed in this lost book. Taking Ahab as we find him in the Old Testament, his character seems throughout to be in keeping with that awful description of him--that he was one who had "sold himself to work wickedness." His life seems instinct with but one spirit--that of wilfulness and rebellion. There is scarcely one redeeming feature.

The most favorable point in his life was the manner in which he put his faith in the Lord when threatened by Benhadad, as you may read in 1 Kings 20. And yet in this we may find matter for his condemnation, for when we read that in his fear of Benhadad he was willing patiently to consult the prophet of the Lord, and when his faith was rewarded with success, how can we think that his subsequent ungodliness and rebellion was otherwise than extremely aggravated? And that other redeeming feature of his life, as it would seem--his penitence and ambition when threatened by Elijah after the murder of Naboth--what is that better than a condemnation, when we think that Ahab could be humbled for a few days by the fear of threatened vengeance and yet never permanently repent and seek the Lord against whom he had sinned? And if you put out of the question these two passages, which after all do not seem much to his praise when sifted to the bottom, you can, as I have said, scarcely find a redeeming feature in Ahab's life. And we have it on the testimony of the sacred historian that there was none like Ahab in the extremity of his wickedness, none so daring in rebellion, none so thoroughpaced in sin.

Yet I suspect that if we had possessed the lost Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, or if we had a life of Ahab drawn by some uninspired and not very experienced hand, we might have had a very different picture given to us. The text speaks of that other book containing an account of "all the rest of Ahab's acts, and the ivory house which he made, and the cities which he built." And these glimpses of Ahab's life reveal him to us in a quite different character from that which appears on the face of the Bible history.

He would seem to have been one who encouraged arts and industry, one who did a good deal for the temporal improvement of his people, and one concerning whom a flattering historian might have said many things which would tend to raise our thoughts of him as a useful king. You can easily fancy the figure which the ivory palace and the newly-erected cities would form in the narrative of some human historian, and how much would be said about the adorning of the capital, the strengthening of the kingdom, the growth of wealth and commerce. But one verse of the sacred history is sufficient to include all that it was

necessary to say on this head, and that which really forms the staple of the life of Ahab is his spirit of ungodliness and rebellion.

And we may see an awful commentary on such lives in that which has happened in the case of Ahab. His ivory palace and the cities which he built have passed away, together with that book of Chronicles which contained their history. They are gone by and have vanished like a dream. But what has remained, and will remain for evermore, is the fearful testimony that neither before nor since was there ever any king in Israel like Ahab, who gave himself up so completely and unreservedly to work evil in the sight of the Lord. We may see a commentary upon this truth, that the question of lasting importance to each man is no other than this: whether he has set himself with all his heart to serve the Lord, or whether he has determined to be rebellious. And that lasting praise belongs not to him who builds cities and ivory palaces, but to him who fears the Lord and walks in His ways.

Now all this is part and parcel of a great and general truth, namely, that God and man look upon many things in very different lights. "Man looks to the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart."

Thus it is that we fall into the habit of weighing actions by other balances than that of God's sanctuary. We allow the brilliancy of a man's deeds to light up the darkness of his principles. We allow a man to expunge from his list of household words *duty, obedience, submission, humility*, and to put the empty name of *glory* in their place. And though the glory be only the glory of self, still, if it be pursued with genius and success, we allow ourselves to admire and applaud.

Very differently will the lives of men seem to be when all things are made new, and the Son of Man sits upon His throne, and all men have to be tried before Him. "Give an account of your stewardship! You who have had power and wealth and talent and time, what have you done? What use have you made of your gifts?" How will it serve an Ahab to make to the question a reply such as this: "I have done many deeds which the people applauded. I built many cities, and I made an ivory palace!"

Alas! these things may look well on the page of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, but they will find no record in the Book of Life. And indeed, Christian brethren, many an act which has been praised and noised about in human chronicles is like the ivory house and the cities of this unhappy king of Israel. A traveler may walk through the land of Israel and he will see no vestige of Ahab's greatness. His cities have long since been depopulated, his palace has passed away. But that testimony has not passed away; it is written in God's book forevermore. It has come down even to us as a lesson and a warning in these latter days, that Ahab was one who sold himself to work wickedness before the Lord beyond all other kings of Israel.

Wherefore let us lay this well to heart, that we too may possibly be walking in a vain show. We may possibly be judging of ourselves, and may be judged by others, differently from the judgment of God. I would that we could all feel more deeply the awfulness and solemnity of our present lives. We have a work to do in this life which requires all our care. We have "to work out our salvation with fear and trembling." We have to build a tower upon that

foundation stone which Christ has laid in Zion--the top of which shall reach to heaven--to save us when the flood of God's wrath comes.

Parish Sermons (condensed)

Day 16

THE SIN OF UNBELIEF
Daniel Baker

"But he who believes not shall be damned."
Mark 16:16

This is one of the most awful declarations found in all the sacred volume; and it assumes a character of peculiar interest and solemnity when we recollect by whom this declaration was originally made and the circumstances in which it was made.

By whom was this declaration originally made? It was not by an enemy, but by a Friend--the sinner's best Friend--even the loving tender-hearted Saviour himself. Yes, it is none other than the blessed Jesus, who died for sinners and before whose judgment-seat we must all one day appear, who said, "He that believes not shall be damned." And when did he utter this awful language? In the most interesting circumstances which can well be imagined. It was in his last interview with his disciples. He had died on the cross, he had risen from the tomb, and he was now just about to ascend to heaven. His disciples are around him, and there is the cloud like a chariot hovering over him, and angels waiting to attend him to his home in the sky. In these peculiarly interesting circumstances our great Redeemer gave his parting charge: "Go, my disciples, into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"--here we have the overtures of mercy for those who accept of the way of salvation proposed in the gospel; "but he that believes not, shall be damned"--here we have solemnly announced the certain doom of those who reject it.

Remember, these are among the very last words which fell from the lips of our blessed Saviour when on earth, and they may well be depended upon; for who can suppose that He, whose love for our race was stronger than death, would use language unnecessarily harsh? Or who can for a moment suppose that our Saviour would utter vain words, especially in circumstances of such peculiar interest and solemnity. No, my friends. The declaration in our text may not be lightly regarded. It presents a truth of tremendous import and must stand forever--"He that believes not shall be damned."

Unbelief is the opposite of faith. Now as faith is giving credence to the testimony of God in general, having special reference to the mediatorial character of Christ as the world's last and only hope, unbelief is the rejection of that testimony. And this may be either speculative or practical. *Speculative*, as when a man looks upon Christianity as a farce and the Bible as a cunningly devised fable. Unbelievers of this class are certainly embraced in the anathema of the text, "he that believes not shall be damned." But unbelief may also be *practical*, as when a person professes to believe that the Bible is the word of God and yet is not influenced by the Bible; or, as when a man admits that Christ is a Saviour and yet receives him not as such; admits that Christ is the only Saviour and yet treats him as if he were no Saviour at all. In this case the understanding assents but the will rebels; the head is right but the heart is wrong. There is no want [lack] of evidence, but a lack of disposition. In both cases the unbelief is substantially the same. Christ is rejected; and as without him there is no Saviour, the condemnation of the one, of course, must be as certain

as the condemnation of the other.

It is manifest from the whole tenor of the Bible that whether we can fully understand the matter or not, there is something in the sight of God exceedingly offensive and hateful in the sin of unbelief. No sin, it would appear, calls down heavier wrath than this. Why was it that a whole generation of Jews were cut off from the promised land? The Psalmist says that with that generation God was not well pleased, and swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest [Ps. 95:11]. And lo, their carcasses fell in the wilderness and their bones were made to bleach in the desert. [This was] a fearful monument of God's wrath for some sin committed. And what sin? Their strivings, their rebellions, their idolatries? No. Why then was it that they were not permitted to enter the promised land? The apostle tells us in express terms: "They could not enter in because of unbelief" [Heb. 3:9]. And when he said this, he seized the opportunity to give needful warning to those to whom he was writing--"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief" [Heb. 3:12].

Some eighteen hundred years ago the Jews were cut off from their land amid circumstances which indicated special divine wrath. Our Saviour predicted that there would be many signs and wonders and fearful sights connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, such as should cause men's hearts to tremble and fail within them. The historian tells us that when Titus, the Roman commander, had gotten within the walls of the city and had looked upon the scene of unprecedented distress spread before his eyes, he could not refrain from tears; and, looking up to heaven, he called God to witness that he (Titus) had not brought these calamities upon the Jews; and added that it was so evident that God was angry with them that he was afraid not to punish them lest God should punish him. Now, the question is, why were they thus cut off? The answer is given by the apostle himself: "Because of unbelief they were broken off" [Rom. 11:20].

Unbelief strikes a blow at God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, pouring contempt upon his truth. John says, "he that believes the record of God concerning his Son has set to his seal that God is true; but he that believes not has made him a liar" [1 John 5:10]. What strong language this is, and in what an awful, frightful light does it present the sin of unbelief! I have seen men excited. I have heard them raising towards each other harsh language, abusive language, and yet no act of violence was done. But the moment one said to the other, "You are a liar," that moment the blow was given. This is common all the world over. I do not say it is right, but I do say it requires grace, much grace, not to give the blow. And why? In pronouncing a man a liar you give him the greatest affront which can be given. You pronounce him vile, depraved, void of all moral principle, fit only to be scorned and despised.

Now, sinner, you who have rejected Heaven's Darling, remember the words of the apostle and let conviction seize upon you! Yea, let fear and trembling come upon you. By your unbelief you have dishonoured God! You have insulted your Maker! You have made the Ancient of days, the all-glorious and ever-blessed King of the universe, a liar! Be sure your sin will find you out.

Revival Sermons (condensed)

Day 17

WHY WORRY?
Kenneth S. Wuest

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Philippians 4:6)

In Philippians 4:6 we are exhorted to be careful for nothing. We have here a word that has changed its meaning. Today it means to exercise caution. When our translation was made it meant to be full of anxious care. The Greek word is used in a second century sentence, "I am writing in haste to prevent your being anxious, for I will see that you are not worried." The word therefore is a synonym for the word "worry." The force of the word in the Greek is that of forbidding the continuance of an action already going on. Thus the translation is, "Stop perpetually worrying about even one thing."

The same Greek word is found in Matthew 6:25 and is translated, "Take no thought." We have the same force of the Greek here. "Stop perpetually worrying." This recognizes the habitual attitude of the unsaved human heart toward the problems and difficulties of life. God commands us to "Stop perpetually worrying about even one thing." We commit sin when we worry. We do not trust God when we worry. We do not receive answers to prayer when we worry, because we are not trusting.

But this command not to worry is founded upon a reasonable basis. That is, there is a reason why we need not worry. In 1 Peter 5:7 we have, "Casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you." The word "care" is from the same Greek word. We are commanded to cast all our worry upon Him. The word "cast" is not the ordinary word in Greek which means "to throw," but one which signifies a definite act of the will in committing to Him our worries, giving them up to Him. That means that we are through worrying about the matter. We will let God assume the responsibility for our welfare in the promises.

And that is just what He desires to do. We are to commit to Him all our worries, or the things that would worry us if we assumed the responsibility, because He cares for us. But the word "cares" is not the word for "worry" in the Greek. The expression in the original means literally, "is a care to him concerning you." That is, your welfare is His concern. He in bringing you in salvation into His family, has undertaken the responsibility of caring for your welfare. Therefore, if that is true, why worry?

There is on record in an early Greek manuscript the name of a man called Titedios Amerimnos. The first name is a proper name. The second name is made up of the word which means "to worry," with the Greek letter Alpha prefixed to it which makes the word mean the opposite of what it formerly meant. It is thought that this man was a pagan Greek who perpetually worried, but who, after being saved, stopped worrying. So he was called, "Titedios, the Man who Never Worries." Can we write our name and add to it, "The One Who Never Worries"?

Golden Nuggets from the Greek New Testament

Day 18

DEPENDENCE UPON GOD

Charles Mason

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

1 Peter 5:7

In these and many similar words of Holy Writ we have distinct and cheering assurances that the Infinite God regards with tender compassion all the trials of His creatures, and will grant relief to all who humbly seek Him. This is a truth so wonderful, so sublime, that it obtains little credit with an unbelieving world. That the Being of whose exalted and unfathomable nature we can form but the faintest conception, and upon whose will and power the universe depends, should indeed with a father's tenderness and sympathy behold every care, every anxiety, every trial of the most inconsiderable of His creatures; that He should anticipate their every humble thought, their every breath of prayer for relief; this is an extent and minuteness of sympathy which the natural heart finds it difficult to comprehend. We are prone to think of Him as a God afar off, and not as a God near to every one of us. We are apt to consider it almost incredible that a Being of such infinite power and occupied by such infinite concerns should condescend to watch over the minutest affairs of man, and to manifest the most assiduous and tender care for his earthly and eternal interests.

Yet such is the truth in which we are called upon to place a simple undoubting trust, as the great and only sufficient motive for cheerfulness in our earthly course. Whatever expressions, then, can convey to the heart and mind the utmost degree of sympathy and compassion, such are employed by God to teach His children the unlimited degree of His love. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Whatever form of language can express the strongest assurance of Divine condescension, that is used to encourage this perfect trust in God.

Here then is the strong motive for seeking God for relief when suffering under the burden of a troubled spirit. It is addressed to a simple faith in the promises of Him who cannot lie. It is the undoubting assurance that the great Being who orders all events, and molds the heart at pleasure, cares for you and will sustain you under the pressure of the weightiest affliction. Here is the unfailing remedy: trust in the compassion, condescension, and support of the Lord. This is the only anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast: implicit trust in the wisdom and goodness of God. It is the very simplicity of the remedy which staggers the faith of mankind.

You may witness the most convincing evidence of the sustaining power of this trust in every walk of life, in all the varied circumstances of suffering, in every change which can possibly pass over the course of the religious pilgrim. It sustained Abraham when commanded to give up his only son an offering unto God. It supported David when, in view of his many troubles, he exclaimed, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." By it Daniel placed himself without fear in the hands of his enemies, and was preserved unharmed. This it was that enabled Paul, and the early

believers generally, to rejoice in tribulation and anguish, and which made them "more than conquerors through Him that loved them."

And if we descend into the more retired walks of life, we shall find many instances of the most cheerful patience under the most trying circumstances, the secret of which is trust in the love and compassion of God. We shall see the countenance bearing marks of a serene and submissive spirit, and the lips uttering words of resignation, love, and praise, while the body is tossed upon a bed of pain, and while the successive waves of affliction roll over it.

There is a wide and mournful difference between acknowledging a motive and a duty, and feeling their power in the heart. It is very easy to say to the troubled soul, "Peace, be still," but difficult, indeed, to actually subdue the risings of natural desire and passion. When trouble threatens or has actually befallen us, vain is the attempt to find comfort and peace in the Divine promises, and hardly will the soul bow in acquiescence to the will of God unless it has been prepared by the precious exercise of submission, and by much conscientious reflection upon the wisdom and love of the Ruler and Disposer of all events. Unless we live habitually under the impression of such views of the Divine character and sovereignty, and move onward in life as pilgrims, expecting frequent and great changes in our outward position; unless we maintain a constant feeling that all those blessings by which we are surrounded are at the will of a higher power, and in most instances are intended to be transient, the hour of heavy calamity will find us unprepared to meet it with resignation. We shall be disposed to repine and rebel against the wise decrees of the Almighty. We shall not be able to realize that it was in truth the hand of mercy which thus afflicted us.

My brethren, the only rule of wisdom in this respect is, in the time of prosperity to prepare for adversity. I do not mean that we should be anxious or fearful about the future, but that we should maintain the habit of feeling that God is present in all the events that may befall us in His own good providence, and that this is a world which in its very nature is changing and which passes away. While your blessings are spared, enjoy them with that chastened, subdued emotion which will prepare you, when the hour of separation must at length come, to control your grief and submit to God's will, and to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them," but prepare yourselves by self-denial to endure their loss. Cultivate at all times that disposition commended to us in the words as well as in the life of the Apostle Paul, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed 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."

To live in this state of readiness will require much watchfulness, prayer, and self-denial. But its fruit will be an equable, cheerful, and submissive temper; and it will cause your peace of mind to rise far above the changes which take place around you, and help you to enter into the spirit of the words of St. Paul when he said, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." And if you should indeed be enabled to bear the troubles, cares, and trials of life in this manner, they would prove in the end your

greatest blessings. They would be made instruments of training you for Heaven.

Strive then thus habitually to cast your cares upon the Lord. Faint not when you are rebuked of Him, and you shall realize an ever-increasing satisfaction, and shall enjoy a hope which will sustain you in every trouble and enable you to resign your souls, at the final call, into the hands of God with perfect hope and joy and peace! With this elevated faith and meek submission, we may all be found conquerors, and "more than conquerors" through Him that loved us and gave Himself for us.

Parochial Sermons (condensed)

Day 19

ADAM, THE FIRST MAN Eli Meeker

*"Then God saw everything that He had made,
and indeed it was very good."*

Genesis 1:31

Thus the great Creator viewed his works on the sixth day, when the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. They not only exhibited the wisdom and goodness of God as a stupendous system, but every part both in the natural and moral creation was admirably designed to manifest the being and perfections of Yahweh. Infinite wisdom and benevolence devised the wondrous scheme, and almighty power gave it existence.

As the Lord is by nature invisible, so the manifold works of creation are the book of nature, in which finite intelligent beings may read and form consistent and exalted views of his true character. The goodness of God will appear very conspicuous if we consider the soul of Adam, the father of the human race, in its original state as he was created on the sixth day. As the soul of man is the most excellent part of any of the works of this lower world, so we should naturally conclude that it would be the nearest resemblance of its Author. And with such a conclusion the following, scriptural account is in entire accordance: *"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him."*

The Lord is a Spirit, or an intelligent Being whose understanding is infinite. The soul or intelligence of man is finite, a mere image of the omnipresent, invisible Yahweh. And as the Lord is infinitely holy and most righteous in all his ways, so we are taught that God made man upright. Thus all mankind bear the natural image of their Maker, as they are intelligent beings, and our first parents were created in a state of perfect holiness after God's moral image.

How happy, then, must they have been in such a state, and how much resembling that of the holy and blessed angels. The soul of Adam was doubtless more capacious than that of any of his offspring, and his means of improvement and advancement must have been far superior to those of any of his fallen race. This is evident from the consideration that sin introduces natural evils, mental as well as bodily.

Whether our first parents had a language suited to their original state, implanted in their very natures and innate, or whether the Lord thus furnished them in a supernatural manner, we cannot tell. However, that they had such a language and correspondent knowledge, reason would teach as well as scripture. The description of Adam's giving names to all the animals of the earth will throw much light on this subject.

"Out of the ground Yahweh God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field." The idea which some entertain, that Adam, though very

happy had but little knowledge, is entirely groundless and every way inconsistent. It is founded perhaps on the expression of Satan, "*and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*" But what must be the proper import of such a temptation? Truly this: Eat of the forbidden fruit and your extensive knowledge and enlarged views will be supernaturally augmented; and you, who are but little lower than the angels, will at once be equal to them.

The serpent, from dread experience, knew that the suggestion of the highest possible attainments of knowledge would be the most likely to excite ambition in the heart of one of a capacious mind, and of clear and sublime views. Aspiring to be gods, angels fell; aspiring to be angels, man rebelled. But the race of Adam have souls inferior to him, in consequence of the diseases both of the mind and of the body. How extensive the capacity, how great the knowledge, and how holy and happy must our first parents have been while in that blessed situation, the garden of Eden!

When we consider the soul of Adam in a state of innocence, a living and holy image of its Creator, the divine goodness shines conspicuously, for the Lord himself saw that it was made very good.

Sermons on Philosophical, Evangelical, and Practical Subjects

Day 20

REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD
John Girardeau

"There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God."
Hebrews 4:9

Another element of the rest which Jesus confers consists in relief from the painful disquietudes which spring from temporal afflictions and from changes in our earthly circumstances. The chief sting of affliction lies in the conviction that it is penal. The sense of ill-desert is the natural and necessary effect of our sins. And when we regard the sufferings of life as punitive visitations--as evidences of the fact that God is dealing with us in the capacity of an unsparing Judge, and that His dispensations toward us are the measures of retributive justice--our condition is truly deplorable. Cut off by the very pressure of sorrow from all external sources of relief, we find in our inward consciousness no mitigation of the trial. On the contrary, reflection upon our own state serves only to convince us that we suffer justly, and this conviction lends additional poignancy to the arrow that pierces the soul. All is dark without, and no ray of light arises from within. If we look to the world, it presents the aspect of a stormy sea that threatens to overwhelm us. If we look to our own souls, the tempest equally rages there. If we look to God, His throne is pavilioned with clouds and His face is shadowed with frowns. We hear nothing but the roar of the tempest and the angry voice of the Judge.

It is the province of the gospel, and of it alone, to furnish us rest in the midst of these trials. The vicarious work of Christ changes the very character of our afflictions. Believing in Him and justified by His righteousness, we are freed from the condemning sentence of the law. *"There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."* It is not to be denied that the believer undergoes suffering from the afflictions which are common to men, or even from trials which necessarily result from His profession of the gospel. It may be admitted that it is a law of Christ's kingdom on earth that His people shall have tribulation, and that they who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But it is equally true that all the afflictions which the believer is called upon to encounter are stripped of their penal complexion, and constitute a salutary discipline which is intended to benefit and not to destroy. He is entitled to regard them not as the retributive measures of a Judge, but the kindly corrections of a Father. So far from being a penalty, they are the tokens of paternal love.

This consideration cannot but deprive our earthly trials of their chief power to inflict anguish. It reconciles us to a discipline which checks our waywardness, refines our graces, and ripens [us] for the inheritance of the saints in light. It calms the perturbations of our spirits and gives us a measure of rest in the midst of our anxieties, perplexities, and griefs. Convinced that God is reconciled to us by the blood of Jesus, and that like as a father pities his children so He pities us; assured that Christ, by His sufferings and death, has forever removed from us the curse of the law and transmuted our afflictions into blessings; cheered by the precious testimony of the blessed Spirit concurring with that of our own spirits that we are the children of God and heirs of all the priceless and everlasting treasures of His kingdom, we possess a peace which passes all understanding and imparts a serene rest to

our souls while struggling with trials and tossed by grief. In this point of view, the paradoxes of the apostle become experimental verities [truths]: *"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."*

These consolatory considerations are enhanced, too, by the reflection that the administration of divine providence is committed into the hands of the Lord Jesus--hands that for us were once nailed to the accursed tree, but now for us hold the reins of universal empire. He who sits upon the throne of providence--controlling its energies, arranging its measures, and meting out its dispensations--is He who, standing in the midst of His church, is not ashamed to call them brethren. It is He who assumed our nature and was made in all things like unto His brethren, that He might be merciful and faithful to them. To Him all power is intrusted. All the elements of nature, all the forces of providence, all the powers of heaven, earth, and hell are at His supreme and absolute disposal. He speaks, and cherubim and seraphim hasten to obey. He thunders, and the nations of the earth tremble at the sound. He utters His majestic voice, and devils cry out in anticipation of their doom. His will is omnipotence, His realm the universe, and His sceptre the symbol of illimitable and resistless sway.

My brethren, if there be any thought which is suited to allay our fears and to give us rest amidst our earthly trials and the fluctuations of our earthly lot, it is that Jesus reigns; that the infinite resources of providence are lodged in a brother's hands, and that all its measures in relation to His people are the suggestions of a brother's heart. He allots our afflictions and appoints our changes, and we may safely rest in the conviction that, as He is a Savior and not a Destroyer, He makes His Providence a minister to our good. Under His administration, nature becomes grace and the scheme of providence is merged into the scheme of redemption. His infinite power obeys the promptings of His infinite love. To know the wants of His people is to supply them; to know their distresses is to relieve them; to know their dangers is to defeat them. His all-seeing and compassionate eye watches us toiling, rowing amidst night and storm, and He comes to us walking upon the sea. It is enough that He is present. His voice sets our fears at rest and sinks the heaving billows of our afflictions into profound and settled calm. This, then, is our relief. We rest in providence, for providence is Christ's and Christ is ours.

Sermons

Day 21

REASONS FOR AFFLICTIONS
Ichabod Spencer

"For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." (Lamentations 3:31-33)

Afflictions are common. The world is full of them. No man is exempt. And since they are of God, and since he *does not afflict willingly*, it may both instruct our understandings and improve our hearts if we examine into the reasons why he gives us so many afflictions here.

1. *Afflictions are peculiarly instructive.* There is a tendency in deep trials to bring the justice of the Almighty to mind. Grievings and pains are very unacceptable. No man loves them. Most men find it difficult to bear them with commendable patience. And as the mind is troubled under them, nothing is more natural than to inquire whence they come and why they are sent. And thus the mind is led away to God, and reminded of the justice of his character. The sufferer may sigh and be dissatisfied, but he cannot accuse him. He may long for relief and be impatient, but he cannot convict God of injustice. And the sufferings that are abroad in the world constitute one great chapter of demonstrations, that the justice of the Almighty is in operation--that he is an angry God, that he is bending the frowns of his anger upon the world, a world of sinners! Were it not for this great chapter of ills, there is many a man who would never believe at all what the Bible says about the sin and guilt of our race, and about the anger and justice of God.

2. God sends afflictions upon men for the sake of their influence *as they bear upon the passions and purposes of life.* Amid the prosperities of life (when pains, disappointments, and distress are strangers) pride is very apt to be strong and influential. Prosperity fosters and strengthens it, and gives it the larger opportunity for its bad work. And many a man has been led into insolence, and haughtiness, and tyranny by the influences of prosperity upon him. The miseries of this life are sent to repress this pride. They rebuke it. They check it. They stand in its way and hinder its influences. Pain and pride do not thrive well together. Far from it.

These afflictions of life also *repress worldliness of spirit.* Amid unbroken happiness and success, the worldly spirit increases in power. It becomes strong, absorbing of mind and heart, far-reaching, rancorous, and unsatisfied. Then there is no end to its ambition, no limit to its hopes, no boundary to its aims. It would engross the whole soul and would gain the whole world. There never was a more blind and stupid spirit. It aims after what it does not need and cannot use. It longs to attain that which has no other tendency than to prove a burden. And this stupidity and blindness are not to be cured by moral lectures. Lecture to rock as soon. There is a necessity for affliction to come in to hush down the clamor of worldly affections before the man will hear you. Trial must open his eyes or he will see nothing but a world that dazzles and blinds him. Make him miserable and you may cure his stupidity.

3. The afflictions experienced by the people of God *furnish opportunity and means for the cultivation of the highest and most difficult virtues.* There are excellences of character unattainable without trials and distresses. If there were no instances of distress, we should have nothing to excite our pity. If there were no instances of need, there would be nothing to call forth our charity. If nobody injured or offended us, we should have nobody to forgive. We could pray for no enemy if we had none. This piety, this charity and forgiveness, this fortitude, patience, meekness and depending faith, are among our most difficult virtues, and they constitute our highest excellences of character. *"Let PATIENCE have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."* Just as if *patience* were the crowning grace of all.

4. How could you, then, judge *whether you were a child of God or not?* The temper we have and the demeanor we exhibit in afflictions, and toward the afflicted, constitute more just criterions of our character than any other. If there were no afflictions here we should have no "good Samaritan" to copy, and no "priest and Levite" whose irreligious example [it is] to shun. God may have sent us trials and filled his world with sorrows, *not willingly,* but to furnish us opportunity to test our faith and find whether we are on the way to heaven, following that Christ who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and suffered the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.

5. Afflictions make *demonstrations of men--proofs [and] exhibits to the world of the power and divinity of faith.* The world needs such demonstrations. The wicked are not to be convinced by principles merely. Unbelievers are not likely to be fully convinced and to have even any tolerable ideas of the Divine efficacy of religion till they behold some examples of it. And where shall we look for examples that will answer the purpose? Examples which will confound skepticism and make unbelievers feel to their very heart's core that these Christians are something more than mere common men, that they are aided and sustained by something within them which can be explained by nothing but the presence of God the Holy Ghost in their souls? You must look among the tried for such examples--among the poor, among the widows giving their two mites and finding exhaustless the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal. In trial grace brightens, it shines, it demonstrates. For this reason God sends trials. Mark his manner of distributing them. He does not send many of them to us weak Christians who could not endure them. But he sends them upon some who can stand the furnace when its flames kindle and its heat is terrible! Not willingly, but because he will have examples of righteousness and enduring which shall demonstrate to men and devils that God is with his people of a truth.

6. Finally, if I might, I would finish the subject by showing that it is just in those times of afflictions that *God bestows upon you his most precious gifts.* If I had time, I would make your own hearts preach to you on this point, and make them demand of you an answer to the question, Where had you been now had your heart never bled or been torn with anguish? I would summon your closet of prayer [as evidence, if it could speak], if that sacred spot was not most sweet and most precious, and your own covenant God most near, just when you went there to meet him--a poor, stricken mortal who could do nothing but cry. You would own that his best gifts have been sent in sad times, and that you love him most for what he has done for you when sorrows lay heavy upon your soul. They were put there by God, *not willingly,* but to teach you the best lessons and lead you to the best

comforts your soul ever had.

Life, Practical and Experimental Sermons (condensed)

Day 22

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF REGENERATION
Ashbel Green

"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

That the god of this world has blinded the eyes of the children of men is a truth which Scripture and experience unite to confirm. Insensible by nature of the beauty and excellence of holiness, we wander in pursuit of the unlawful pleasures which our corrupted passions suggest, and easily fall into the snares which the enemy of our salvation spreads for our destruction. Natural conscience, rendered insensible by repeated perversions and violations, ceases at length to do its office, and the unhappy offender is left to the fatal consequences of an unrestrained indulgence of his corruptions and lusts. This, although a dark, is not an unjust picture of the natural state and tendency of man. It is, in effect, the picture which the Apostle has given, in the verses immediately preceding the text. And on the justness of this representation is founded the necessity of that great change which we are now to illustrate.

What is clearly revealed in the divine word is that the change which, in regeneration, is wrought by God in the hearts of sinners, is a work of creation. This seems evidently to be taught by the Apostle's comparing the power of God in the original creation of light with his operation in producing the light of life in the unholy heart: "*God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts.*" As if he had said, "The same creative power, which made light to spring out of the darkness and confusion of chaos, has by a similar operation made divine light to shine amidst the darkness and disorder which sin had introduced into the hearts of his people. This sentiment, somewhat diversified in the manner of its expression, is delivered in many other passages of Scripture. Sometimes it is represented as a new birth. Sometimes it is spoken of as a great change or transformation. But whatever figure or mode of expression is used, the idea is still preserved--that a creative power has been exerted on the soul.

The consequence of the great change of which I have spoken is a new and impressive discovery of the glory of God. "*To give us,*" says the text, "*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.*" A perception of the glory of God consists in a just view of the infinity, harmony, and moral beauty of all the divine attributes. Some faint traces of several of the perfections of the Deity the sinner might indeed perceive, and in a degree admire. The wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the great Creator are noble objects of contemplation for every intelligent creature. But to view the Supreme Being in a partial manner is so far from beholding his glory that it is rather a degradation of his excellence. Is he wise? His wisdom is not confined to the formation and government of the material creation. It extends, likewise, to the moral perfection of his system. And here he often "*takes the wise in their own craftiness; and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.*" But it is in devising and executing the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ that the wisdom of God is most displayed, and appears the most glorious both to saints and angels. Is he powerful? Not merely in creating and upholding the visible universe, but likewise in

executing all his plans and purposes for the salvation of his people; in defeating and punishing his enemies, and in protecting and rewarding his own children.

When it was said that the believer delights not in contemplating a partial Deity, I did not mean to intimate that there are not some of the divine perfections in which he may feel himself peculiarly interested. To the mercy by which he is saved, and from which he derives his daily comforts and his eternal hopes, he may look with uncommon pleasure. But he never excludes one of the perfections of God by an unreasonable extension of another. He adores the justice that punishes the obstinate sinner, as well as the mercy that pardons the returning penitent. He considers all the divine attributes as perfectly consistent and harmonious, and, in the highest degree, worthy of his admiration and praise.

The character of our great Redeemer is, as it were, the mirror which exhibits to the eye of faith the glory of God in its greatest luster. It was long an object of anxious inquiry among the most enlightened of the heathen world, how God could be just and yet the justifier of sinners, even when repentant. Perfectly holy and righteous himself, no expectation of a return of indulgence could induce him to bestow pardon on the guilty. And how the moral government of the universe could be sustained, if every offender did not receive the punishment due to his transgressions, was a question of difficult solution. But by the death of Christ this dark important problem was solved at once. The justice of God, which would not be pacified without satisfaction, appeared awfully conspicuous [exceedingly manifest] when the life of his own Son was the price of its vindication; and the mercy, which would provide and pay such a price for offending sinners, shone forth in all the splendor of its charms. Here, then, in the redemption of Christ, the glory of God appears to the renewed soul in a way of which the wisest of the ancient heathen were totally ignorant, and for which the men of the world, in every age, have had no relish. In creation and providence they may have perceived his power and admired his wisdom. Evident as they are to the eye of sense, it would not have been easy to resist them. But the consistency and harmony of the divine perfections in the plan of redemption (the union of justice and mercy--the very light of the knowledge of his glory) can be seen only by the eye of faith. And to the luster of this the heathen were perfectly blind.

How absolutely we are dependent on God for our salvation. To effect it we have seen that a work of creation must be wrought on the heart. How ought the reflection to awaken our concern and quicken our diligence. But to what purpose, it will probably be said, would be our most strenuous endeavors? The work is not ours but God's. To renew the heart, it has been affirmed, is beyond the reach of human power and finite exertion.

This objection however intended, expresses a solemn, and what ought to be an affecting truth. Would to God that those in whose mouths it is the oftenest found felt in their hearts its high importance and its just consequences. It would not then be so frequently pleaded as an excuse for sinful indulgence. It would be the most powerful of all motives to watchfulness and care. Are sinners dependent on God for the renovation of their natures? And yet are they careless how much they offend him, how many provocations they give him to withhold the necessary influence of his Spirit for so important a purpose? Do men act thus when they feel that they are utterly dependent on a fellow creature for an important

favor? Remember, then, O sinner, that although you cannot save yourself, yet you may destroy yourself. You may put yourself, if not absolutely beyond the reach, certainly beyond the reasonable hope of salvation. And this you are in danger of doing if you plead an appointment [election to salvation] of God as an excuse for offending him. It may be said of you as of Ephraim of old, "he is joined to his idols, let him alone."

Remember, there is such a thing as divine dereliction; and that when it takes place the individual whom it affects is as sure of perdition as if he were already in the place of torment. In infinite goodness and condescension, God has instituted certain means for your instruction and reformation. In what manner these means possess an influence on the absolute determination of God, we know not. But we know the facts of the case. We know that without the use of the means, which are as much in our power as anything can be in our power, we have no just ground to expect or hope for the divine interposition. And on the other hand, we have reason to hope that if we are diligent and faithful in the use of the appointed means, and at every step look earnestly to God to attend them with his blessing--to work in them and by them a work of saving grace on our hearts--the result will be salutary. Not, be it remembered, as a matter of merit or desert, but a gratuitous favor conferred on those who are found in the way, in which he has commanded sinners to seek him. Pervert not, therefore, the divine sovereignty into an argument for careless impenitence and stupid security in sin. Use it rather as the most powerful motive to diligence and care, lest you provoke God to give you up to strong delusion to believe a lie. Cry mightily to him for his effectual aid; and endeavor without delay to cast yourselves truly and unreservedly on his mercy in Christ Jesus. Never did he spurn from the foot of his throne of grace the soul that humbly resolved to be saved or to perish there.

Practical Sermons (condensed)

Day 23

CONFIDENCE IN GOD PRODUCTIVE OF PEACE

James Richards

*"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You,
because he trusts in You."*

Isaiah 26:3

I hardly need remark that this expression is nearly equivalent to that of "trusting in God," "casting our care upon him," and "looking to him" for whatever is needful in time or eternity. But to enter a little more into the import of this expression, I remark, in the first place, that he who stays himself upon God has a deep and affecting sense of his own insufficiency. He clearly perceives that he has no power independent of God; that he can neither provide for his wants nor protect himself against his fears without the agency of Divine Providence. In particular it may be said that he has no confidence in his own wisdom and foresight, as if he were able to penetrate the dark folds of futurity and to find out for himself a secure path amidst the ever-varying scenes in which he is called to mingle.

He is equally convinced of his own insufficiency to sustain himself in the day of calamity and rebuke, or to bear up under the common ills of life if not supported by a hand which is almighty. He ceases, therefore, all proud reliance upon himself. Nor is he ashamed to acknowledge that the very feeblest of his enemies has power sufficient to destroy him if unprotected by Him whose eye is over all and whose hand directs and governs all.

In the next place, that as he has a deep conviction of his own weakness, so also he has a lively sense of the weakness and insufficiency of all other creatures. He perceives that they are as little capable of administering to his wants and of becoming a full and satisfying portion as he himself is. This is absolutely necessary to his staying himself upon the Lord. The streams must dry up before he will go to the fountain.

To a conviction of the insufficiency of the creature you must add a just and lively apprehension of the infinite excellency and glory of the Creator; or, which amounts to the same thing, a firm and heartfelt persuasion of the being and perfections of God. He must appear to be the rock and his work perfect before we can make him the object of our confidence. But let us not suppose that a mere speculative knowledge of God will suffice. God must be seen in his spiritual excellence and glory; in other words, he must be loved before we can make him the object of our trust.

But how, it may be asked, does this confidence in God make itself known? Do they who possess it grow negligent and presumptuous in proportion as their reliance upon God is increased? Far otherwise. The more they stay themselves upon Him, the more solicitous do they become to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. They show their reliance upon God by cheerfully submitting to his hand under the dark and trying dispensations of his providence. God often has his path in the great deep, where his footsteps cannot be traced. The wheels of his government are high and dreadful, and to the eyes of mortals, so complicated in their movements that no human wisdom can penetrate their design. But

this is no ground of discouragement to those that stay themselves upon the Lord. They never expected that the counsels of infinite wisdom could be measured by the short line of their understanding. It is enough for them to know that God is upon the throne.

Can it be strange that such a temper should bring peace with it, even a peace which passes all understanding? It is the very spirit of the gospel, a strong and decisive characteristic of true love to God. Shall I say it is a peace which stands opposed to all those corroding cares which so often disturb the minds of men in relation to their present wants, and which leads them to cry, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But the peace of which we speak stands opposed to all this. It supposes such confidence in the power, wisdom and goodness of God, and especially in those great and precious promises in which God has bound himself to watch over his people and provide for their wants, as to lay these anxious and devouring cares to sleep.

Sermons (condensed)

Day 24

ADVICE FOR PARENTS

Ralph Wardlaw

*"He who spares his rod hates his son,
but he who loves him disciplines him promptly."*

Proverbs 13:24

There is no subject of deeper interest and importance than the education of the young. It is so for their own sake, for the sake of their family and kindred, for the sake of society, for the sake of the Church, for the sake of the glory of God. In their systems of education, some are for excluding the "rod" altogether. But such would be wiser than God; for He has sanctioned its use.

It should be noticed that the "rod" is to be taken for correction or punishment in general, not specifically for corporal punishment. The blessed God employs a great variety of kinds of chastisement in dealing with His children, suiting the correction in nature as well as in degree to the peculiarities of each character and the circumstances of each case. So may Christian parents consider themselves warranted to employ whatever description of punishment experience may teach them to be best fitted to answer the end. Of the observations now to be made, some refer to the "rod" more specifically, and some to all kinds of correction.

1. *The rod should be the last resource.* In this remark I refer of course to the "rod" properly so called. Perhaps the most suitable season for the use of it may be in the early stages of education when the mind is but beginning to open, that is, as soon as the meaning and design of it can be distinctly understood, with the view of forming a habit of subjection such as may enable you afterward to rule easily and effectually without it. Still, whenever it *is* used, it should be as the *last resort*. If conviction and sorrow sufficiently pungent and deep can be produced otherwise (if you can reach the heart and draw the tears of a tender and contrite spirit to the eyes), it would then, generally speaking, in such circumstances be cruelty to super-add the pain of correction, the end having been gained in all respects more pleasantly and more effectually without it.

2. When the "rod" is used or any punishment inflicted, *be sure that a fault has been committed.* "Strange direction!" you may say. "Who requires to be told this? Do you suppose any of us so unnatural, so fond of putting our children to pain that we would punish them for nothing?" My answer is, that there is no parent who does *not* require the counsel. My full conviction is that children are often chastened, and chastened at times severely, when they have committed no fault. A fault that justifies punishment (I would have you remember) should involve the manifestation of *some evil disposition*. In every other case, correction is wrong; and the parent who inflicts it would himself be a fitter subject for it.

Let me illustrate my meaning by two or three exemplifications. There is in children, when in good health, *a principle of activity*, a restless buoyancy that invites and impels them to lively exercise. It is an important instinctive propensity, intimately connected with bodily

health--with the strength of the bones, the firmness and pliancy of the joints, the tension of the nerves, the energy of muscular action, and the general growth and vigor of the entire frame. The indulgence of this propensity may make them at times a little noisy and turbulent. It may be indispensably necessary, on occasions, to lay it under temporary restraint. But authority should be reluctantly interposed. And unless when authority is violated or incumbent duty neglected, it should never be visited with punishment. You would be punishing your child for exhibiting nature's indications of health, which it should rather please you to see, as young people are seldom well when dull and disinclined to romping and active exercise.

Again, evil is sometimes done in ignorance. The child has no idea that it has been doing any harm. You happen, I shall suppose, to leave a bank-note in your child's way. He finds the bit of paper. He finds it where it should not have been. He has no notion whatever of its value. He takes it up and throws it into the fire, and he laughs and claps his hands in innocent glee at the pretty blaze. The loss in such a case is yours; but don't forget that so is the fault. You should not have left anything of the kind thus exposed. You may warn your child strongly never again to burn any bits of paper he may find till he has asked you whether they are of use. And you may impress the lesson by teaching him the extent of the damage he has done. But take care. Let not rising passion at your loss lead you to inflict hasty and summary punishment on the child. He does not deserve it. And let not the punishment and the passion be proportioned to the amount of the loss. One pound or fifty was the same to the child. The more valuable the note, the more inexcusable was your own carelessness. A severe infliction in such a case would be the extreme of unrighteousness; and it would be the greater culprit punishing the less.

Still further, things may be done (that are much to be regretted) by accident. Here too correction is wrong, or should be very discriminatively inflicted. If the accident has happened in doing that which had been previously warned against or forbidden, there may be room for it. But to punish for what has been purely accidental, where there has been no evil principle or intention, is most unjust. Let children be trained, by all means, to caution and care. But beware of assuming in such cases, as the measure of punishment, the actual extent of the mischief done.

For example: your child, watching your employment, sees by your looks and motions that you are in need of something. He knows, or he guesses what it is. And with the lively glee of childhood and affectionate eagerness to serve you, he sets off full speed to fetch it. By and by he comes back, but slowly and in an altered mood. He hangs down his head beside you in hesitating silence and fears to tell what has happened. He has, alas, stumbled in his haste and has let fall and broken the article he ran to bring. You feel your spirit rise at the loss and the disappointment. An article, it may be, of some value is destroyed and your process is interrupted and spoiled. But again take care. Lift not your hand. Call not for the "rod." His very eagerness to serve you has occasioned the misfortune. Would you punish him for that? Poor dear child, he is more to be pitied than you. The mortification and shame, the sudden sinking of his little heart from lively gaiety to sadness and vexation--indicated by the slow creeping step, the downcast look, the tearful eye, and the faltering tongue--are punishment enough for his undue haste, when that very haste was prompted by a praiseworthy principle. Caress him for his kind intention, while you join in

lamenting the accident. Restore, if you can, the smile to his countenance, and caution him not to be quite so quick in his motion-- even to serve you--next time he happens to have something delicate to carry.

3. Let there always *be a due proportion between the fault and the correction*. It should be laid down as a general principle, that all punishment beyond desert is punishment of innocence. The just degree of punishment is, in all cases, the smallest degree by which the desired effect may be produced--a proper impression, that is, of the evil done, humble submission, and promise of amendment.

4. *Never chastise in a passion*. There are few cautions of more difficult observance, but few of more essential consequence. If you are unable to govern yourselves, are you fit for governing your children? Rage may frighten, and it may even, by the mere power of terror, keep from outward trespass. But it never will reclaim to right feeling or right principle. Do not, then, deal in furious rebukes and angry blows. . . . If you feel passion rising, lay a firm command upon it. Restrain yourself. Let the correction stand till you are calm and fit to do it with judgment. Never forget that correction is for an end: that end is the conviction, repentance, and recovery of the offender.

This leads me to notice,

5. The propriety of always *preceding or accompanying chastisement with convincing the offender of his fault*. Show him, seriously and affectionately, why you chastise him. If you feel yourself at all at a loss to do this, you may be very sure you are doing wrong. Correction must never either be or appear to be a mere arbitrary display of authority. In all the precepts respecting "the rod," the child's good is the object; and all should be regulated by a regard to this end. The spirit of it, on the part of parents, should be that which dictates the corrections of God, who chastens not for "His own pleasure" but for his children's profit. And in seeking this end, mark the terms of the verse before us--"he that loves him chastens him betimes." Oppose the beginnings of evil. Check propensities to it early, before they have time to acquire strength and to form and settle into habits.

6. In order that correction may have the surer and happier influence, *let it be accompanied with a system of encouragements*. It is not fair to correct--and to correct severely--for faults, and to express and manifest no satisfaction and pleasure in the right discharge of required duties. Children should be judiciously commended as well as judiciously reproofed; judiciously rewarded as well as judiciously punished. There is, with different parents, a danger of the opposite extremes--of commendation and reward without reproof and punishment, and of reproof and punishment without commendation and reward. It requires much discretion duly to blend the two. The good sense of parents must distinguish between just commendation and what would only minister to vanity. But it is evident that few things can possibly be more dispiriting to a child than for a parent to be ever prompt to punish evil but never to reward good; severe and forward to chide but reluctant and backward to commend. Children should be stimulated by praise as well as restrained by censure. You may be assured that this will eminently contribute to the right reception of your chastisements and their salutary influence upon the character.

I only add,

7. That *correction is one of the most delicate and difficult of parental duties*. It is easy to do it, but far, very far from easy, to do it *well*. Therefore, let parents keep it in their own hands. It must ever, in order to answer its appropriate ends, be associated with the blended faithfulness and tenderness of love. When transferred to improper hands, it is almost sure to produce the very opposite effects to those designed by it.

Let Christians, as the children of their heavenly Father, rejoice that their parental discipline is in the hands of One who cannot err, either in the time, the manner, or the measure of His corrections; who will make every stroke of "His rod" tell upon the best interests of his people; promoting their spiritual and securing their eternal interests. And let their submission, in all their sorrows, correspond with this assurance.

Lectures on the Book of Proverbs (slightly condensed)

Day 25

DR. HOWARD A. KELLY
Wilbur M. Smith

***"Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."***
John 4:4

In Gilman Hall, one of the beautiful buildings of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, there has hung for some years a famous painting of four great leaders in medicine and surgery, whose brilliant work during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the present century made Johns Hopkins Hospital one of the great medical centres of the world. The four men who appear in this painting are Dr. William Osler, Dr. William Henry Welch, Dr. William S. Halstead, and the only one of the four still living, Dr. Howard A. Kelly.

Dr. Kelly was Professor of Gynecology at Johns Hopkins University from 1889 to 1919, and Emeritus Professor and Consulting Gynecologist since 1919. For the last forty-four years he has been chief surgeon and radiologist in the famous Howard A. Kelly Hospital, Baltimore. The medical and surgical societies of which he is a fellow or an honorary member fill thirty lines in the much abbreviated sketch that appears in *Who's Who in America*. He has received honorary degrees from a number of institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Over twenty different volumes on gynecology, radiology, the appendix, medical biography, and other subjects, together with over five hundred scientific articles, have been written by this famous surgeon during the last half century. In this day, when science is so much admired, almost worshipped, and scientists are looked upon by so many as the one group of men worthy of our absolute confidence, surely the verdict of such a man demands our closest consideration, if it be concerning a subject to which he has given the full and unbiased attention of his vast mental powers. Dr. Kelly has devoted years and years of careful study to the Book this volume is discussing, and we will let Dr. Kelly tell us himself, first what he thinks of the Bible, and then, something of how he himself studies the Bible.

"I accept the Bible as the Word of God," Dr. Kelly says in his widely-known book, *Scientific Man and the Bible*, "because of its own miraculous character, born in parts in the course of the ages and yet completed in one harmonious whole. Without the Bible, all God's precious parables in nature, His other book, are utterly lost, and nature, exploited merely for lucre or for the pride of science, is degraded and ruined. I testify that the Bible is the Word of God because it is food for the spirit just as definitely as bread and meat are food for the body. The Bible appeals to me strongly as a physician, because it is such excellent medicine; it has never yet failed to cure a single patient if only he took his prescription honestly. . . . It is the one book in the world which reveals a God infinitely above our own natural imaginings, worthy of our love and worship, and inexhaustible in His wonderful nature. In opposition to false science and false religions it fixes the origin of sin at a particular time and in an individual, Satan, and at the very outset promises sin's cessation forever when that arch traitor shall be rendered forever impotent. It reveals God's righteousness in Christ, His judgment of sin, and His great mercy to every sinner

who trusts Him. It is the one book in the world which is always young and fresh and inspiring. Whatever there is in civilization that is worthwhile rests on the Bible's precepts. Everywhere and in all its teachings the Bible claims to be the authoritative Word of God, and as such I accept it."

In a charmingly written booklet, which Dr. Kelly published some ten years ago, "How I Study My Bible," he said: "My conviction is that I must know His word well; my Father has written me a letter and I must read it until I am acquainted with all its particulars. If I conceive of it as more than a mere letter and rather as a Will, a Covenant, I must then examine it searchingly as a lawyer scans a legal document, seeking to grasp its every shade of meaning to apply it to my life."

Everyone who has ever heard Dr. Kelly speak about spiritual matters, who has ever seen him with his well-marked Bible open before him, and has had the privilege of hearing him tell of some of the rich things he has found in the Scriptures, will know what a real master of the Word this famous scientist is. It will be of the greatest profit to each one of us to have Dr. Kelly tell us himself of his own habits of studying the Bible. In a personal letter to the writer of this book, Dr. Kelly says: "I rise regularly at six in the morning and after dressing give all the time until our eight o'clock breakfast to the study of the Word. I find time for brief studies throughout the day and again in the evening. I make it a general rule to touch nothing but the Bible after the evening meal. It is the greatest possible help to me in my own spiritual life and growth, and enables me to carry fresh messages to my audiences. I have a feeling that the Bible is so profound a book that one ought to be able to give some fresh message to each and every audience year after year."

In the booklet which we referred to a moment ago, he has given us further insight into his own habits of reading the Word. "One of my greatest helps in life," he writes, "is a red leather, hip-pocket notebook, opening lengthwise, of about a hundred pages, in which I jot down striking verses for meditation during the day, or record any succinct well clarified, convincing statement touching the Bible or any spiritual truth. This serves to keep one on the *qui vive*, calling for constant, discriminating attention to what is read and heard, and serving to crystallize great thoughts in the memory and to foster the loftier habits of thinking."

Many people ask from time to time about the value of Bible helps, and the words of Dr. Kelly on this matter are worth quoting in this very place: "And how about the numerous Bible helps, the many good books written about the Bible? Invaluable and indispensable, but the help must always remain entirely subsidiary to the Word itself. Nothing is more futile than time spent reading religious and pious books, if the Bible is neglected, and yet many do that very thing because it seems easier." But probably Dr. Kelly's most valuable paragraph on this great subject of the right method of Bible study is toward the very close of his discussion, and we take the liberty of copying it here in its entirety.

"And now for my greatest secret for everyday common folks, known through the ages and yet ever needing to be restated and learned afresh as generation succeeds generation. It is this. The very best way to study the Bible is simply to read it daily with close attention and with prayer to see the light that shines from its pages, to meditate upon it, and to

continue to read until somehow it works itself, its words, its expressions, its teachings, its habits of thought, and its presentation of God and His Christ into the very warp and woof of one's being. No, there is nothing remarkable about that, it is wonderfully simple. *But it works*, and one does come, in this way, to know the Bible and to understand it. What appears, to a beginner, as a great knowledge of the Bible is thus often only the natural result of a persevering use of the simplest of all methods, namely, reading the Book day by day until it becomes extremely familiar in all its parts."

In these days of great spiritual conflict, when we must avail ourselves of all the strength that God would place at our disposal for daily victory over sin, this final sentence from one like Dr. Kelly, whose life has been such a wonderful testimony to the redeeming and keeping power of God, comes with tremendous force to all of us who are earnestly and continually longing to be used by Him unto the uttermost. "Let my daily Bible then be my rock and my citadel, my high tower overlooking the city of Zion, where I dwell secure from all the wiles of the enemy, the sword of my spirit for defensive and offensive warfare on the arch enemy of our souls,--an armory full of weapons, not carnal, but spiritual and mighty through God to the casting down of strongholds."

Profitable Bible Study

Day 26

PHARAOH
Alfred Edersheim

"But Pharaoh hardened his heart."
Exodus 8:32

It would appear that Moses' first charge to Pharaoh was only for leave "to go three days' journey into the wilderness," whereas it was intended that Israel should forever leave the land of Egypt. At the outset, we observe the more-than-dutiful manner in which Israel was directed to act towards Pharaoh. Absolutely speaking, Pharaoh had no right to detain the people in Egypt. Their fathers had *avowedly* come not to settle, but temporarily "to sojourn," and on that understanding had been received. And now they were not only wrongfully oppressed but unrighteously detained. But still, the people were not to steal away secretly nor attempt to raise the standard of rebellion. On the contrary, they were to apply to Pharaoh for permission to undertake even so harmless an expedition as a three days' pilgrimage into the wilderness to sacrifice unto God--a request all the more reasonable since Israel's sacrifices would, from a religious point of view, have been "an abomination" to the Egyptians and might have led to disturbances.

The same excess of regard for Pharaoh prompted [the request] that, at the first, only a moderate demand should be made upon him. On the part of God, it was infinite condescension to Pharaoh's weakness not to insist from the first upon the immediate and entire dismissal of Israel. Less *could not* have been asked than was demanded of Pharaoh, nor could obedience have been made more easy. Only could the most tyrannical determination to crush the rights and convictions of the people, and the most daring defiance of Jehovah, have prompted him to refuse such a request, and that in face of all the signs and wonders by which the mission of Moses was accredited. Thus Pharaoh's submission was to be tried, at the first, where it was easiest to render it, and where disobedience would be "without excuse."

There might have been some plea for Pharaoh to refuse at once to wholly let those go who had so long been his bondsmen. But there could be absolutely none for resisting a demand so moderate and supported by such authority. Assuredly, such a man was ripe for the judgment of hardening, just as, on the other hand, if he had yielded obedience to the divine will at the first, he would surely have been prepared to receive a further revelation of God's will and grace to submit to it. It is in such a manner that God always, in his mercy, deals with man. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." The demands of God are intended to try what is in us. It was so in the case of Adam's obedience and of Abraham's sacrifice, and now again in the case of Pharaoh, where divine forbearance went to the utmost verge of condescension.

The same principle of government appears in the New Testament and explains how the Lord often first told of "earthly things," so that unbelief in regard to them might convince men of their unfitness to hear of "heavenly things." The young ruler who believed himself desirous of inheriting eternal life, and the scribe who professed himself ready to follow

Christ, had each only a test of "earthly things" proposed. And yet each failed in it. The lesson is one which may find its application in our own case; for only "then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord."

Bible History Old Testament

Day 27

THE TWO STICKS
Alexander McCaul

"Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand. The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.'" (Ezekiel 37:19-22)

What God has interpreted is fixed and settled forever, and no man can, without the most extraordinary forgetfulness or the most daring impiety, presume to offer a different interpretation. An instance of such inspired comment is found in one of the passages of the prophet Ezekiel already alluded to. In the vision of the two sticks, which were to become one in the hand of the prophet, we have noticed that there is first a prophecy and then subsequently the divine explanation. The prophecy itself was symbolic, and consequently obscure. The people who beheld Ezekiel take one stick and write on it, "For Judah and the tribes of Israel, his companions," and then take another stick with an inscription for Joseph and the tribes his companions, and unite them into one stick in his hand, could not easily understand the purposes of God thus symbolized. The Lord foresaw that they would not understand, and therefore, in the eighteenth verse, he prepared the prophet for the people's inquiries, saying, "And when the children of your people shall speak unto you, saying, Will you not show us what you mean by these? Say unto them, Thus says the Lord," and then follows the explanation promising the restoration and reunion of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel under the Messiah, and their eternal possession of the land of their fathers in the covenant of the gospel.

This explanation therefore is final. It does not require another. It was intended for the instruction of Ezekiel's contemporaries as a help to the understanding of the vision. The words in which it was conceived were dictated by Infinite Wisdom, and consequently the best possible that could be adopted for the purpose. No man therefore can, without impiety, give another explanation, or interpret that given in any other sense than that which the words would have had in the minds of Ezekiel's countrymen. In what sense they understood the words is evident beyond all dispute. The men of that generation certainly did not understand by the promised reunion of Judah and Israel the admission of the Gentiles to the privileges of God's people; nor did the words, "The land given unto Jacob where their fathers dwelt," convey an idea of the true Sion the Christian Church. The men for whom the explanation was given took all these terms literally, and thus must they be taken by all who believe that the Divine Being is able as well as willing to explain to men the mysteries of his will.

If the divine interpretation require another interpretation to make it intelligible, and that

it certainly does if the ten tribes mean Gentile believers and the land of Israel stands for the Christian Church (for of such signification neither Ezekiel nor his hearers had any conception), then must it be pronounced insufficient, and this insufficiency must be ascribed either to want [lack] of power or will; that is, an allegorical interpretation of this passage cannot be adopted without an implication of blasphemy.

The Messiahship of Jesus

Day 28

THE REAL REASON THE LORD TOOK JOSEPH TO EGYPT
Christopher Benson

"And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (Genesis 45:7,8).

Remarkable indeed is the spirit of penetration into the divine counsels, of reliance on the divine promises, and of esteem for divine privileges which Joseph's declaration betrays. A common mind would have thought that Pharaoh and his house were the objects of God's care in the wonderful provision which was made to meet the coming famine, and that Joseph had been raised up to be a special blessing to the Egyptian. But Joseph himself looked deeper into Providence and saw in the whole the power of the Almighty stretched forth to save his father's race principally, if not alone, in the dispensation. Touched and subdued by the sense of the present Deity, he said, "God sent me before you to preserve *you* a posterity in the earth, and to save *you* by a great deliverance."

But who were they, these simple shepherds of Canaan--a family at most but "of threescore and fifteen souls"-- that they should have the eye of Heaven fixed upon them and call forth so many of its mighty acts? It was because the blessing of Abraham was upon them. It was because the everlasting covenant of God was theirs, and in their loins was the salvation of the world shut up, and in their seed were all the families of the earth to be blessed. Blot out the name of Israel from under Heaven, and man must have gone mourning all the days of his life, without remedy of his wretchedness and without redemption from the grave; for to the name of Israel alone were the promises of God assured, and in the name of Israel alone had the sons of Adam hope, and Joseph himself was nothing except as he belonged to Israel.

To us nothing is more easy than to see the importance of this race, "though few in number, and they strangers of the land." Living in a brighter hour and under a better revelation, we are conscious that all the interests of humanity were bound up in the preservation of *their* posterity; and walking in the midday blaze of that life and immortality which has been brought to light through the Gospel, we count the very hairs of their head to have been of more value to the solid welfare of the world than Pharaoh king of Egypt and all his host.

But it was far otherwise in the fainter illumination of those early days, when a few scattered rays of prophecy, faint and far-between, were the only light to guide the steps of the believer and show to him the finger of Providence as it pointed the way to the great end of all revelation and all hope. Yet Joseph did see the tendency of God's wonders. And great indeed must have been the piety, the humility, and the faith towards God which could thus teach him that in the eye of the Almighty he himself was nothing, and that Egypt was nothing; that all the mercies which Egypt had felt and all the greatness and glory and power of Joseph were but the secret workings of an over-ruling Providence wrought for the direct and special purpose of saving Israel from famine by a great deliverance and

preserving to Israel a posterity in the earth.

On Scripture Difficulties

Day 29

ROBERT E. LEE
Wilbur M. Smith

"The memory of the righteous is blessed."
Proverbs 10:7

Robert E. Lee is acknowledged by all military students, both in this country and in Europe, as one of the greatest soldiers of the nineteenth century, and in many ways the greatest military strategist our own nation has ever produced. The integrity of his character, the absolute spotlessness of his own private life, can be surpassed by no famous figure in American history.

Lee graduated from West Point in 1829, at the age of twenty-two, number two in his class, and without a demerit. He was made first lieutenant of engineers in 1836, and captain in 1838; at the age of forty-five he was appointed, against his wishes, superintendent at West Point. His achievements during the Civil War, toward the end of which he was general-in-chief of all the Confederate armies, need not detain us here. After the War, as a recent writer on Lee has said, "His supreme interest was in restoring the economic, cultural, and political life of the South. His mail, which was immense, was crowded with offers of business proposals, all of which he rejected." In September, 1865, he accepted the presidency of Washington College at Lexington, Virginia, which, after his death, October 12, 1870, changed its name in his honor to Washington and Lee University.

Lee's greatest biographer, Dr. Douglas S. Freeman, has summarized his influence and character as follows:

"After sixty years, the affection and reverence of the South for him are, if anything, higher than in 1870. No American has ever had an influence on the people of the old Confederate states comparable to his. On all matters on which he expressed himself, he is still regarded as the final authority. In him, the South still sees the embodiment of all its best ideals. While Lee was distinguished as an educator, his place in American history is that of a notable Christian gentleman and a great soldier. He was confirmed in the Episcopal church in 1853, and the fundamentals of the Christian religion--humility, prayer, faith, and kindness--were his code of daily conduct. His equanimity was religious, rather than philosophical, and, though he was not a fatalist, he believed that God directed the affairs of man and ordered even man's adversities to his good. It was for this reason that he accepted defeat without repining. His unique relations with his soldiers, his affection for children, his dignified courtesy, and his love of animals are illustrated by a thousand anecdotes that are part of the spiritual treasury of Americans. His temper and patience seldom failed him. Self-control was second nature. His rare outbursts of wrath were generally followed by some particularly gracious act to the object of his displeasure."

What such a man thought of the Word of God, and what he did with the Word of God, will prove of the greatest interest. Dr. Freeman in his recently published monumental four-volume *Life of Robert E. Lee*, further tells us that "The General had family prayers every morning, before breakfast, but his own spiritual life was bound up with the daily Bible

reading and with special seasons of private devotions. The Bible was to him the Book of books, 'a Book,' he wrote, 'which supplies the place of all others, and which cannot be replaced by any other.' He received various copies of the Bible, both for himself and for the college, but the one he used was a pocket edition he had carried with him in all his campaigning since he had become a Lieutenant-Colonel in the United States army."

The Rev. J. William Jones, D.D., one of the chaplains of General Jackson, in an article written many years ago on "The Inner Life of Lee," tells us that "The Bible was his daily companion, his guide, his comfort, and his trust. He was a constant reader and a diligent student of God's Word, and had his regular seasons for this delightful exercise. In the army, he *read the Bible every day*, in his headquarters, on the march, in the bivouac; and he did everything in his power to circulate the Word of God among his soldiers." In a letter to Markie Williams, written in December after the close of the Civil War, Lee gave this splendid testimony: "I prefer the Bible to any other book. There is enough in that to satisfy the most ardent thirst for knowledge, to open the way to true wisdom; and to teach the only road to salvation and eternal happiness." Chaplain Jones records that Lee once said to him personally: "There are many things in the old Book which I may never be able to explain, but I accept it as the infallible Word of God, and receive its teachings as inspired by the Holy Ghost." And so, as Dr. Freeman finely says: "Simple as was his soul, he had 'meat to eat that ye know not of.'"

Profitable Bible Study

Day 30

THE WORD "VISIT" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Kenneth W. Wuest

***"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."* (James 1:27)**

By our English word "visit" we usually mean "the act of calling to see another, of paying a visit in the sense of a social call." Consequently we sometimes attach this meaning to the word when we find it in Scripture. But the Greek word of which it is the translation means something more than that.

The word "visit" is the translation of two closely related verbs which have the following meanings. First: "to look upon or after, to inspect, to examine with the eyes." Second: "to look upon in order to help or benefit, to look after, to have a care for, to provide for." The word "visit" is possibly the best single word translation of the Greek words, but the English reader can see that it does not adequately translate it. Take for instance, "Sick and in prison and ye visited me not" (Matt. 25:43). What a richer, fuller meaning we have when we go to the Greek text. It was no mere social call that would have met the need of the prisoner. Oriental prisons sometimes were cold and uncomfortable. Paul writes to Timothy from his prison in Rome, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when you come, bring with you" (II Tim. 4:13). What a prisoner needed was ministering care like the help which the Philippians sent to Paul by Epaphroditus. Truly, the latter's visit to Paul in his Roman prison is a good illustration of the meaning of the Greek word translated "visit" in Matthew 25:43.

Zacharias, at the birth of his son John the Baptist, knowing that the latter would be the forerunner of the Messiah who would therefore shortly come, said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68). When he used the word "visited," he really said "for He has looked upon His people in order to help and benefit them, and provide for them." Then in Luke 1:78 he said, "The day-spring from on high has visited us." That Dayspring is none other than the Lord Jesus, who looked upon Israel and had a care for His chosen people so that He came to their aid. And when Israel refused the aid of its Messiah, He laments over Jerusalem and its inhabitants and speaks of its destruction, closing with the words, "You knew not the day of your visitation" (Luke 19:44). The word "visitation" is from a noun whose root is the same as the stem of our verb. Israel did not perceive that the coming of Jesus of Nazareth was the day when God was looking upon His people in order to help them. We have the same meaning in Luke 7:16.

The verb form is used of Moses in Acts 7:23 where Stephen speaks of him leaving the palace of Pharaoh to visit his Jewish brethren who were the slaves of the Egyptian king. "It came into his heart" to look after his brethren in order to help them. He had the consciousness that he was the God-ordained instrument to deliver Israel, and he was going to its aid.

In Acts 15:14 we have a very significant statement, "Simeon has declared how God for the first time (in the house of Cornelius) did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name." And so we could translate more fully "how God for the first time did look upon the Gentiles in order to help them and provide for them." After the first missionary journey, Paul said, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do" (Acts 15:36). Paul's use of the verb "visit" included a tour of inspection and the giving of spiritual aid where that was needed.

In Hebrews 2:6 we have, "What is man, that You are mindful of him? or the son of man, that You visit him?" The words "son of man" are here a designation of the human race. The Psalmist exclaims at the wonder of it all, that considering the insignificance of man, God would look upon him in order to help him and give him aid. 1 Peter 2:12 speaks of the fact that the unsaved who have been attracted to the Lord Jesus by the beautiful lives of Christians, and have put their faith in Him, will "glorify God in the day of visitation." The word translated "visitation" is allied to our verb, and refers to the day when God looks after them and cares for their souls in salvation. In 1 Peter 2:25, the word "Bishop" is from another word closely allied to the same verb. Thus God becomes the Bishop of the souls of the saints in that He looks after their spiritual welfare and gives them aid. In James 1:27 we have, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Here again, the word "visit" does not refer to a social call, but to the act of looking after the fatherless and the widows in order to help them.

Treasures from the Greek New Testament

Day 31

"O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM!"

William Paley

***"O wretched man that I am!
Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"
Romans 7:24***

In order to arrive at St. Paul's meaning in this matter, we must attend, with some degree of care, not only to the text but to the words which follow it. The 24th verse contains the question, *"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* and then the 25th verse goes on, *"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Now there is good reason to believe that this 25th verse does not appear in our copies as it ought to be read. It is most probable that the passage stood thus: the 24th verse asks, *"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* then the 25th verse answers, *"The grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Instead of the words "I thank God," put the words "the grace of God" and you will find the sense cleared up by the change very much.

I say it is highly probable that this change exhibits what St. Paul really wrote. In English there is no resemblance either in sound or writing between the two sentences, "I thank God" and "the grace of God." But in the language in which the epistle was written, there is a very great resemblance. And as I have said, there is reason to believe that in the transcribing, one has been confounded with the other. Perhaps the substantial meaning may be the same, whichever way you read the passage. But what is implied only in one way is clearly expressed in the other way.

The question then which St. Paul so earnestly and devoutly asks is, *"Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"*--from the state of soul which I feel and which can only lead to final perdition. And the answer to the question is, *"The grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Can a more weighty question be asked? Can an answer be given which better deserves to be thoroughly considered?

The "grace of God" means the favor of God. At present, therefore, the answer stands in general terms. We are only informed that we are rescued from this state of moral difficulty, of deep religious distress, by the favor of God through Jesus Christ. It remains to be gathered, from what follows, in what particularly this grace of favor consists. St. Paul, having asked the question and given the answer in general terms, proceeds to enlarge upon the answer in these words: *"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."* There is now no condemnation, but of whom and to whom is this spoken? It is to them who, first, are in Christ Jesus; who, secondly, walk not after the flesh; who, thirdly, walk after the Spirit.

And whence arises this alteration and improvement in our condition and our hopes, this exemption (or rather deliverance) from the ordinary state of man? St. Paul refers us to the cause. *"The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death,"* which words can hardly bear any other signification than this: "that the aid and operation of God's Spirit, given through Jesus Christ, has subdued the power which sin

had obtained and once exercised over me."

With this interpretation the whole sequel of St. Paul's reasoning agrees. Every sentence almost that follows illustrates the interpretation and proves it to be the true one. With what, but with the operation and the cooperation of the Spirit of God--as of a real, efficient, powerful, active Being--can such expressions as the following be made to suit? *"If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you"; "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"; "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you"; "By his Spirit that dwells in you"; "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption"; "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit";* all which expressions are found in the eighth chapter, namely, the chapter following the text, and all indeed within the compass of a few verses. These passages either assert or assume the fact, namely, the existence and agency of such a Spirit; its agency, I mean, in and upon the human soul.

Sermons on Several Subjects