Doctrinal
Devotional
Directional

Truths for Our Day

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To "... strengthen the things which remain..." Revelation 3:2

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Holy Ground

James H. McConkey

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy Ground." (Exodus 3:5)

Plymouth Rock and Independence Hall are holy ground to every patriotic American heart. Gettysburg, Antietam, and Fredericksburg are holy ground to every man of the North and man of the South who walks over those dramatic spots. The battlefields of France are holy ground to countless mothers, whose hearts turn tenderly to the crossmarked graves where the bodies of their precious boys sleep amid the hush and beauty of green fields and flowers. But do we realize this word of God to Moses that "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground?" That the daily, prosaic seemingly hum-drum round of our every day life and toil is holy ground if we would only see it as God sees it and accept it from His hand, as the holy place where He is ready to work out His great purpose for our humble lives?

The place whereon thou standest is the holy ground of consecration.

Most of us believe that God needs consecrated men in the ministry, in the foreign mission fields, and in all forms of Christian work. But how many of us realize that the whereon we stand in our daily, work-a-day life is holy ground, and that there is no limit to the blessedness and power with which God will use consecrated bankers, lawyers, physicians, clerks, mechanics and other Christian laymen who give themselves to Him in consecration, in the holy ground of their every-day life.

Chatting one day with a dear Christian friend he said to me, "Have you ever heard about Nat's sand-pile?" When I answered in the negative he told me this story. Nat was a beloved friend of ours. He was building contractor. It so happened that in his native city down by the riverbank was a huge sand pile. To every one else but Nat it was merely an unsightly, worthless sand pile. But Nat had a vision about this sand pile. He saw that every truckload he sold would bring him a dollar. And when the sand pile was gone the leveled ground would make a fine site for a business block. So Nat bought the sand pile.

When the news got abroad, many of his friends were smiling at the idea of his buying a worthless sand pile. But soon Nat's vision began to come true. Week after week he sold sand and leveled off the ground. Bye-and-bye the sand was all sold; the ground was leveled off; a handsome business block was built on the site. Before the year was over, a good part of the wholesale trade of the city had moved into that block, and soon after he sold out making thousands of dollars by the operation.

Friend, your life may be obscure, untalented, and as worthless in your sight as that sand pile. But if you will treat the place in every day life whereon you stand as holy ground, and give that life to God in consecration, God will make of it a beautiful structure enduring for His glory through all time and eternity.

The place whereon thou standest is the holy ground of God's call.

Most of us, when we picture God's call, think of something dramatic, revolutionary, and startling. The scene on the road to Damascus at once comes up. We see the great light in the sky; we hear the voice from heaven; we picture the revolutionizing effect of it all upon the great Apostle to the Gentiles. But we forget the great number of men to whom God's call came when they stood upon the holy ground of their every-day life and service. God's call came to Samuel as he ministered in the daily round of the temple; it came to David in the sheepfold; it came to Moses after forty years in the back of the dessert; it came to some of the disciples as they were mending and casting their nets. In all these cases the call came to them as they stood upon the holy ground of their daily duties.

There comes back to me an experience of my early manhood days. My health was broken. All my own plans were crushed. As yet I had found none of God's. One day I was sitting at my table studying the Word of God. A great blessing came into my heart. It was glowing with joy and with the desire to give the same message to others. I leaned back in my chair and walked down stairs. My sister handed me my morning mail.

The first letter I opened was from the secretary of a Young Men's Christian Association across the river from the little hometown in eastern Pennsylvania where I lived. It ran like this. "Dear Brother-Last night we decided to start a Bible class. We arose from our knees,

after a half hour's prayer, impressed that you were the man we needed. Will you come and teach this class for us?" It seemed but a small thing, but it looked to me like God's holy ground of service. That night I went and taught a Bible class of five bighearted railroad men. God gave great blessing to my own soul, and seemed to help these dear men. I taught that Bible class as faithfully as I knew for a period of three years. Then came another class, and another. At the end of three years I was teaching ten Bible classes, and had found my life work. The place of daily service whereon I had been standing proved to be holy ground, and I had found the joy of God's will for my life.

Let us then heed this great truth that God's call always has come, and always will come, to men who are standing on the holy ground of every day, faithful service. If He wants us elsewhere, He will make it plain. But until He does so, stay where you are and count it holy ground whereon thou standest.

"Truths for our Day"

A monthly publication that is freely available on the Internet and is intended to help believers who appreciate the timeless truths of God's Word and who recognize the unchanging principles of God's will for His people. It is primarily intended to strengthen those who enjoy fellowship in local assemblies of believers who are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Thank you

The place whereon thou standest is the holy ground of patience.

The literal meaning of the verb "to be patient" is, "to stay under." It is a striking word picture. We sing-"Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way; Thou art the potter, I am the clay." But when the potter puts His hand on the clay, the clay proceeds to get out from under the potter's wheel instead of staying under the same. To stay under all that God permits to come upon you, whether of suffering, tribulation, or affliction while He works out His purpose of Christ-likeness in you, that makes the place whereon thou standest to be the holy ground of patience.

How true this was of Moses. There in that barren, lonely spot, under the fiery rays of a desert sun, day after day, year after year, God kept His great servant in the place of patience. That is he "stayed under" the hand of God amid all the monotony, desolation, and isolation of that forty years of tremendous test and trial. Forty years of training and patience for forty years of service. A year of patience for every year of leadership! And out of it the hot-headed, hasty young Egyptian killer came forth an iron-willed, steadfast, tender-hearted, marvelous leader with the very patience of God Himself. For none other would have sufficed to lead this raw, undisciplined, rebellious, unbelieving, idolatrous host of Israelites through all those weary years of wandering which their own sinfulness had brought upon them, yet which he shared with them as though he himself were with them for the tragedy of it all.

Much of our prayer life consists in beseeching God to surround us with a new set of circumstances. Instead of that we should pray for grace to stay under the present circumstances while He works out in us His purpose of Christ-likeness. God does not need a new set of circumstances to make you Christ-like. All He needs is for you to "stay under" the old set with which He has environed your life. I question if there is any Christian reading these lines who needs a change of circumstances as much as he needs that Christlike change in himself which God is seeking to work out as he stays under his present conditions.

A young man came into my room one day for a conference. He said he had been praying earnestly to God to make an important change in his environment, but God had failed to do so. So his faith had been much shaken. I suggested that God might have a purpose in keeping him where he was, and that it might be well to submit it all to Him and stay under His hand while He worked out His great purpose. We got down upon our knees together and I prayed that he might make such a committal. I waited a moment to hear it, but when I looked up he was standing with his hand upon the doorknob ready to go out. He had no intention nor desire to stay under God's hand, but was getting ready

to get out. We pray to God to change our environment, but when God puts His hand upon us to change us instead of staying under that hand we reach for the door to get out. Of course if God Himself changes our circumstances it is different. But until He does so, it is well for us to stay under our present environment, realizing that the place whereon we stand is the holy ground of patience for us. (Continued)

When knowledge enters the head, it exalts me.
When knowledge enters the heart, it humbles me.
Edward Dennett

Deuteronomy (3)
Suggestions of the Upper Room
Joel Portman

Deuteronomy is included with the previous books of Moses in the Pentateuch, and we properly do so. However, if we separate it from the four, since it is of a different character than they are, and link it with the books that follow, we get a perspective that suggests dispensation truth that specifically applies to us.

This book gives us the last recorded words of a man who is shortly going to die. Also, like Christ, he was soon to be seen "going up". Moses spoke these words so that the people might be preserved, blessed, and encouraged to go on without him. It gives truth that would enable them to possess and inherit the land (4:1). He gives teaching that links their love for God and keeping His commandments directly together. Moses in this book is the Mediator and Deliverer linked with his people, but he must die before they can enter the land and possess it (3:23-29). Joshua replaces him to lead them in and divide the inheritance for their enjoyment.

In this way, Deuteronomy suggests the precious truths we enjoy in John 13-17. We have the last words of our Lord to His own, ere He would lay down His life for His sheep and accomplish that death that was always before Him. Those words were intended to preserve them during the coming days of His absence, intended to encourage and minister blessing to them, to stabilize them in their life and exercise for Him, and to prepare them for the possession of spiritual blessings to come. Those blessings would result from His death and ascension to God's right hand, and they would come through the ministration of the Holy Spirit sent down from above. Again, the Lord's teaching repeatedly links their love for Him with their obedience to His blessed commands (John 13:34-35; 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:9-10). They would demonstrate that love practically by their obedience, but also by their genuine love one for another (15:17). One may see many other correlations by studying these passages together.

If this is so, then Joshua reminds us of the coming of the Holy Spirit to carry out the work of the Risen, Exalted Man at God's right hand. That work brings the believer into the inheritance of "the heavenlies" and makes real to his heart the blessedness of having been risen with Christ (Colossians 3:1, Ephesians 1:3). The following book of Judges gives a picture of the course of the present age with its degenerating condition unto the end, but Ruth takes us forward to the coming marriage of the Gentile bride and the restoration of a widowed nation on the ground of the grace of a heavenly Boaz. Following that book are the events that lead into the establishment of the kingdom when Christ will rule supreme and be exalted in all the earth.

That being the picture, we should appreciate even more the fact that in Deuteronomy, God is seeking to draw out His people's hearts (ours included) to greater and genuine love for Him. This is love that motivates obedience to His word, love that is expressed in our obedience, and a love that is the only proper response to what He has done for us. Paul without doubt entered into this blessed truth, when we hear him in 2 Corinthians 5:14 and Galatians 2:20. We should express it as well, when we think that we are no less debtors to our blessed Lord because of how He has expressed His love for us!

A Separated People unto God

God emphasizes in Deuteronomy that they were a separated people, different from all the peoples of the earth. They were not reckoned among the nations and were not to behave like the nations around them. This issue of separation and its importance has always been a point of difficulty for many, since it is abrasively opposed to the desires of the flesh and those who tend toward natural things do not like it. Many balk at the teaching that the believer is not of this world, though passing through it, and they don't like to hear that we are not to have a part in its different aspects of living that are associated with a world system that is opposed to God. This separation is first of all unto God, and as a result of recognizing that we are His entirely and uniquely, we would respond with conditions that are in keeping with God's character and will. We have no part in its entertainment system, its sports system, its political system, its social structure, its business ambitions that center on self, or anything else that links us wrongly with a system that is under God's judgment.

The Israelites, and we, are separated by the elements that are emphasized in Deuteronomy. The first issue, in Deuteronomy 1-3, is a separation on the basis of their PATHWAY. His survey of that pathway shows that it, though accompanied by their failure and unbelief, was a path on which God had led them. This

is emphasized in 8:1-2, and it gives the realization that the believer has been led on a path of life that is different from the man of the world. No other nation had been led by that path and come to that point in the same way. They were separated by the PRECEPTS of God's Word, chapters 4-11, that were to be obeyed and taken to heart. Notice 4:8, 10, 5:1, 29. No other people of the earth had such a Word given to them, and its truth received would separate them from the world. Any appreciation of this blessed truth will cause a true believer to respond with a life of separated devotion to our Lord.

In chapters 12-13, God emphasizes that they were separated by the PLACE of the gathering. That place was not determined according to principles of the unsaved, but it was the Place of His own determination, the place of His Name, the place where HE was. May we recognize that our gathering to His blessed Name acknowledges His authority and rights over our entire lives, and that being identified with an assembly thus gathered is a point of our separation from the religious world in which we live.

Another point of their separation was the PERSON of God revealed to them (4:7, 15-16, 34; 32:4, 33:26). What other people had come to know the true God Who had made Himself known to them? Knowledge of God made them different from others who might make gods of their own imagination that expressed their own corrupted spirit. We are separated by the truth of God, received, known, and upheld in life and doctrine in a way that makes compatibility with religious men holding erroneous ideas of God impossible. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 would teach us this along with other Scriptures.

Last of all, they were separated unto God by their PRACTICES that are emphasized in chapters 14-26. They were marked as a Holy People, linked with a Holy God and a Holy Place, and thus were expected to continually display Holy Practices that showed this to be true. What we do in our lives and how we live before the world must show consistency with the truth we profess to believe and the One Whom we profess to know. Those were practices that set them apart from the nations around them, and we believe that the lives of the believers today should show that we belong to the Lord and that we are not our own, for we have been bought with a price and must therefore glorify God in our body and in our spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

May God impress these practical truths on our hearts and preserve us in our lives for His honor and usefulness until He comes.

There is not a single operation of the Spirit of God nor a single form of His workings, that Satan does not imitate.

Joy of the Lord in Psalm 16, pt 3

Walter Gustafson

His joy in Counsel (v. 7) *"I will bless the LORD, who hath given Me counsel: My reins also instruct Me in the night seasons."*

These words easily link themselves with Isaiah 50:4, "*The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned".* Parts of many of His nights, and at least one whole night, were spent in communion with His Father (Luke 6:12). What a holy, intimate relationship there was between Christ and His Father! He could say in John 4:34, "*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work"*. That was His satisfying portion and, of course, He was very careful to find out the will of God for Him for each day. The Lord Jesus received definite guidance and positive direction in life here and so can we. In Psalm 25 there are two promises for those who fear God, "*What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose"* (v. 12), and "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant""*(v. 14). That fear is a filial fear, lest the father be displeased. The late George Truitt said, "The greatest discovery is to discover the will of God, the greatest knowledge is to know the will of God, and the greatest accomplishment is to do the will of God".

His joy in God's presence and help (v. 8)

"I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved"

Here we have His positive purpose of heart. Surely, this is the practice of the presence of God in perfection. The Lord Jesus is the only one who could say, "always" here and also in John 8:29*, "I do always those things that please Him"* and in John 11:42, "*And I knew that Thou hearest Me always"*. I John 3:22 can be linked with John 11:42, *"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight"*. Charles H. Mackintosh writes, "Union with Christ is a strong link and nothing can break it, but communion with Christ is a tender link and is easily broken". We, however, have a resource that our Lord Jesus never needed, in I John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*. "Keep no accounts with God" is really better advice than "keep short accounts with God". Can we take the Lord with us everywhere we go?

"*Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved"* (v. 8). There is strength at my right hand. The words of the Lord Jesus link naturally with the prophecy of Isaiah 50:6-7, "*I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore*

have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed". Also, Luke 9:51 says, *"And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"*, and nothing could turn Him aside.

"Unmoved by Satan"s subtle wiles,
By suffering, shame, and loss;
Thy path, uncheered by earthly smiles,
Led only to the Cross."

The Lord is also right at our elbow to help us. "*Let your moderation* (or Matthew Arnold has, "your sweet reasonableness") *be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand"* (Philippians 4:5). W. E. Vine tells us that that word can mean either near in time or near in place. For that verse I believe the latter sense is more helpful: the Lord is right at our elbow to help us to be sweetly reasonable.

His joy in hope (or certain expectation) (vv. 9-11)

"Therefore My heart is glad, and My glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell (or" Sheol" RV, place of the dead)*; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore".*

The word "*Therefore"* shows that there is a link with what has gone before. Therefore, on the basis of His joy experienced throughout His earthly life and referenced in the first eight verses, His heart, His glory and His flesh all respond to the thrill of hope, of certain expectation (never, when in a positive sense in scripture, seen as only a possibility but rather as a certainty).

In these verses, we can link "Heart" with "Soul", "Glory" with "Spirit", and, very clearly, "Flesh" with "Body". Since Man is a tripartite being (1 Thessalonians 5:23), we can see that our Lord"s whole being (spirit, soul and body) was enraptured in delight at the joyous anticipation. The Lord Jesus refers to His spirit in Luke 23:46, His soul in Matthew 26:38, John 12:27 and Psalm 69:1 and to His body in John 2:19 ("*Destroy this temple*", cf. v. 21, "*But He spake of the temple of His body"*). Here we see that His holy, sinless humanity in its entirety, thrilled at this certain expectation!

"For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (v. 10). This verse explains His joyous hope: Verses 9-10 clearly anticipate His resurrection and v. 11, His ascension. That He did not see corruption contrasts with David himself, of whom Paul definitely states in Acts 13:36, "*for David … saw corruption"*. In contrast, in the following verse, Paul says, "*But He, Whom God raised again, saw no corruption"* (Acts 13:37). Psalm 16 unquestionably predicts that Christ would **never** see corruption.

It is noteworthy that both the apostle Peter in Acts 2 and the apostle Paul in Acts 13 emphasize the truth predicted in Psalm 16 that Christ would not see corruption, Peter twice and Paul three times.

We can ask, how did the Lord Jesus know (v. 11), "*In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"?* We could say, He knew, because He was God and was omniscient, and that is true; but it is precious to think also that it was because He had been there (at God"s right hand) before! (Concluded)

Expose yourself to the circumstances that God chooses. Samuel Rutherford

Death's Solemnity Fading

Jim Brown

While I was out delivering gospel tracts three years ago in October, I was confronted by a giant skeleton, twice my height, as I rounded the corner of one house to enter the next yard. I'd never seen a Halloween decoration that large! After I recovered from being so startled, the verse came to me, "Fools make a mock at sin" (Proverbs 14:9). Thinking along that line, it also occurred to me that fools make a mock at death. But Halloween is not the only mockery. Yesteryear's sober seriousness and sobbing sadness at funerals have been replaced with a lighter, giddier reaction. The millennia-old proper mourning of death (see Genesis 23:2, John 11:35) has now succumbed to a new trend called "the celebration of life". A quick search on Google shows that no movie genre is more profitable than horror movies showing 52% while the industry average is 43%. Mankind will always have a strange fascination with death, whether it be the professional dare-devil drivers, risky circus acts, mountain-climbing, airplane or bungee-jumping and like ventures. What is the problem? "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:18).

With the season of Halloween upon us, one wonders why, or how a subject so solemn, that is, death, can be treated with such callous joviality and comedic abandon. I've heard some defend the holiday as being just an innocent, fun excuse for both children and adults to have a "costume party". I won't further digress other than to ask how popular costumes supposedly portraying characters like skeletons, dead people, evil witches, gruesome monsters, ghosts, and even Satan himself are to be construed as innocent

fun? Perhaps that makes me an old fuddy duddy, yet, in the name of our Lord, the question still hangs: Why?

Job refers to death as “the king of terrors” (Job 18:14). Paul mentions there is a “sting” to death (1 Corinthians 15:55) which could only refer to what pertains to unbelievers since Christ has removed it through His death and resurrection. Also, in Hebrews 2:14-15, we see that until each of us learns that Christ delivered us from the penalty of our sins by being delivered (Romans 4:25, 8:32) and by destroying the one who had the power of death, the devil, we were hopelessly subject to bondage through fear of death our entire life.

Let’s examine the simple ones in Proverbs 1:22-30 who loved simplicity. That simplicity really involves living life under the baser direction of fleshly nerves and impulses rather than attributing any value to the three-fold instruction from God to pursue knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Like those in Psalm 73 who seemed to prosper (from Asaph’s initial perspective), there were no bands in their death, impervious to, and not caring what awaited them in their folly. When God rises up to judge them after all his reproof and counsel are rejected, the happy-go-lucky attitude is met with an abrupt about-face. Notice the adjectives describing what it means for a fool to die and find out, too late, that they had not prepared to meet God: Calamity and fear (v. 26), fear, desolation, destruction like a whirlwind, distress and anguish (v. 27) and nothing but silence with no sympathy from heaven (v. 28). What hopelessness! In the light of Matthew 7:14’s “few there be that find it”, it’s always amazing to me that funerals for unbelievers often come off as, more or less, the necessary prelude to the party that follows, so why not get a head start on frivolity right here in the building’s “holy place”.

There are varying thoughts on exactly what “the worm that dieth not” (Mark 9:48) is in hell for the unbeliever. It is their own personal worm, not some general worm blanketing all unbelievers. Some describe the hideous thought of literal worms, or maggots gnawing on the eternal bodies suffering in the lake of fire. Others tell us that the worm gnaws upon the conscience, a remorse over lost opportunity, but never producing genuine repentance. Either way, how awful! Notice that both death and hell are cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14) at the very end of time for earth. God takes death very seriously and has the power to remove it forever for believers. But inversely, He will secure it eternally after the resurrection of damnation where nothing but a tormented conscious existence in death exists following the events of Revelation 20:15. How does that happy little Halloween lawn ensemble or cute skeleton costume look now?

I am so thankful for direction given in Scripture that show what our thoughts about death should be, whether for ourselves as believers or for those out of Christ. I appreciate our brethren who handle funeral services in a godly manner and my fellow believers who maintain the dignity of such an event. Let us never be found caught up in the world’s lightness about death. Were we to slack on this, we’d be poking a huge hole in the power of the gospel message we support.

After all, we were once “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1), under the sentence of death (Romans 5:12), earning its wages (Romans 6:23), afraid to face it (Hebrews 2:15) but needing to keep its appointment (Hebrews 9:27) and heading eventually for the second death (Revelation 20:14). And for every verse we can show how closely linked with death we were, we can show just as many, if not more, that describe our life in Christ. But we could not do that without showing several dozen verses about the wondrous death of our Lord Jesus Christ, voluntarily submitted to, because each one of us can say: 'He loved me so'. His death was like no other.

Only when sin is bitter does grace become truly sweet.

The Trespass-Offering

C. E. Stuart

From sins of inadvertence, violations of natural conscience, and those which become sins by statutory enactment, we pass on to another class, which under the law are called a trespass (maal), and had to be met in the manner revealed to Moses.

Trespasses might be committed against God, or against one's neighbor, so two revelations were vouchsafed to Israel respecting them. The first, in Leviticus 5:14-19, treats of trespasses against the Lord; the second, in Leviticus 6:1-7, of trespasses against a neighbor; and both have this feature in common, that besides the sacrifice which had to be brought, a money payment as well was enjoined on the offender as compensation for the harm that he had done.

Of course every trespass was a sin, though every sin was not a trespass. A recompense being demanded showed that the rights of the one sinned against were not to be ignored; but a sacrifice being also enjoined, showed that a trespass against one's neighbor was not a matter which could be hushed up, or compromised, without any acknowledgment of the guilt before God. The injured party received back that of which he had been wrongfully deprived, with a fifth part

of its value in addition, a fine imposed on the offender by the law of his God. But besides the restitution to the injured party, the death of the appointed victim had to take place to make atonement for the guilty person, that he might be forgiven. The forgiveness of his neighbor was one thing; the forgiveness of God was another thing, and with nothing less than that was the offender to be contented. Thus the Lord would teach His people, that their acts of sin had to be viewed in connection with their responsibility to Him, and not merely as they might affect the one sinned against on earth. Many a man might be defrauded without much personal inconvenience to him flowing from it; but a trespass committed against such a one was a trespass against Jehovah, and could only be atoned for as the law directed. How fully were the rights of property to be respected by those who were privileged to be called the people of the Lord. Are Christians sufficiently alive to that of which the Israelite under the law was constantly reminded?

A trespass-offering then supposed the commission of an act by which the Lord or the man's neighbor had been wronged. Of this class of sins we have several examples in the Old Testament. A wife unfaithful to her husband was guilty of a trespass against him; for she defrauded him of his rights. (Numbers 5:12.) Aaron, too, and Moses were guilty of this sin at Meribah–Kadesh, when they did not sanctify the Lord in the midst of the children of Israel. (Deuteronomy 32:51.) Similarly Achan, and after him Saul, were convicted of a trespass when they kept back from the destruction to which God had devoted them - the one some property of the Amorites, the other some of the spoil of the Amalekites. (Joshua 22:20; 1 Chronicles 10:13.) Again, Uzziah was a trespasser in the holy things of the Lord when he presumed to officiate at the altar of incense, a service only lawful for the priests. (2 Chronicles 26:18.) And Ahaz and Manasseh stand out as shameful instances of trespassers; for they turned their backs openly on the worship of God. (2 Chronicles 28:19, 22; 2 Chronicles 29:19; 2 Chronicles 33:19.) But not only were individuals guilty of such a sin; for the nation was convicted of it, both when they turned to idolatry before the Babylonish captivity, and when the remnant intermarried with the people of the countries around them, after the Lord had in mercy allowed them to return to their land. (1 Chronicles 5:25; 2 Chronicles 36:14; Ezekiel 20:27-28; Ezra 9:2, 4; Ezra 10:6; Nehemiah 13:27.) Separation to God should have characterized them, but in that they had grievously failed. Lastly, Zedekiah is charged by Ezekiel with this sin (Ezekiel 17:20) when he broke his covenant with the king of Babylon, to which the Lord was made a party, by his swearing in God's name to keep it.

These are instances of trespasses which God could not pass over, and for the most of which the law could provide no sacrifice. The returned remnant did, it is true, offer a trespass-offering for their failure in the matter of the strange wives. (Ezra 10:19.) To Manasseh grace was shown when he repented. But the leprous king and the faithless monarch were monuments, as long as they lived, of the evil of such a sin in God's eyes; whilst Moses and Aaron, Achan, Saul, and Ahaz, experienced God's governmental dealing in being removed by death as a visitation on them for their sin. And Israel, exiles to this day, a people without self-government, and even national existence, are witnesses of the grievous consequences of trespassing against their God. Witnesses, too, are they of the law's inability to meet their case, whilst awaiting the coming of that day when the blessed results of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be applied to them, brought to own their sins, and to turn to the Lord.

In all these cases the distinctive feature of a trespass is discerned. God or man was defrauded of their rights by a wrong done to them. In the case off the individuals, where the law could not provide a sacrifice, the temporal consequences of their sin could never be averted, unless God was pleased, as in Manasseh's case, to act in sovereign grace. In the case of the nation, they will learn by-and-by that their trespasses, to atone for which the law could make no provision, have been fully met and, dealt with by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ shed on the cross. Meanwhile under the law, God did provide a sacrifice, that trespassers, of a certain class might be sheltered from the consequences of their acts, and be assured of divine forgiveness. These are specified in Leviticus 5:14-6:7.

A person might sin through inadvertence in the holy things of the Lord, or he might have sinned ignorantly in such matters; for the sins referred to in verse 17, seem to have respect to those mentioned in verses 15, 16. Inadvertently, or in error, he might have committed a trespass, or he may have acted in ignorance; nevertheless he had sinned, so a trespass-offering he was commanded to bring. Again, if he had lied to his neighbor concerning any matter of trust, or deceived him, or had sworn falsely for the purpose of defrauding him, a trespass-offering was demanded by the law, and that offering was to be a ram of the flock, which when duly dealt with at the altar, the money payment having also been made, the guilty one could go home with the assurance from Jehovah Himself of the forgiveness of his sin. So careful was the Lord to impress that on the offender that three times in these few verses is it stated. (Leviticus 5:16, 18; Leviticus 6:7.) For whether he had to bring a sin-offering or a trespass-offering, if the appointed sacrifice was brought, and the demands of the law complied with, the guilty one was assured of forgiveness on the part of the Lord. Absolution from the priest was not the question. No priest of Aaron's house could absolve a man from his sins, but he could tell him what Jehovah had promised, and assure him of it on the authority of the written revelation by Moses.

Having seen what constituted a trespass according to the law, we would now trace out some of the distinctive features of the required offering; for in each of the offerings at which we have looked, the ritual prescribed had in it something different from the others. For a burnt-offering, a meat-offering, or a peace-offering, as we have seen, the offender had a choice, though only a choice within the range prescribed for him by the Lord. For a sin-offering as treated of in Leviticus 4, God took account, as we have noticed, of the responsibility of the offender. For a sin-offering as enjoined in Leviticus 5, the Lord took into consideration the ability of the sinner. In the case of a trespass-offering, on the contrary, there was but one sacrifice appointed for every trespass, without any alternative to meet the offender's temporal circumstances. A ram of the flock was the only sacrifice the law appointed, an offering of less pecuniary value than a bullock, but of greater value than that of a lamb; for since the trespass indicated that either God or man had been defrauded of their rights, a ram, which reminds us of consecration, was the fitting offering to be appointed. With the sacrifice a money payment was demanded (this too was peculiar to this offering), depending in amount on the value of the harm done, with a fifth part of the value added to the sum which had to be paid.

Was it a trespass in the holy things? In that case the money payment went to the priest. Had any individual been injured? The money due was paid to that person, or if dead to his representative; and if he left no representative, then it was handed to the priest. (Numbers 5:5-8.) What justice was here displayed! No one was to take advantage of another, even though he were his brother; and if he did defraud or wrong him, he committed a trespass against the Lord. (Leviticus 6:2.) The injured party's rights the offender had to acknowledge, and to make amends for the harm done to him. But he had to do with the Lord about that wrong, and his presence at the altar with a ram was a confession of it. Death then could never be pleaded by the guilty one as barring any claim for restitution or the need of confession. Jehovah did not pass away, nor did the priesthood die out; so the Lord's claims had to be acknowledged, and restitution had to be made. Had it been left to man to draw up regulations in cases of trespass, some might have carefully provided for the recognition of the claims of the injured party, and have passed over all consideration of that which was due to God. Others might have stipulated for a sacrifice, and where death had intervened, have released the offender from all claim on him for compensation. With God's law how different. Time would not diminish the gravity of the offense; for it was a trespass against the Eternal One. Circumstances could not lessen the sinner's obligation to make restitution, so He who sat upon the throne, the Righteous One, insisted on that being done, ere atonement could be made for a trespass against a neighbor. The claims then of divine holiness were maintained, and also met in the ram when sacrificed. The demand, too, for a just recompense to be made by the offender was not suffered to remain unsatisfied; yet the guilty one was also cared for in the provision made for his forgiveness. How correct was David in his judgment when he said to the prophet Gad, "Let me now fall into the hands of the Lord; for very great are His mercies." (1 Chronicles 21:13.)

Amends then had to be made for the harm done, and where the wrong was one done to a neighbour, the restitution or payment of the fine is spoken of, ere the sacrifice which had to be brought is mentioned. (Leviticus 6:1-7.) This order is not without significance. Where God had been defrauded, the sacrifice which He required, that He might be seen to be righteous in acting in grace toward the offender, is put in the foreground. When anyone injured his neighbor, the Lord taught the trespasser that He could not receive his offering, unless he first provided the proper recompense for the one whom he had wronged. The principle here illustrated abides unchanged. Dispensations may pass away, new regulations for the worship of God may be needed; but the recognition of a neighbor’s rights God cannot allow us to forget; nor will He accept the sacrifice of the man who, from whatever cause, would ignore them. (1 Thessalonians 4:6-8; Matt. 5:23-24.) The ram brought to the altar, we learn from the law of this offering how it was to be dealt with. (7:1-7.) As with the sin-offering and peace-offering, its inwards only were burnt on the altar. In common with the sin-offering and meat-offering, it was most holy. Differing from the peace-offering, but in this resembling the sin-offering, the males only of the priesthood could eat of it; and the priest that made atonement therewith was to have it. Lastly, in common with the burnt-offering and peace-offering, its blood was only sprinkled on the altar round about. Thus the regulations respecting each offering are seen to be different. Resembling others in some points, no two were alike in all. Yet all typified one sacrifice, that which has been offered up, and accepted, even Him who is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, whose death therefore will have wide-reaching results, far beyond what any sacrifice under the law could prefigure. They were shadows, but the body is of Christ (Colossians 2:17.) They dealt with man's need; His deals with sin as well as with sins. By His precious blood atonement has been made for sins. By His sacrifice on the cross the sin of the world will be taken away. How suitable was it that the priest who offered the offering should have it, so that the sin which was transferred to the sacrifice should never rise up against the offender. The offering put out of sight, because eaten, the sin could never be remembered. How perfectly has God provided for this! (Hebrews 10:17.)

We have seen what constituted a trespass - maal - and in what manner such a sin could be dealt

with. It will not therefore surprise the reader to learn that at no public festival was a trespass-offering - asham - appointed to be offered; yet a leper could not be cleansed without one (Leviticus 14:10-14), nor could a Nazarite, who had defiled the head of his consecration, renew that consecration, till he had brought a he-lamb of the first year for a trespass-offering unto the Lord. (Numbers 6:12.) In both these cases God's rights had really been infringed. The leper teaches us what God's professed people ought to be for God, but had not been; the Nazarite shows us what one specially devoted to God should be to Him. But in neither case was harm done, so we have no money payment insisted upon.

For centuries such sacrifices have ceased; for there was only one altar on which they could be offered, that called the altar of burnt-offering. By-and-by that altar will be reared up afresh, and hallowed again for acceptable worship to the Lord. Then trespass-offerings will be brought, as before, to God's altar at Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40:39, 42:13), and the priests will boil what remains of them in the appointed place (Ezek. 46:20), and eat them as they were commanded of old. (Ezekiel 44:29.) But Christians, living between the time of the cessation of sacrifice on the altar and its renewal, know now what the earthly people will then learn - that propitiation has been already made once for all, and substitution in its fullness and reality is a thing of the past, though never to be forgotten; for Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation for our sins, and He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree. (1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 2:24.)

“One cannot live in paradise without the Word of God, but he can live in hell without it.” Luther

Our Empathy

Carlos Fariñas

Although the term "empathy" does not appear explicitly in our Bibles, the concept is reflected in the many ways the Scriptures describe how believers in Christ should relate to one another, as well as to all those we wish to reach with the glorious message of the Gospel.

The dictionary defines empathy as "the disposition to identify with others, recognizing that they may have life circumstances or temperaments different from our own."

Psychology teaches us that various types of deprivation experienced during childhood can affect a person’s temperament, potentially leading to a hostile, aggressive, or entirely withdrawn character. Often, when a person’s personality is judged, it is based on a limited analysis of their outward behavior or character, without ever understanding the underlying causes of that behavior.

We know that a person’s temperament is inherited from their parents—sometimes as a combination of both parents' temperaments, or as a stronger manifestation of the more dominant parent’s temperament. Character is the form that temperament takes after being shaped by one’s upbringing or the circumstances experienced throughout life. In adulthood, personal effort or formal education can lead an individual to mold their character and establish patterns of behavior that ultimately define their personality.

In several of his letters, the Apostle Paul reveals God’s desire regarding how a believer should interact with those around them—both fellow Christians and non-believers. In 1 Corinthians 12:4–7, he teaches us about the equipping that the Holy Spirit provides to every believer from the moment of their conversion. Throughout the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, we see the express desire of the Lord Jesus Christ to use the gifts bestowed by the Spirit to shape a church that reflects His character and holiness. Then, in Romans 12, God instructs us on how we ought to conduct ourselves in order to carry out the work He designed before the foundation of the world. It is crucial to highlight and always keep in mind the teaching found in verse 3: “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” In Philippians 2:3, we find this exhortation: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” It is easy to see that both selfish ambition and vain conceit stand in opposition to humility—a virtue that should be clearly evident in every genuine believer. This humility has nothing to do with a believer’s economic or social status; rather, it is an essential trait of the Christian character, independent of one’s standing in society.

Let us understand, then, beloved brothers and sisters, that our God—our beloved Savior and the Holy Spirit—work in perfect harmony to make each of His children a useful member of the body of Christ, which is the Church. Our part is simply to follow the directives given in Ephesians 4:22–32: to strip away, day by day, the carnal ideas that may still linger within us, and to be renewed daily through the Word of God.

Therefore, before we become judges of others, we should consider several points related to what has been explained above:

1. Since character and personality are the result of past experiences or personal deficits, only empathy can provide us with the opportunity to offer counsel and attempt to help shape those around us who may be behaving in undesirable ways.

2. Anyone who has experienced crises during their upbringing—and has not been transformed by the grace of Christ—will pass on those same limitations and deficits to the children they raise. This suggests a long chain of issues, making it increasingly difficult to help an individual as they grow older.

3. When we look inward and acknowledge our own shortcomings, we gain a clearer perspective on how best to help others. This is precisely the point of the counsel given by the Lord Jesus Himself: “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? ” (Matthew 7:1–4).

4. Scripture tells us: “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil” (Proverbs 16:6).

God cannot forgive excuses; He can only forgive sins. Calvin Thielman

How to Pray

Franklin Ferguson

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for me”
(Ephesians 6:18-19).

The Season of Prayer—”praying always.” Most of us have set times for prayer, morning and evening, and perhaps at noon; some may arise even in the night, when all is still. But we should also pray hourly through each day, as matters arise, in a simple and brief lifting of the heart to Heaven; it may be only a sentence; thus we live in the attitude of prayer, we are “praying always.”

The Manner of Prayer—”with all prayer and supplication.” That is, with every kind of prayer—earnest, believing, thankful, joyful, importunate, agonized; and any other kind of prayer befitting our state of soul, or the thing prayed for. “All” prayer implies a zeal of the suppliant that leaves nothing untried to obtain the gracious answer of our God.

The Power of Prayer—”in the Spirit.”To thus pray is to pray in deep fellowship with the Lord, with an indwelling and ungrieved Holy Spirit leading forth our supplication, “according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27); then freely and blessedly “in the Spirit” do we feel our hearts praying with a liberty which otherwise could not be possible.

The Guarding of Prayer—”and watching thereunto”. We “watch“ as well as pray; for easily Satan may steal the time that should be given, and we are robbed of “mercy” and “grace to help” when in need. Prayer keeps open the channel from above, and strengthens the encircling fence of God’s protecting care.

The Continuance of Prayer—”with all perseverance.” It must be “without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), that is, continue until heard. We ask a petition for a week, a month, a year; then we tire for want of “patient continuance,” forgetting that delays are not denials, but tests to faith. Do we really desire the things we ask for? Can we hold on to God till He shall answer? Though the answer tarry a long while, yet it shall come when patience has done her perfect work.

The Subjects of Prayer—”for all saints.” This will keep us fully and blessedly occupied when upon our knees. Is there a felt lack of what to pray for when the usual petitions are being made? Then let us name, one by one, saints known personally; this enlarges the heart and greatly widens our interests and sympathies. The range is as wide as the Church of God.

The Individuality of Prayer—”and for me.” In these words are expressed that deep personal sense of needing the prayers of fellow-saints; and if an inspired Apostle like Paul solicited such a personal interest, how much rather should we desire this benefit, who come so far below the high spiritual attainment he reached.

“The great lesson to be learned from the whole is, sin is progressive; one evil propensity or act leads to another. He who acts by bad counsel may soon do evil deeds; and he who abandons himself to evil doings may end his life in total apostasy from God.” A. G. Clarke