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***"Nothing is more foolish than a security  
built upon the world and its promises,  
for they are all vanity and a lie."***

—Matthew Henry

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## MEDITATIONS

### The Father's Love for the Son

Rev. B. Elshout

*"The Father loveth the Son."* —John 3:35

John 3 is one of the chapters of Holy Scripture to which frequent reference is made in both preaching and devotional literature. This chapter records Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus about the necessity of the new birth, Christ's articulation of the biblical gospel expressed in verses 14-21, and John the Baptist's profound testimony about Christ—words that mark the conclusion of John the Baptist's public ministry.

In this final segment of the chapter—John the Baptist's moving confession that Christ must increase and he decrease (v. 30) as well as his solemn declaration that God's wrath abides on all who do not believe the Son (v. 36)—we find these profound words: "The Father loveth the Son." This statement stands out for its beautiful simplicity. John expresses a truth so extraordinary in meaning that its profundity excels everything else stated in this chapter—even the fact that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Why? These words articulate the reason why God the Father was moved to give His Son to be the Savior of a fallen world: He loves His Son!

In these words, the Holy Spirit gives us a glimpse of the infinite depth of the Father's heart—a heart that is eternally moved in love toward His begotten and beloved Son. In fact, this truth is the fountain of all theology. Nothing so precisely defines the Father as the fact that He loves His Son. Throughout Scripture we observe that God does what He does because He is who He is. This is supremely and profoundly true in the fact that the Father loves the Son. The Father delighted Himself from all eternity in the Son of His good pleasure, who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person (Heb. 1:2). In Proverbs 8, in which Christ is speaking as the Father's eternal wisdom, He says of Himself, "I was daily his [the Father's] delight, rejoicing always before him" (v.30). That is why Paul tells us in Colossians 1:18-19 that the Father's eternal delight is that His Son should have the preeminence and that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell."

From all eternity the Father has been engaged in loving His Son in whom He is well-pleased, beholding in Him the full glory and magnificence of His own Per-

son. How appropriate it is that it should be so, for the Father whose personality and attributes are of infinite dimension must have an object for His love that is exactly suitable for such love. He finds this object in His Son who is equal to His Father in the infinity and magnificence of all His attributes.

This infinite love for the eternal Son of His bosom (John 1:18) is the deepest motive for all that the Father does. Love for His Son moved Him to create the universe, for Paul tells us that "all things were created by him, and for him" (Col. 1:16). The creation of the universe was an expression of the Father's love for His Son; it was the Father's gift to His well beloved Son. Therefore, upon finishing the work of creation, the Father exclaimed that it was very good.

What made the work of creation so very good in the eyes of the Father? He beheld in the work of His hands the reflection of the glory of His beloved Son. How beautifully this truth is expressed in Psalm 19: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psa. 19:1). The heavens declare the glory of Him who is the brightness and revelation of His Father's glory, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father.

The same love for His Son moved the Father to create Adam in the Son's image. Scripture therefore refers to Adam as the son of God (Luke 3:38), for in him the Father beheld a beautiful reflection of the glory of His eternal and natural Son. Thus, as the created son of God, Adam bore the image of the natural Son of God, and was truly the masterpiece of God's creation. As the created son of God, Adam was expressly created by the Father to delight in His eternal Son, the Living Word (John 1:1). Thus, before his dreadful fall, Adam delighted in the very same Son of God. It was for this reason that Adam was the recipient of the love the Father has for His Son, for the Father beheld His eternal Son in Adam and was therefore moved to love him as He loved His Son.

If the profundity of all this overwhelms us, how can we even begin to comprehend that the Father, whose love for His Son transcends our comprehension, was pleased to send His Son into the world to redeem fallen sons and daughters of Adam who lost the image of His Son? How can we comprehend that the Father chose *fallen* men (Eph. 1:4) to become the recipients of the love He has for His Son (John 17:26) and to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29), knowing that the object of His love would have to become the object of His infinite wrath in order to redeem such fallen sinners? How can we fathom that this Son of God had to descend into the depths of hell and cry out, "My God, my God, why hast *thou* [my Father!] forsaken *me* [thy Son!]" (Matt. 27:46).

How can we even begin to grasp that in eternity the

Father gave a people to the Son in order that through them the glory of His Son would shine forth most brilliantly? In order to accomplish this, He gave His beloved Son over to the accursed death of the cross so that His people, utterly unworthy of such a favor, might be the adopted sons and daughters of God. Here words fail and we must cry out in holy amazement with the apostle Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33-34).

However, in the midst of that which cannot be grasped by our finite minds, one truth emerges: The entire plan and work of redemption revolves around the Father's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father is pleased to form a people for Himself that through them His Son might be supremely glorified. Therefore He chose His people in His Son, gave them to Him in the eternal counsel of peace, redeemed them in Him, united them to Him, conforms them to Him, and molds them into a people that will eternally delight themselves in Him—a people that will forever worship Him, "saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

And thus, dear people of God, the Son of God, our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is the great focal point of God's redemptive purpose toward us. The Father loves us with an eternal love because we are eternally included in His Son. He is *the* Elect in whom the Father delights Himself (Isa. 42:1); therefore, He delights Himself in us, a people chosen in Him. Therefore, we are the recipients of the love wherewith the Father loves His Son. The Father loves us because He loves His Son!

All boasting is forever excluded! How can we ever praise the Father sufficiently for the fact that He has eternally been moved within Himself to make us, wretched sinners, the recipients of the love wherewith He loves His Son, and in order to make this a reality, He gave the Son of His love to be a sacrifice for our sins?

Is this magnificent God not worthy of our love? Should not we, with every fiber of our being, love the very Son of God whom the Father loves? Is not that the great purpose for which the Father redeemed us that we would love and honor His precious Son now and forever? Should such amazing love not kindle in us a flame of devoted love in return? Nothing delights and pleases the Father more than when His people love His Son and by His grace endeavor to be like Him. What unspeakable joy for the Father to behold in His people the image of His well-beloved Son! What sacred duty of love we have to therefore abide in the Son who gave Himself for us, so that we, as we abide in Him, may

bring forth much Christ-like fruit to the glory of the Father (John 15:5, 8)!

How evident it should therefore be that the people of the Lord love whom their Father loves: the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Why must this be so? Because the love of God the Father has been shed abroad into their hearts. The nature of this love has the Son of God as its object, for the Father loves the Son; thus the distinguishing mark of the adopted sons and daughters of God is that they love the natural and eternal Son of God. They are sinners who have been quickened by the Spirit of the Father and the Son—a Spirit whose special work it is to glorify the Son and to show Him unto His people (John 16:13-15).

The true people of the living God, therefore, wrought upon by the Spirit of God, become increasingly preoccupied with the Son of God and His inexpressible beauty. Jesus Christ becomes their all and in all. They love the very Son whom the Father loves, and cry out in holy ecstasy, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand" (Song of Sol. 5:10). They love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and worship His Father by exclaiming, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

Dear reader, do you already love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity? After all, that is the most basic mark of all marks of grace! That alone confirms that the love of the Father has truly been shed abroad in our hearts. If, by the grace of God, you do love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, show your love for Him by keeping His commandments. The more you love the Son, the more the Father will be delighted—for the Father loves the Son!

Are there those who do not yet love the Son? How fearful will the Father's wrath be for you for the exceeding wickedness of not believing the record He has given of His Son (1 John 5:10)! Paul testifies of this when he writes, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema (that is, accursed)!" (1 Cor. 15:22). Nothing offends the Father more than when we do not love and honor the Son whom He loves. For that very reason, He has created a hell. The existence of hell is the Father's affirmation that He loves His Son so much that He will forever pour out His wrath upon all who hate His Son. That is why immediately after our text John the Baptist concludes his magnificent doxology about the Son by saying, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Therefore, dear reader, "Kiss the Son, lest he [Jehovah, the Father] be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Psa. 2:12).

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Rev. B. Elshout is pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregation of Jordan Station, Ontario.



## EDITORIAL

Dr. J.R. Beeke

### Profiting from the Puritans for Devotional Reading

Puritan literature has been a major resource for my devotional reading for thirty-five years. I believe there is no group of writers in church history that can feed our minds and souls with spiritual truth as effectively as do the Puritans. With the Spirit's blessing, here's how Puritan writings can enrich your devotional reading:

#### **Shape Your Life by Scripture**

Let the Puritans show you how to shape your entire life by Scripture. They loved, lived, and breathed Scripture, relishing the power of the Spirit that accompanied the Word. They regarded the sixty-six books of Scripture as the library of the Holy Spirit that was graciously bequeathed to them. Scripture was God speaking to them as their Father; the Word was truth they could trust in for all eternity. They saw it as Spirit-empowered to renew their minds and transform their lives.

The Puritans searched, heard, and sang the Word with delight, and encouraged others to do the same. Puritan Richard Greenham suggested eight ways to read Scripture: with diligence, wisdom, preparation, meditation, conference, faith, practice, and prayer. Thomas Watson provided numerous guidelines on how to listen to the Word: Come to the Word with a holy appetite and a teachable heart. Sit under the Word attentively, receive it with meekness, and mingle it with faith. Then retain the Word, pray over it, practice it, and speak to others about it.

The Puritans sounded a call to become Word-centered in faith and practice. Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory* showed how the Puritans regarded the Bible as a trustworthy guide for all of life. Every case of conscience was subjected to Scripture's directives. Henry Smith said, "We should set the Word of God always before us like a rule, and believe nothing but that which it teacheth, love nothing but that which it prescribeth, hate nothing but that which it forbiddeth, do nothing but that which it commandeth."

If you read the Puritans regularly, their Bible-centeredness becomes contagious. They show you how to yield wholehearted allegiance to the Bible's message.

Like them, you will become a believer of the Living Book, concurring with John Flavel, who said, "The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying."

Puritan books are rich with scriptural support and references. When you read these books for devotions, look up their references and meditate on them.

#### **Marry Doctrine and Practice**

The Puritans show us how to marry doctrine and practice in our lives by addressing the mind, confronting the conscience, and wooing the heart.

♦ *Puritan literature addresses the mind.* The Puritans loved and worshiped God with their minds. They refused to set mind and heart against each other, but taught that knowledge was the soil in which the Spirit planted the seed of regeneration. They viewed the mind as the palace of faith. "In conversion, reason is elevated," John Preston wrote. Cotton Mather said, "Ignorance is the mother not of devotion but of heresy."

The Puritans teach us to *think* in order to be holy. They understood that a mindless Christianity fosters a spineless Christianity. An anti-intellectual gospel will spawn an irrelevant gospel that doesn't get beyond "felt needs." That's what is happening in our churches today. We have lost our intellect, and for the most part we don't see the necessity of recovering it. We do not understand that if there is little difference between the Christian and unbelievers in what we believe, there will soon be little difference in how we live.

♦ *Puritan literature confronts the conscience.* The Puritans were masters at naming specific sins, then asking questions to press home the guilt of those sins. As one Puritan wrote, "We must go with the stick of divine truth and beat every bush behind which a sinner hides, until like Adam who hid, he stands before God in his nakedness."

Devotional reading should be confrontational as well as comforting. We grow little if our consciences are not pricked daily and directed to Christ. Since we are prone instead to run away, we need help in our daily devotions to be brought before the living God, "naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

♦ *Puritan literature woos the heart.* It is unusual today to find books that both feed the mind with solid biblical substance and move the heart with affectionate warmth, but the Puritans do this. They reason with the mind, confront the conscience, and appeal to the heart. They write out of love for God's Word, love for the glory of God, and love for the souls of readers. They set forth Christ in His loveliness, moving the reader to yearn to know Him better and live wholly for Him.

### **Focus on Christ**

Puritan literature magnifies Christ. According to Thomas Adams, “Christ is the sum of the whole Bible, prophesied, typified, prefigured, exhibited, demonstrated, to be found in every leaf, almost in every line, the Scriptures being but as it were the swaddling bands of the child Jesus.” Likewise, Isaac Ambrose wrote, “Think of Christ as the very substance, marrow, soul, and scope of the whole Scriptures.”

The Puritans loved Christ and wrote much about His beauty. Listen to Samuel Rutherford: “Put the beauty of ten thousand thousand worlds of paradises, like the Garden of Eden in one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all loveliness, all sweetness in one. O what a fair and excellent thing would that be? And yet it would be less to that fair and dearest well-beloved Christ than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and foundations of ten thousand earths.” Thomas Goodwin summed that up, writing, “Heaven would be hell to me without Christ.”

Would you know Christ better and love Him more fully? Immerse yourself in Puritan literature, asking the Spirit to sanctify it to you in a Christ-centered way.

### **Handle Trial Christianly**

The Puritans show us how to handle trials. We learn from their books that we need affliction to humble us (Deut. 8:2), to teach us what sin is (Zeph. 1:12), and to bring us to God (Hos. 5:15). “Affliction is the diamond dust that heaven polishes its jewels with,” wrote Robert Leighton. They teach us to view God’s rod of affliction as His means to write Christ’s image more fully upon us so that we may be partakers of His righteousness and holiness (Heb. 12:10–11).

If you are presently undergoing profound trials, learn from the Puritans not to overestimate those trials. Read William Bridge’s *A Lifting Up for the Downcast*, Thomas Brooks’s *A Mute Christian Under the Rod*, and Richard Sibbes’s *A Bruised Reed*. They will show you how every trial can bring you to Christ to walk by faith and to be weaned from this world. As Thomas Watson wrote, “God would have the world hang as a loose tooth which, being easily twitched away, doth not much trouble us.”

Or read *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* by Jeremiah Burroughs. He’ll teach you how to learn contentment through trial. Then, the next time you’re buffeted by others, Satan, or your own conscience, you will not waste time complaining. Instead, you’ll carry those trials to Christ and ask Him, by His Spirit, to sanctify them so that you model spiritual contentment for others.

### **Live in Two Worlds**

The Puritans show us how to live from a two-worlds point of view. Richard Baxter’s *The Saint’s Everlasting*

*Rest* demonstrates the power that the hope of heaven should have to direct, control, and energize our life here on earth. Despite its length (800-plus pages), this classic became household reading in Puritan homes. It was exceeded only by John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which, by the way, is an allegorical proof of my point. Bunyan’s pilgrim is heading for the Celestial City, which he never has out of his mind except when he is betrayed by some form of spiritual malaise.

The Puritans believed that we ought to have heaven “in our eye” throughout our earthly pilgrimage. They took seriously the two-worlds, now/not-yet dynamics of the New Testament, stressing that keeping the “hope of glory” before our minds helps guide our lives here on earth. Living in the light of eternity for the Puritans often necessitated radical self-denial. They taught us to live knowing that the joy of heaven will make amends for any losses and crosses, strains and pains that we must endure on earth if we are to follow Christ. They teach us that preparation for death is the first step in learning to live. This earth is God’s dressing-room and gymnasium that prepares us for heaven.

### **Emulate Puritan Spirituality**

There’s so much to learn from the Puritans—how they promote the authority of Scripture, biblical evangelism, church reform, the spirituality of the law, spiritual warfare against indwelling sin, the filial fear of God, the art of meditation, the dreadfulness of hell and the glories of heaven—but space prohibits us. In a word, let’s read the Puritans devotionally, then pray to emulate their spirituality. Let’s ask ourselves questions like these: Are we, like the Puritans, thirsting to glorify the triune God? Are we motivated by biblical truth and biblical fire? Do we share the Puritan view of the vital necessity of conversion and of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ?

Reading the Puritans isn’t enough. We also need the inward disposition of the Puritans—authentic, biblical, intelligent piety that shows in our hearts, lives, and churches.

Let me challenge you. Will you live like the Puritans? Will you go beyond reading their writings, discussing their ideas, recalling their achievements, and berating their failures? Will you practice the degree of obedience to God’s Word for which they strove? Will you serve God as they served Him? Will you live with one eye on eternity as they did? “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16).

A happy old age! Is such a thing possible? Do we ever meet with an old, worn out person who is really happy? Is the evening of life ever bright and sunny? Yes, such a thing is quite possible; we meet with it now and then. Though the body is decayed by time, the limbs are feeble, and the mind is somewhat weakened, yet there still may be a calm joy within, a peace which time can never wear out.

Dear brother or sister, do *you* wish to be happy? I know you do; everyone is a seeker after happiness, though many look for it in the wrong direction, and therefore never find it.

Shall I tell you how and where to find happiness? The *world* cannot give it to you. It holds out large promises, but it has no peace to bestow. *Friends* cannot give it to you. It is a blessing to have kind friends, and to be surrounded by those who love us; but this cannot give peace to the conscience. *Money* cannot give it to you. It is well to have enough, and something to spare. I dare say you often long to be a little richer than you now are. But money cannot drive away care or bring joy to the heart.

What is it then that will make us *truly happy*? The grace of God is the one great thing which can bring peace to the soul. Oh, what a happiness to know that He is your Father and your Friend! To be able to look up and feel that He is *yours*, and you are *His*—this is happiness.

You have sinned, perhaps very long and very greatly. But remember, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). He is full of mercy and ready to forgive. He has sent His dear Son to save sinners, and He will receive every penitent sin-

ner who comes to Him through Christ, looking to His precious blood to save him.

Yes, dear friend, you may be very happy, happier in your old age than you have ever been before. God can give you happiness, and He *will* give it you, if you cast yourself on Him, and take Him as your portion.

Now, go to God and ask Him to show you your sins and to pardon them all for Jesus' sake. Oh, seek Him in earnest prayer, and never rest till you have found Him. Pray for the Holy Spirit. Entreat Him to come into your dark soul and enlighten it. Beseech Him to change your evil heart, to take away all that is wicked in it, and to fill it with what is holy and good. Ask Him to show Christ to you, and to enable you to believe in Him. Ask Him to lead you in the blessed path of holiness which He points out for His people. *Then* you will be happy. This is the grand secret of all peace. This gives rest for the weary soul, and joy for those who have never tasted it before.

But there are two or three more hints I would like to offer you.

Try to *take a bright view of everything*. Look at the sunny side of things. Do not dwell much on your pains and aches, your troubles and infirmities, your trials and misfortunes. They may be very great, but they will not grow lighter by always harping on them. Rather, love to dwell on your many blessings and your many mercies.

You will say perhaps, "I cannot help thinking of my troubles." But you *can* help it by making an effort to do so. A dull, complaining spirit grows upon people sometimes with-

out their knowing it. Do try to check it, or it will make your days miserable and displeasing to God.

Determine to be *content with your lot*, whatever it is. Paul says, "I have learned" [and he found it a good lesson when he had learned it!] in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). A thankful and a contented spirit is a continual feast. We *ought* to be contented, and we *shall* be contented, if we are in the habit of seeing God in everything, and living upon Him day by day. Oh, for a spirit of true thankfulness!

*Oh, for a heart to praise the Lord,  
A heart from sin set free,  
A heart that's sprinkled with the blood  
So freely shed for me!*

Jane Down was a woman of about sixty-five. She was well off in the world, with a little money of her own. I never went to see her when she did not find something to complain about. Either her head ached, or her knee troubled her, or somebody had been speaking against her, or the weather was too hot or too cold. You could at once see that she had not found out the secret of true happiness. She was a constant trouble to herself and a weariness to her friends.

Widow Kingston lived near her. She was supported partly by her son, and partly by parish pay. But her cottage was as clean and tidy as Jane Down's, though she had not half as many things in it. She was sure to welcome you with a smile, if you went to see her. She was sure to say something pleasant, and you felt afterwards that it did you good to pay her a visit. She had not much of this world's goods; but she possessed *Christ*. She loved her Savior, and it was her greatest joy to speak of His goodness. There was a calm peace in that poor widow's heart, and nothing could rob her of it. Having Christ, she had all.

What made the difference between these

two old people? What made the one contented and happy, while the other was sour, discontented, and miserable? It was grace that made them to differ. The one was under the influence of the Holy Spirit; the other was destitute of His indwelling power. The one knew Christ and loved Him; to the other, He was a stranger.

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***Live above the world. A ship that is "homeward bound" cares little for the winds and waves as it sails on speedily towards the desired harbor. Heaven is the peaceful harbor you wish to reach. Then why think so much about the storms and tempests, which buffet you on your way?***

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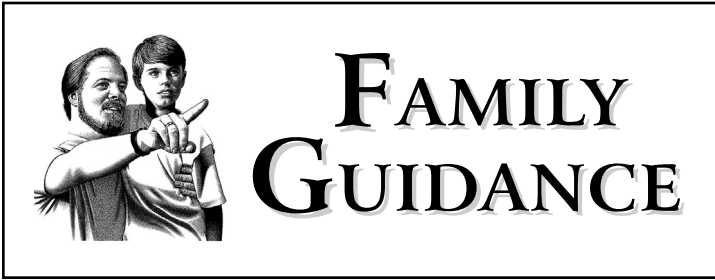
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Try to *live above the world*. A ship that is "homeward bound" cares little for the winds and waves as it sails on speedily towards the desired harbor. Heaven is the peaceful harbor you wish to reach. Then why think so much about the storms and tempests, which buffet you on your way? They will soon be over. Face them manfully. Take them patiently. Bear them meekly. Keep your eye ever fixed on Christ and eternity, and then the evils of this present world will not greatly trouble you.

Oh, that Christ may give you, dear reader, His own peace—the peace which He promised to His people, when He said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27).

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**Dr. Ashton Oxenden** was a Reformed minister in Montreal in the nineteenth century.



## Fathers and Sons

J. Westerink

By and large, we are more affluent today than our forefathers. Dads are home more often. They usually have Saturdays off, are more involved with the day-to-day raising of the children, and spend more time taking trips and holidays with the family. These are good developments, and because of this, the relationships with our children is also different. But a relationship involves more than being present, going on vacations, and being able to give our children more of the things that make life enjoyable. A relationship also involves expressing our love, physical affection, and giving our children regular doses of praise and encouragement.

In my experience as a principal, I have discovered a common problem in our young men at high school, college students, and even after marriage in our young fathers and husbands. They have missed out on the physical affection, praise, and encouraging words from their fathers that they so desperately needed. This can manifest itself in high school boys with attention-seeking misbehavior, poor self-image, and other insecurities. Even negative attention is better than no attention at all. Later on in life, men discover relational issues in the workplace, and issues in their marriages that link back directly to a lack of positive reinforcement and physical affection in their youth.

Our boys need physical affection and praise just as much as they need food, drink, and discipline. We are called by God to admonish, instruct, and correct our children, but not to provoke them to wrath (Eph. 6: 4). The Bible uses the word *nurture*. The dictionary defines nurture as, "to bring up; to care for; rear; training; education." It can even mean the provision of food. Wrestling or scuffling with dad after supper, playful punches in the shoulder, trying to beat dad at anything at all, whether it be running, throwing a ball, or a game, are all ways of getting some of that physical contact and nurture that is so important to them. A pat on the back for work well done, a ruffled head to show appreciation, or a sentence or two of praise for school accomplishments may be squawked at by our boys, but they love it, and they need it. When is the last time you did this with your son? When is the last time you actually told your son that you were proud of him? That you loved him?

*The tender love a father has  
For all his children dear,  
Such love the Lord bestows on them  
Who worship Him in fear.*

—Psalter 278 verse 1

*Like as a father looketh with compassion  
Upon his children, lo, in such a fashion  
The Lord doth look on them that fear and trust.*

—Psalter 444:5

One possible reason that we seldom praise and encourage our sons may be our theology. We all agree and confess that we are born in sin, and are depraved by nature. There is no good in us except that which is worked by God through His Holy Spirit. This is an important truth that shapes our view of children. Lest we foster pride in our sons, we may have a tendency to overreact by rarely giving words of praise or encouragement. Perhaps some of us are inwardly proud of our sons, but we are afraid to express it outwardly because it may be interpreted in the wrong way, and we might be labeled as "theological liberals." The error we are making is of confusing pride and nurture. Nurture produces a healthy self-image in our children. If that self-image is over-inflated, it leads to pride. If that self-image is under-inflated, it leads to lack of self-worth and depression. Both extremes are unhealthy.

Pride is sin, and can be quite ugly when a person is unaware of it. "Pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate" (Prov. 8:13b). But there is a good kind of pride, perhaps better called a healthy balanced self-image. It makes us want to do a good job, causes us to set a high standard for ourselves, and produces good results. Bad pride is at the expense of others, and does not give praise, honor, and glory to God.

A second reason that we seldom praise and encourage our sons may be that we do not recognize what is praiseworthy. Perhaps the "bigger" things such as getting a good job, earning a good salary, or being able to buy a house are things we recognize as being praiseworthy; while the "smaller" things such as accomplishing a good grade on a test, showing an act of kindness, being polite, or going on a short-term mission project are not recognized by us. After all, we are supposed to do our best and be kind all the time, so why should we get praise for it?

In the business world, employees receive bonuses, extra time off, raises, or letters of commendation for doing a good job. And yet they were hired to do a good job, and agreed to a set wage for doing it. The reality is that these perks do a lot for our sense of self-worth, increase job satisfaction, and help to produce a happy employee. We can apply this principle to our sons as well. Let us learn to look for and recognize praiseworthy reasons to positively build up our sons.

### **Addiction: Sin or Disease?**

*Rev. J. Koopman*

Moms generally have the most contact with the children on a daily basis. When the children come home from school, they want to tell mom all about their day. If there were any problems during the day, most of the necessary discussion has already taken place before dad comes home from work. Moms are usually the ones who tuck the children into bed at night; Dad may be already off to a church or school meeting by then. Mom is the one who hears about the troubles, disappointments, and fears (social or spiritual) that the child will often express before saying their prayers and going to sleep.

In order for dads to have relationships with their children, especially their boys, they often will need to consciously make that time available by planning to be alone with them. These times alone with dad do not have to be elaborate or expensive. Simple things like trips to the store, going out for a coffee, a Saturday fishing expedition, and working together on a garden project are different ways that dads can plan for some quality one-on-one time with their sons. During these times you can let your son know that you are proud of him and you love him, and give him words of encouragement. It is important to open the lines of communication between you and your son early, so that later on when the years of adolescence roll in, there will already be an established relationship that you may need to cash in on.

It is true that we want our boys to become men with a backbone, able to stand up for biblical principles and able to make good decisions. It would not be good if our men would fall apart emotionally every time there was a difficulty or sadness, or if men could not handle stressful situations graciously. Boys need to grow up to become men who have a definitive God-given role in the family. They are to be leaders in their family, decision-makers, role models, and spiritual examples. But this role does not negate the fact that boys need to be loved, encouraged, built up, and touched physically.

Men need to develop a sensitive side as well. A man who is compassionate, has a listening ear, and can be tender hearted can be a rich blessing to his family and church. The Bible says "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15). Solomon says, "There is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.... A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Eccl. 3:1,4).

If you are reading this, it is not too late to change our patterns, and to rectify our shortcomings. By God's grace, start today.

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Mr. Jack Westerink is principal of Rehoboth Christian School, Copetown, Ontario. This article was adapted from the February 2002 issue of *The Messenger*.

Previous generations didn't hesitate to call addiction to alcohol, drugs, or pornography sin. As recently as the 1960's, most people agreed that alcohol abuse was sin—a problem of the heart—rather than a brain or chemical problem. However, today there is a tendency to call these addictions "diseases" rather than sin. For instance, Alcoholics Anonymous states: "We in A.A. believe alcoholism is a disease that is no respecter of age, sex, creed, race, wealth, occupation, or education. It strikes at random."

#### ***Sinners or Victims?***

The result of renaming alcoholism and other addictive "diseases" tends to absolve the participant of any responsibility for his actions. Those who engage in these sinful practices are then considered "victims" rather than sinners. Victims are not responsible for their actions; they are casualties of what happens to them. Almost every human failure is presently described in the light of how the perpetrator has been victimized.

One of the main reasons that the above-mentioned sins (and many others) are presently labelled "diseases" is because some scientists believe that they originate in our genes. I'm not a scientist, but it is my understanding that they have not been able to locate any *particular* gene that absolutely predetermines if a person is going to engage in alcoholism, drug addiction, or any other sinful behavior. Yet, for the sake of argument, let us assume that there is a specific gene that can be identified for every particular sin imaginable.

First, if a specific gene could be identified which made one genetically predisposed to a particular sin, would that require us to redefine sin? How do we define sin? We define sin as that which is contrary to the very nature of God and the Ten Commandments. Catechism students, you may have learned that sin is that which breaks God's law by omission or commission in thought, word, or deed. Now, if it was proven that there was a specific gene which made murder, pornography, alcoholism, or any other sin a greater temptation for someone, would that mean that it would no longer be sin? No, of course not, for Scripture teaches that these activities are contrary to God's

nature. The definition of sin doesn't change because of our inabilities!

Second, if a tendency towards a particular sin were present in one's genes, would that absolve the perpetrator of responsibility for his actions? What does the Bible teach us? It teaches us that we need to take responsibility for our sins regardless of their origin. In a certain sense, sin is in our genes, for we are all conceived and born in sin (Ps. 51:5); but that does not excuse us when we sin! Our depravity is not an excuse for our sin, nor does it absolve us from our responsibility. We must not make allowances for sin; we are no different than Adam and Eve after their fall into sin. They immediately tried to escape their responsibility by shifting the blame for their sin to someone else. Adam said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). Eve said: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13). We are still trying to escape responsibility for our sin. We are still trying to shift the blame to someone or something else. But unless we take responsibility for our sin, there is little hope for us. Christians are rapidly losing sight of sin as the root of all human woes, and in so doing they also lose sight of the gospel which is able to save.

### **The Source of Sin**

Whether we have a genetic disposition towards a particular sin or not, sin is exceedingly wicked! Jeremiah Burroughs, in his *The Evil of Evils*, makes the following comment about the wickedness of sin:

It is a very evil choice for any soul under heaven to choose the least sin rather than the greatest affliction. Better be under the greatest affliction than be under the guilt or power of any sin.... There is more evil in sin than in outward trouble in the world; more evil in sin than in all the miseries and torments of hell itself.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, many today seem utterly lacking in any notion of the profound evil of sin. Presently, most are more concerned about *feeling* good rather than *doing* good. We grieve on account of our troubles, on account of our sicknesses, on account of our calamities; but do we still grieve on account of our sin? Do we still believe that sin is exceedingly evil? We commit sinful acts because of our sinful nature, not because we have any particular disease: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). Being a drunkard is a sin (Gal. 5:21). Being an adulterer is a sin (Matt. 5:27-28). All these sins flow out of a sinful heart!

### **Sin Must be Acknowledged**

Perhaps you think that I'm being harsh towards those who are caught in alcoholism, pornography, drugs, or any other addiction. But what hope does the secular world offer these individuals? In some cases the world teaches that you'll be forever enslaved, whether it be to alcohol or to drugs, and that you need the "medicine" of psychotherapy for the rest of your life. Drunkards and drug addicts can check into clinics for "treatment" of their "chemical dependencies." But they are told that they need to receive "treatment" for their addictions for the rest of their lives! They are told that there is no way that they can ever expect to be set free from these sins as long as they live. Alcoholics Anonymous believes "there is no such thing as a cure for alcoholism."<sup>2</sup> Is there any hope in such a way of thinking?

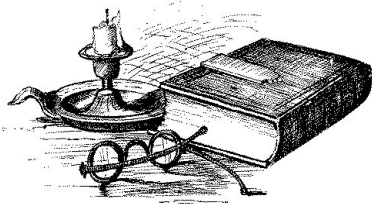
Every alternative to the gospel is hopeless. The gospel is so much richer than any secular treatment of sin! When we refuse to acknowledge our sin, we are burdened with guilt. David said, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy on me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Ps. 32:3-4). Isn't this characteristic of many who continue in patterns of sin? Always trying to cover sin begins to weigh heavily on one's conscience because of the overwhelming guilt of sin. But notice how true peace and forgiveness come by acknowledgment of sin and confession: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5).

There is only one way to deal with sin; there is only one way in which sin can be destroyed! There can be no salvation for those who aren't convinced of the wickedness of sin. It is only when one acknowledges that his external actions originate from a sinful heart that he will flee to the only Savior of sinners: the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only by repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that one can ever begin to conquer any sin. This is the only way in which the guilt, punishment, or power of sin can be removed from your life. There is no hope in renaming your sin "disease"; then you become merely a victim of circumstance. But when you take responsibility for your sins, when you acknowledge your sin, there is forgiveness with the Lord! There is only hope when you call sin sin! There is no hope when you call sin just a disease.

<sup>1</sup>Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Evil of Evils* (Ligonier, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992 reprint of 1654 original), 2-3

<sup>2</sup>[http://aa.org/default/en/about\\_aa.cfm?pageid=10](http://aa.org/default/en/about_aa.cfm?pageid=10)

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# BOOK TALK

Dr. J.R. Beeke/R. Pederson

## Voetius and Hornbeek on *Spiritual Desertion*

The following titles are recently published or reprinted. The first price is retail, and the second, our discounted price. p = paperback.

**Voetius, Gisbertus and Johannes Hoornbeek.** *Spiritual Desertion*. \$14.99/9.00p

First published in 1646, *Spiritual Desertion* offers comfort and consolation to believers whose circumstances cause them to wonder if God has abandoned them. Second Reformation leaders Gisbertus Voetius and Johannes Hoornbeek demonstrate that the anxiety of doubting believers is proof that God has not abandoned them; rather, it is evidence of the work of the Spirit in their hearts.

This is the third volume of four being published by Baker this year in the Classics of Reformed Spirituality series developed by the Dutch Reformed Translation Society. The first volume was Jean Taffin's *The Marks of God's Children* (\$14.99/9.00p); the second volume is *The Duties of Parents* by Jacobus Koelman (\$14.99/9.00p). The last volume, Willem Teellinck's *The Path of True Godliness* (\$19.99/11.50p), will be available, D.V., in October. Scripture quotations for the first three volumes are translated directly from the Dutch. Highly recommended.

**Adams, Jay E.** *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More than Redemption*. \$18.99/16.00p

This book provides the reader with insight into the theological framework that supports and directs a biblical approach to counseling. Adams discusses the proper counsel to be given in the context of biblical theology. Considering the prevalence of secular, humanistic psychology today, this book provides a wise counsel on the cure of the human soul.

**Bavinck, J.H.** *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*. \$14.99/10.00p

For decades, Bavinck's work on missions has been recognized as the authoritative textbook in the field. The passing of time has not diminished its insight and practical wisdom. Not only foreign missionaries but also pastors, evangelists, and teachers faced with an increasingly unchurched culture can find the invaluable guidance they need here.

**Benedict, Philip.** *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed*. \$40.00/32.00

This book is the first synthetic history of Calvinism in many years. It tells the story of the Reformed tradi-

tion from its birth in the cities of Switzerland to the unraveling of orthodoxy amid the new intellectual currents of the seventeenth century.

**Calvin, John.** *Sermons on the Book of Micah*. \$19.99/14.00p

When Calvin preached through the book of Micah in 1550-51, he addressed a social situation similar to Micah's and ours today. The prophet Micah confronted idolatry, superstition, confusion, and personal and social desolation. Calvin's sermons bring out the essence of Micah's message, and its relevance for our day.

**Fraanje, J.** *Striving Together in the Divine Truths of Scripture*. \$15.00/9.00p

*Striving Together* contains Rev. Fraanje's notes on Abraham Hellenbroek's catechism, *Specimens of Divine Truths*.

### New Book From Reformation Heritage Books

**Harinck, Cornelius.** *Called to Confess*. \$15.00/9.00p

In this work, Rev. Harinck attempts to maintain the tension involved between the profession and confession of faith. While he notes that one's profession before the public assembly is not a *confession* of one's conversion (it is a testimony of one's belief concerning Christ, says Harinck), he nevertheless urges that the church must settle for nothing less than genuine conversion. Furthermore, Harinck offers advice on attendance at the Lord's Table and the proper method for self-examination before admittance. He also interacts with the biblical, confessional, and historical data on the subject of the church member's profession.

**James, John A.** *The Church Member's Guide*. \$25.00/18.50

This much-needed reference contains a plethora of material related to church membership—why it is necessary, what it consists of, and the duties it entails. James thoroughly debunks the myth that Christians can rest securely without membership in the visible Christian church.

**The King James Study Bible.** \$59.99/35.00

This black-bonded leather edition, published by Thomas Nelson, contains over 5,700 annotations, book outlines, maps, and many other reference tools. It is very helpful for private study and for family worship.

**Loach, Jennifer.** *Edward VI*. \$17.00/13.00p

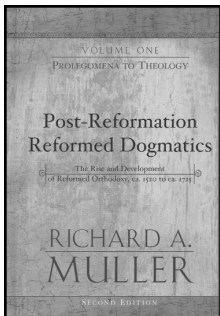
The only surviving son of Henry VII and his third wife, Jane Seymour, Edward VI reigned only six years until his death at the age of fifteen. In this scholarly assessment of Edward's life and influence, Loach presents a portrait of the young king as a vigorous Protestant aristocrat far removed from the sickly child of previous depictions. The author explores Edward's life and the import of the royal court to his upbringing and rule, and analyzes the events and politics of the time.

**Miller, J. Graham.** *An A-Z of Christian Truth and Experience*. \$21.99/15.00

This collection of quotes from leading Reformed writers throughout history provides a reservoir of inspiring material. The book is arranged according to several topics on the Christian life, such as hope and faith, with quotations on the subject. While there is an "Authors and Sources" section near the end, nowhere

are the sources directly referenced. This inconvenience, however, should not deter individuals from mining the treasures of the past presented in these pages.

**Richard A. Muller.** *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*. 4 vols. \$150.00/80.00/set



Richard A. Muller's 25 year project has come to completion. Muller contends that the theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is often misrepresented in church histories and scholarly treatments. He has undertaken this extensive study of specific doctrines to demonstrate how doctrine developed in the post Reformation period.

- Volume one, *Prolegomena to Theology*, introduces the study of

Protestant scholasticism. Muller defines theology and religion and discusses several aspects of theology as they were understood in the post-Reformation era, including its divisions, object and genus, and fundamental principles.

- Volume two, *Holy Scripture*, examines post-Reformation understandings of Scripture as the Word of God, its divinity, its properties, the integrity of the canon, and its interpretation.

- Volume three, *The Divine Essence and Attributes*, examines post-Reformation theology on the unity of God's existence, God's divine essence and attributes, and divine will.

- Volume four, *The Trinity of God*, examines the doctrine of the Trinity, including unity and distinction in the Trinity as they were understood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and addresses the deity and person of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

**Murray, Iain.** *Wesley and The Men Who Followed*. \$29.95/20.00

In this intriguing biography, Iain Murray presents the candid truth about the life and witness of John Wesley. He attempts to present him as he was, and as he professed himself to be. Aside from lambasting Wesley for his heretical doctrines, modern Calvinists have often misjudged Wesley's life, ignoring the fact that *every* life has lessons for all time—whether for the good and emulation of God's people, or for their caution and warning. This biography provides a new assessment on Wesley from one who has been in the Reformed tradition for decades.

**Piper, John.** *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy: God's Triumphant Grace in the Lives of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin*. \$17.99/13.00

Here Piper movingly unfolds these famous Christians' experiences of God's majesty and grace in times of weakness. He shows their courage and stamina in the face of countless injustices and adversities. Their writings and their lives have inspired generations of believers.

**Piper, John.** *The Roots of Endurance: Invincible Perseverance in the Lives of John Newton, Charles Simeon, and William Wilberforce*. \$17.99/13.00

By God's grace, John Newton considered all the degradation of his past a bitter blessing, for the humiliation he suffered created an amazement that

overwhelmed him with praise. Charles Simeon remained faithful in his post for over half a century. And William Wilberforce never lost his child-like joy in Christ. These three men, whose lives have inspired many, are discussed by Piper in detail; he shows us how God's grace was active in their own time, and pleads for similar manifestations in ours.

**Rex, Richard.** *The Lollards*. \$21.95/19.00p

This work presents the history of England's only native, medieval movement that strove against Roman Catholicism. Beginning with its fourteenth-century origins in the theology of the Oxford professor, John Wyclif, Richard Rex examines the spread of Lollardy across much of England until its eventual dissolution amid religious upheavals.

**Roberts, Maurice.** *Great God of Wonders*. \$9.99/7.00p

First published in the Banner of Truth magazine, these writings provide practical and warmly biblical reading. We all become like the objects we worship. To think about God rightly is the most exciting occupation possible for any created being, Roberts writes. Roberts's book promotes thought-provoking spirituality.

**Beeke, Joel R.** *A Busca da Plena Seguranca: O Legado de Calvino e Seus Successores*. \$22.50/15.00p

The work *Quest for Full Assurance* (available in English for \$7.50) has been newly translated into Portuguese. Here Dr. Beeke chronicles the theme of assurance through Calvin and his successors (i.e. Perkins, Goodwin, Owen); he finds that the Puritans were not only faithful to their Reformed fathers but actually continued to develop the doctrine of assurance, much in the same way that the branches of a tree are a natural out-growth of its root. —RP

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# PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

Rev. J.M. Brentnall

## Five Searchlights on Sin

In bringing us to Himself God sooner or later places our sin under such powerful searchlights that we cannot fail to recognize it as the loathesome thing that it is in His sight. This is the painful process described in Scripture as the Holy Spirit convincing us of sin (John 16:8), bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, (1 Cor. 4:5) and making sin exceedingly sinful to us (Rom. 7:13). Because His aim in putting us through this process is to make us partakers of His holiness, He invariably makes us flee to Christ, the only Mediator between Himself and us, for both cleansing from its burdensome guilt and deliverance from its oppressive power.

In this brief article we will consider five such searchlights and indicate how our most secret thoughts, motives, desires, words, and actions are exposed by their powerful glare. As we do this, may we be made willing to place ourselves under them, be brought to loathe ourselves for what they show us, and seek that cleansing and deliverance that only Christ can give us.

### 1. *The Character of God*

When the Holy Spirit brings us to see God in His holiness and sovereignty, we cannot help seeing something of the sinfulness of our sin. "Woe is me, I am undone," cried Isaiah, "for I have seen the king, the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. 6:5). "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," exclaimed Job, "but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). When we are shown the glory of God shining through His holy attributes, we reflect on our own contrasting depravity and wickedness. When we compare ourselves with others, we may thank God proudly that "we are not as other men" (Luke 18:11). But when we see ourselves in the light of God's holy character, we cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" and restlessly thrash around for a remedy outside ourselves.

### 2. *The Law of God*

"By the law is the knowledge of sin," says the apostle. (Rom. 3:20) That is, because no one can ever be justified except by faith in Christ, God shines the light of His law on us precisely to show us our lack of conformity to its holy precepts. And because the law is spiritual, He shines its light inside our hearts, lighting up the hidden things of darkness that only He sees. Then we see the futility of seeking to justify ourselves by our own character or deeds, despair of ourselves, confess that "all our righteousnesses are filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6), and flee to Christ for a righteousness that will avail us before God. When we compare ourselves with obvious transgressors of God's law, we fancy ourselves to be better than them; but when we compare our inmost thoughts and desires and our outward words and actions with the standard of the law itself, we find ourselves condemned and ashamed before Him.

### 3. *The Torments of the Wicked in Hell*

No one loved souls more than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Yet no one spoke more frequently and feelingly of the indescribable torments of the wicked in hell than He (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30, 46; Mark 9:44, 46, 48.). The sheer horror of being in such a place of eternal pain, anguish, remorse, and despair is expressed by Him in awful terms. Surely God created hell only out of love for His justice and hatred to sin. God does not punish sinners with such excruciating torments forever unless He judges sin worthy of such punishment. And when He graciously shines on us with hell's light we cannot but reflect on the dreadfulness of the sin that deserves such wages. A true sight of hell will make sin abhorrent to us. Many a sinner, awakened to the awful prospect of spending eternity in hell, has wept himself to sleep believing that God would be righteous to wake him up in hell, because he knows that hell is what his sin deserves. When, in His mercy, God shows His righteous wrath condemning us to hell's torments for our sin, we seek deliverance from Him who suffered those torments on the cross for such sinners as we are.

### 4. *Striving to be Holy*

When God is bringing us to Christ, we desire to be free from sin. Longing to swim against the tide of human corruption and worldliness, we struggle hard to overcome it. We try to pray, but find our hearts dragging us downward. We read the Scriptures, but find our hearts still restless and lacking peace with God. We strive to run the Christian race, but find ourselves unable to take even one step forward. We vow to live better lives, but find our old nature unchanged. Before long, we discover that sin is like a strong man, able to wrestle us to the ground without effort on every occa-

sion. We feel condemned to a life of continued striving against sin without any help from God, and become thoroughly weary of ourselves and all our efforts. Yet when we hear that heart-melting invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28), then we flee to Christ and find relief. From that moment on, sin does not have dominion over us. And despite its continued attacks and temporary victories, we are able to sing with the Psalmist: "Iniquities, I must confess, prevail against me do: But as for our transgressions, them purge away shalt thou" (Psa. 65:3, Metrical Version) and cry out with the Apostle: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24-25). Striving to be holy is a most effective searchlight to show us our sin and drive us to Christ.

### **5. Christ Crucified**

Nothing gives us such a horrendous sight of sin, however, as a believing view of Christ crucified. More than anything else, this shows just how much God hates sin. For Him to punish His only-begotten, dearly-beloved Son in our nature—One who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and lovingly bore the sins of others—shows us God's infinite hatred of sin more than even eternal punishment. And the more we see God's hatred of sin, the more we see sin's sinfulness. When we look upon Him whom we have pierced, we cry out with Isaac Ambrose: "Oh, what is that cross on the back of Christ? My sins! Oh, what is that crown on the head of Christ? My sins! Oh, what is that nail in the right hand, and that other in the left hand of Christ? My sins! Oh, what is that spear in the side of Christ? My sins! And what are those nails and wounds in the feet of Christ? My sins! With a spiritual eye I see nothing else tormenting Christ, condemning Christ, executing Christ but sin. Oh, my sins, my sins, my sins!" This is the most powerful searchlight of all that God employs to show us the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

### **Lessons for Ourselves**

1. We may be sure that if we do not see our sin under these five searchlights, despite its greatness and loathsomeness in God's sight, it is not because there is no sin in us to see. It is because we are blind to ourselves. The holy character of God, the commandments of His holy law, the awful torments of the wicked in hell, the futile attempts to become holy without Christ, and Christ crucified have never shone into our hearts with exposing light and power. We are still in our sins. And if we are still in our sins, we are strangers to grace and to God. Oh, may we give ourselves no rest until we find ourselves at peace with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! Let us heed and act on His own gracious

invitation: "Come unto me" (Matt. 11:28), taking our encouragement from the promise attached to it: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:40). Only by so doing shall we be delivered from the guilt and power of sin.

2. Since sin is so sinful in God's sight, how thankful believers should be for the power of grace. Only by the riches and freeness of God's grace have we been delivered, and continue to be delivered, from the enormous evil of sin. Only by the power of that grace are we preserved, like a tiny spark of fire preserved in an ocean of wickedness. "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). Our own hearts are still the receptacles of so much wickedness. Yet God's grace keeps our eyes from tears and our feet from falling (Psa. 116:8). Furthermore, He has promised that He will continue to keep that which we commit to Him against the day of Christ's appearing (2 Tim. 1:12). Let us be thankful then, and press on, until we reach the place where there is no more sin and no further need for searchlights to show us our need of Christ.

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## **Sheep Brought Into The Fold**

*There is an hour known to God,  
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,  
Shall by almighty grace be called,  
And brought into the Shepherd's fold.*

*In league with hell, at war with God,  
They run along destruction's road,  
Give vent to every lust unclean,  
And stray as far as lost sheep can.*

*But grace pursues the wand'ring sheep  
And everywhere protects their feet,  
Glory to God, they shall not rove  
Beyond His everlasting love!*

*They will not come. They will not bow.  
They will not heed the gospel call  
But still God's purpose moves along.  
His "shalls" and "wills" He will have done.*

*He brings His chosen to the place  
At the hour ordained for peace,  
Not to propose, but save by grace,  
And works the wonders of His grace.*

*The heart that would not bow will melt  
When God's almighty touch is felt.  
The will, like clay, the Potter molds,  
And brings His sheep into His fold!*