

OLD TESTAMENT
READINGS &
DEVOTIONALS

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VOLUME 7

C.M.H. Koenig

Robert Hawker

Charles H. Spurgeon

Octavius Winslow

C.M.H. Koenig Books

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Reading: 1 Kings 9

Chiefly, and above everything related in this chapter, let my soul ponder over the wonderous condescension of God to Solomon, in what is here said of this *second* manifestation to him of his grace and love. And while I mark the tender mercy so shewn, let me not forget that *such honor have all his saints*. Yes! blessed Jesus, though not equally splendid, yet equally certain, equally gracious, are thy visits. For thou hast left it upon record as if to silence all doubts and unbelief, that *he that loveth thee shall be loved of thy Father*, and thou hast added in that assurance, *I will love him, and will manifest myself to him*.¹ Oh! wonderous love! oh! matchless grace! Lord how is it that thou dost manifest thyself unto thy people, and not unto the world!

We are not astonished, O ye carnal men, that you should gaze with such amazement as ye sometimes do at the followers of our Jesus! that we are (as David said) a wonder, to many is not so strange, since we are a wonder to ourselves. That we are born from above; that God condescends to acknowledge us for his children by adoption and by grace; that Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brethren; and the Holy Spirit makes our bodies his temple: when we think of

these things, and consider our high calling; when we look within our hearts, and behold such coldness, deadness, and the want of affection, to him, who hath so loved us as to beget us by his glorious redemption and his Father's grace to such an inheritance, oh! how passing in wonder must be the love of God which passeth knowledge!

My brother in Jesus! you I address, who profess to live in the hope and faith of these precious, these distinguished privileges! think, I charge you, (and while I charge you I desire to feel the full force of it upon my own heart) think, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!* Was the Lord thus gracious to Solomon? Did he appear to him twice? Did he solemnly charge him to flee from idolatry, and a breach of his holy covenant? Oh! then, let us consider the infinite importance of living to him who hath purchased our redemption with his blood; whose we are, and to whom we belong. If under the Old Testament dispensation of types and shadows, God was so jealous of his honor; can you suppose that now the whole is confirmed and sealed to us, as it is in the New Testament revelation of his blood, that he is less jealous of his honor, or that he will give his glory to graven images? Oh! my brother! if the Lord hath manifested himself to our hearts, and the grace of God hath appeared unto us, let us never forget what that grace teacheth, and what high claims are upon us; namely, that *denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*² (Hawker, Poor Man's Old Testament Commentary: 1 Kings-Esther, 68–69)

Footnotes:

1. John 14:21.
2. Titus 2:12-14.

2

Reading: Proverbs 25

"Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner." Proverbs 25:4 (AKJV)

"He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will present offerings to the Lord in righteousness." Malachi 3:3

Mark the great and glorious end of this fiery process – a righteous offering to the Lord; and a vessel formed, prepared, and beautified for the Refiner; a "vessel unto honor, meet for the Master's use." Blessed result! Oh, the wonders wrought by the fire of God's furnace! Not only is "God glorified in the fire," but the believer is sanctified. Have you ever observed the process of the artificer in the preparation of his beautiful ornament? After removing it from its mold, skillfully and properly formed, he then traces upon it the design he intended it should bear, dipping his pencil in varied hues of the brightest coloring. But the work is not yet finished. The shape of that ornament is yet to be fixed, the figures are to be set, the colors perpetuated, and the whole work consolidated. By what process? – by passing through the fire. The fire alone completes the work.

Thus, is it with the chastened soul – that beautifully constructed vessel, which is to adorn the palace of our King through eternity – the gaze, the wonder, the delight of every holy intelligence. God has cast it into the Divine mold, has drawn upon it the "image of His Son," with a pencil dipped in heaven's own colors – but it must pass through the furnace of affliction, thus to stamp completeness and eternity upon the whole. Calmly, then, repose in the hands of your Divine Artificer, asking not the extinguishment of a spark until the holy work is completed. God may temper and soften – for He never withdraws His eye from the work for one moment – but great will be your loss, if you lose the affliction unsanctified! Oh! could we with a clearer vision of faith but see the reason and the design of God in sending the chastisement, all marvel would cease, all murmur would be hushed, and not a painful dispensation of our Father would afford us needless trouble. David's pen never wrote more sweetly than when dipped in the ink of affliction. And never did his harp send forth deeper, richer melody than when the breath of sadness swept its strings. This has been the uniform testimony of the saints of God in every age. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; for before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept your law."¹ Learn to see a Father's hand, yes, a Father's heart, in every affliction. It is not a vindictive enemy who has chastened you, but a loving Friend: not an unfeeling stranger, but a tender Father, who, though He may cast you down in the dust, will never cast you off from His love. The Captain of your Salvation – Himself made perfect through suffering – only designs your higher spiritual promotion in His army, by each sanctified affliction sent. You are on your way to the mansion prepared for you by the Savior, to the kingdom bestowed upon you by God. The journey is short, and time is fleeting; what though the cross is heavy and the path is rough – you have not far nor long to carry it. Let the deep-drawn sigh be checked by the throb of gladness which this prospect should create.

"He will not always chide, neither will he retain his anger forever."² The wind will not always moan, nor the waters be always tempestuous; the dull vapor will not forever float along the sky, nor the sunbeams be forever wreathed in darkness. Your Father's love will not always speak in muffled tones, nor your Savior hide Himself forever behind the wall or within the lattice. That wind will yet breathe music, those waters will yet be still; that vapor will yet evaporate; that sun will yet break forth; your Father's love will speak again in unmuffled strains, and your Savior will manifest Himself without a veil. Pensive child of sorrow! Weary pilgrim of grief! timid, yet prayerful; doubting, yet hoping; guilty, yet penitent; laying your hand on the head of the great appointed Sacrifice, you look up with tears, confessing your sin, and pleading in faith the blood of sprinkling. Oh, rejoice that this painful travail of soul is but the Spirit's preparation for the seat awaiting you in the upper temple, where the days of your mourning will be ended. You may carry the cross to the last step of the journey – weeping even up to heaven's gate – but there you shall lay that cross down, and the last bitter tear shall there be wiped away forever! Truly we may exclaim, "Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of Your law." (Winslow, Morning Thoughts, Dec 1)

Footnotes:

1. Psalm 119:67, 71.
2. Psalm 103:9.

3

Reading: Proverbs 26

“The curse causeless shall not come.” Proverbs 26:2 (AKJV)

It is a sweet thought, that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. And surely the curse of the wicked cannot injure the righteous. But it is doubly blessed when a child of God finds a promising God, a performing God, in making their curses fall to the ground; yea, converting their very curses into blessings. Had not Joseph’s brethren sold their brother, humanly speaking, how would he have arrived to the government of Egypt?¹ Had not Haman planned the destruction of Mordecai, and for this purpose erected the gallows, though means would not have been wanting for his own destruction, yet the idea of hanging might not have entered the breast of the king.² Yea, had not the Jews crucified the Lord Jesus, where would have been the triumph of the cross to his redeemed? Learn, my soul, to be looking at these things; not by mere outward appearances, not by the event of the moment, but by the final issue and termination of things. “The curse causeless shall not come.” This is quite enough for every believer. Jesus will prevent, or overrule, or make it minister the very reverse of what the

enemy designed. It shall be frustrated, or it shall be sanctified, or it shall be productive of salutary effects, like medicated waters, that by running over certain properties of the earth, have their nature changed, and become wholesome and healing. Lord! cause me to repose in thee, and if the enemy curse, do thou but bless, and all his causeless anger will then be as nothing. (Hawker, The Poor Man's Evening Portion, Nov 1)

Footnotes:

1. Genesis 41:39-43; Joseph's story is told in Genesis 37-50.
2. Esther 7:9-10.

4

Reading: Proverbs 27

“Know well the condition of your flock, and pay attention to your herds,” Proverbs 27:23

Every wise merchant will occasionally hold a stock-taking, when he will cast up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of heaven, will cry, “Search me, O God, and try me”;¹ and he will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things are right between God and his soul. The God whom we worship is a great heart-searcher; and of old his servants knew him as “the Lord which searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men.”² Let me stir you up in his name to make diligent search and solemn trial of your state, lest you come short of the promised rest. That which every wise man does, that which God himself does with us all, I exhort you to do with yourself this evening. Let the oldest saint look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for grey heads may cover black hearts: and let not the young professor despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the rottenness of

hypocrisy. Every now and then a cedar falls into our midst. The enemy still continues to sow tares among the wheat. It is not my aim to introduce doubts and fears into your mind; nay, verily, but I shall hope the rather that the rough wind of self-examination may help to drive them away. It is not security, but carnal security, which we would kill; not confidence, but fleshly confidence, which we would overthrow; not peace, but false peace, which we would destroy. By the precious blood of Christ, which was not shed to make you a hypocrite, but that sincere souls might show forth his praise, I beseech you, search and look, lest at the last it be said of you, "Mene, Mene, Tekel: thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."³ (Spurgeon, Eve, Dec 18)

Footnotes:

1. Psalm 139:23.
2. Revelation 2:23.
3. Daniel 5:26-28.

5

Reading: Proverbs 28

“The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy.” Proverbs 28:13

A sense of guilt upon the conscience invariably occasions distant views of God. The moment Adam became conscious of having sinned, He hid himself from God's eye.¹ He sought concealment from the endearing presence of Him who had been used to walk in the cool of the evening through the bowers of Paradise, in sweet and confiding communion. It is so now! Guilt upon the conscience, sin unconfessed, imparts misty, gloomy, distorted views of God. We lose that clear endearing view of His character which we once had. We dare not look up with holy, humble boldness. We misinterpret His dealings; think harshly of His ways; and if providences are dark, and afflictions come, in a moment we exclaim, "I have sinned, and God is angry." And so, we seek concealment from God. We sink the Father in the Judge, and the child in the slave.

Another evil that results from sin unconfessed is the hardening tendency it produces upon the conscience. To a child of God, who has felt and mourned over the power of sin, we need not stay to

prove how hardening is the tendency of sin; how it crusts the heart with a callousness which no human power can soften, and which often requires heavy affliction to remove. Where a child of God, then, neglects the habit of a daily confession of sin, by slow and almost imperceptible degrees, the conscience loses its tenderness, and becomes, by this gradual process, so hardened as at length to think nothing of a sin, which at a previous period would have filled the soul with horror and remorse.

One more evil we may mention, and that is, that a neglect of this most important duty causes a fearful forgetfulness of sin, without the sweet sense of its forgiveness. The believer loses sight of his sin, not because he knows it to be pardoned, afresh blotted out, but from a mere carnal forgetfulness of the sin. The child of God, on whose conscience the atoning blood has been afresh sprinkled, cannot soon forget his sin. Oh no! Freed from a sense of its condemnation, delivered from its guilt, and looking up to the unclouded face of a reconciled God, yet He remembers how far he could depart from the God that so loved him, and so readily and freely forgave him. The very pardon of his sin stamps it upon his memory. He thinks of it only to admire the love, adore the grace, and extol the blood that blotted it out; and thus, he is led to go softly all his days. "My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me."

But the believer who neglects the duty and the privilege of confession loses the remembrance of his sin, until brought under the rod of the covenant. Then some deep and heavy chastisement recalls it to his memory, and fills him with shame, humiliation, and contrition. In this state, the Eternal Spirit comes into the soul with His restoring mercies, leads the abased and humbled believer afresh to the "fountain opened," and God; the God of all comfort; speaks in words of comfort to his broken heart.² (Winslow, Morning Thoughts, Aug 22)

Footnotes:

1. Genesis 3:8-10.
2. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.